

Teachers Notes
by Ananda Braxton-Smith

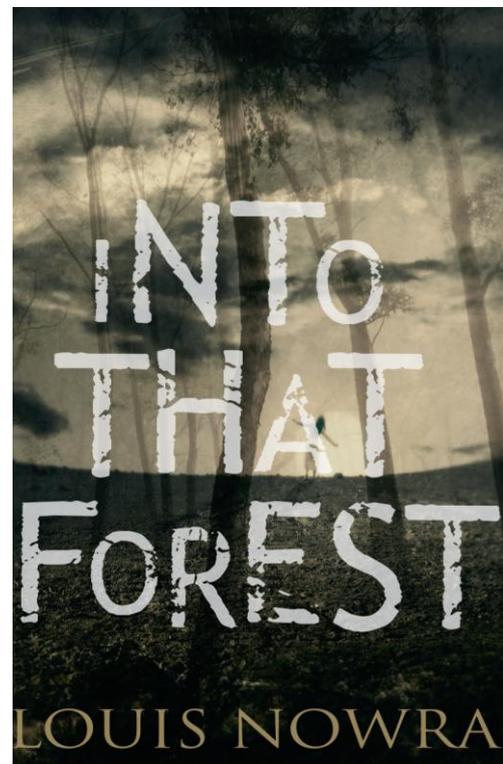
INTO THAT FOREST
by Louis Nowra

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Recommended for ages 15+ years

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SYNOPSIS

It is the eve of the twentieth century and Tasmanian Tigers are being hunted to extinction. Hannah, 6-years-old, and Becky, 7, are lost in the Tasmanian wilderness after a boating accident. They are adopted by a pair of Tasmanian Tigers whose own offspring are dead, killed by bounty hunters.

Hannah and Becky survive by abandoning their human socialisation and learning from the tigers how to live wild. As time passes they must find the 'wild' human within themselves, or perish. As the older Becky fights to retain a sense of her social identity, especially language, the younger, more practical Hannah gives herself over to the tigers very quickly.

Over the next three to four years the girls lose much of their 'humanity' including language, physical modesty, and their sense of being separate from other animals. They learn to communicate with their tiger companions, to hunt, to enjoy raw meat and fresh blood, and to withstand pain, cold, heat and hunger. They learn the tingling joy of being alive in the Now, the true pleasure of food, and the warmth of snuggling down in a pack.

Their senses sharpen.

They become a family with the tigers.

They become part of the life in the forest.

Then in their fourth year with the tigers, Becky's father at last finds them. He is accompanied by Ernie, a man who is travelling through Tasmania recording European and Indigenous folksongs on his Edison phonograph. The two men return the two now 'wild' girls to civilisation. The men try to re-socialise the girls. Hannah and Becky must not only learn again how to walk upright, to eat cooked food, and to talk. In order to rejoin the society of people they must learn to display the right attitude. They must learn to hide their feelings, to say the right thing not the true thing.

Becky takes to this re-education better than Hannah.

Unable to fully grasp her new human 'femininity', Hannah is disguised as a boy and sent to sea on a whaler. Here she relives her joy in the hunt and her connection to wild things. Meanwhile Becky is sent to a girls' boarding school, where despite working hard to fit in she is marginalised. The other students find her an object of fear and scorn.

Heartbroken to be separated from one another and from the tigers, the girls struggle to be human again but their wild worldview keeps breaking through. Eventually Becky makes a break for it, running away from school. She returns to the wilderness and Hannah is taken back into the forest to track her friend.

The two men and Hannah find Becky back at the den with the aged female tiger. Becky is coaxed out by Hannah's presence but then killed while protecting the tiger from her father's gun.

A note on the philosophical nature of the text

One of *Into That Forest's* preoccupations is to constantly interrogate our assumptions about the nature of being human or animal. It asks: What can we lose and still be human? What must we *learn* to be recognisably human? What must we *give up* to be recognisably human? Being *recognisably* human is central to our survival in our human societies.

What is the difference between animals and humans? is one of today's pressing philosophical questions. Animals stand in for the more generalised world of nature, and how we think of animals will tell us much about how we think of the wild world itself. Animals have been separate from humans *in our ideas* for millennia and that has allowed us to continue killing and eating them without guilt. Traditionally we think of wilderness and wild animals as dangerous, uncontrolled, and full of malice toward humans.

For those studying self and society, or philosophy, *Into That Forest* provides opportunities to look deeply into our ideas about being a human being. We can look deeply into an animal kingdom whose edges are less firmly drawn than has been assumed; an animal kingdom that *contains* humans, rather than merely threatening or sustaining us.

INTO THAT FOREST AND THE CURRICULUM

Into That Forest and the General Capabilities

This text will support studies in the following capabilities: literacy, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical behaviour and even intercultural understanding if you reconceptualise the tigers in particular and animals in general as having a 'culture'.

It specifically addresses studies in the following:

- **English:** *Into That Forest* uses a first-person narrative in which the narrator has had to relearn language, and talks in a strong 'dialect' replete with extinct phrases and words. Its repeated use of the literary object *ambergris* draws connections between Hannah and her previous life, and supports the text's intertextuality with Melville's *Moby Dick*.
- **History:** *Into That Forest* imagines the lives of Tasmanian Tigers under threat of extinction, including the part played in that extinction by bounty hunters of late 19th/early 20th centuries. Australia's early collection and archiving of folk material is described. The text also reanimates historical language itself, using many a phrase or word that is now dead.
- **Science:** *Into That Forest* describes the behaviours and environments of the thylacine under pressure from human settlement.
- **Psychology/studies of self and society:** *Into That Forest* interrogates the nature vs. nurture debate through the animalising of its lost girls, and their subsequent 're-humanising'.

ENGLISH

Vocab stop

Meaning: *genre* [noun] --- A type or category of literature or film marked by certain shared features or conventions.

[http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_G.html]

Origin: Early 19th century French, literally 'a kind'

[<http://oxforddictionaries.com>]

Genre: *Into That Forest* as 'Wildchild' Literature

Come on, poor babe:

Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens

To be thy nurses! Wolves and bears, they say,

Casting their savageness aside, have done

Like offices of pity.

[Shakespeare *A Winter's Tale* Act II]

Into That Forest can be compared to 'survival' or 'wildchild' texts whose conventions go far back into literary history. Myth and legend tell of lost children being reared by wolves, bears and monkeys right back into classical times. Tame humans have told stories about wild humans and their animal familiars since people moved out of the wilderness.

Over time, the stories served to authorise various cultural phenomena, such as the idea of a 'right' to rule. For instance, in the founding legend of ancient Rome, Romulus and Remus, the

twin sons of the Roman god Mars and a high priestess named Rhea, were abandoned by their father and suckled by a wolf until found by a shepherd. Their assimilation of wild nature represented by the she-wolf's milk gives the twins authority over the bit of wilderness upon which they later founded the city of Rome.

Medieval characterisations of wild people tended to stress their chaos and madness, and elicited terror and distrust. Medieval notions of wilderness itself, or any kind of disorder, elicited the same terror. Wild places, and thereby wild people, were seen as corrupt. They belonged to the Christian devil and were in need of civilisation, excommunication or destruction.

Over the Enlightenment the sign of the 'wild human' changed from one of disorder into one of natural harmony: s/he was now a human being *uncorrupted* by civilisation. Rousseau's Noble Savage is the apogee of this tendency to see humans in their wild state as more pure - more moral - than their civilised counterparts. This was in part a reaction to collective dismay about the civilised, murderous creatures that were decimating Europe with their religious wars. It was due to widespread guilt about maltreating indigenous people in far-flung colonies.

[See below for link to info on Rousseau]

Modern 'survival' or 'wildchild' fictions tend to focus on questions of human socialisation, and on questions of environmental degradation. They probe first what it is to be human: an animal mostly removed from the challenges of survival in the wild. Out of this contemplation arise the questions: what is our relationship, and what is our responsibility, to the wild animal kingdom?

[See below for list of survival literature from classical world to now]

Into That Forest is also a classic 'tragedy', in that the traits which enable the girls to survive—their attachment to each other plus their 'wild' inability to dissemble—are the traits by which they are eventually destroyed.

ACTIVITY: getting familiar with the literary wildchild

READ these three classical wildchild tales:

- 'Enkidu' — <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enkidu>
- 'Romulus and Remus' — <http://www.unrv.com/culture/romulus-and-remus.php>
- 'Atalanta' — <http://www.hipark.austin.isd.tenet.edu/mythology/atalanta.html>

NOTE the stories' central elements, such as:

- sex and age of the child
- circumstances of the child's adoption into the wild
- type and sex of animal
- what the child or children learn from their wild family
- what happens if and when the child returns 'home'; how are they different to other people?
- Does their experience help or hinder, glorify or degrade them?

COMPARE and CONTRAST the tales' elements with those in *Into That Forest*.

DISCUSS in groups, considering the following:

- how do the stories differ in their textual treatment of animals and of people?
- why is it that the later text investigates the emotional experience of both children and animals so closely?
- What authority do the protagonists in each story gain from their experiences in the wild world?

SHARE your groups' insights with the rest of the class.

Language: *Into That Forest* & dialect-writing

'...a wolf creature with yellow fur and black stripes. It were about the size of a real large dog. I can remember it to this day, cos it were the first one I had ever seen. It had a long muzzle and stripes on its sides like a tiger. The tail were thick and the fur so fine and smooth it were like it didn't have hair. *It's like a wolf*, I heard me mother say and indeed it looked like those wolves I seen in me fairytale books. It stared at us with huge black eyes, then it opened its jaw real slow til I thought it could swallow a baby. I'll go bail if it were not the most bonny, handsomest thing I ever seen..'

[*Into That Forest* p.10]

Hannah O'Brien is seventy-six years old. She lost her language as a child and has had to relearn English later in life. She has a rich untutored dialect replete with grammatical 'mistakes', slang and swear-words.

One of the challenges authors face when writing in dialect is to avoid its stereotyping effect on their singular characters. Such stereotyping happens when characters don't have their own voice, just a generic rendering of their 'type'. Here's a quote from 'Jim' in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*:

'Yes-en I's rich now, come to look at it. I owns myself, en I's wuth eight hund'd dallars. I wisht I had de money, I wouldn' want no.'

[*Huckleberry Finn* Chapter 8]

It is a recognisable 'African-American slave' voice. The problem is that to the contemporary eye and ear *What* it is saying is secondary to *How* it's being said, due to the dialect's density and constellation of apostrophes.

Pre-television readers were used to literary conventions which routinely used long, descriptive narrative and sound-for-sound dialect. However, such a strict recording of the dialect-to-text makes for a slow, difficult reading experience for contemporary readers. We are not used to working so hard and we tend to give up. Here's another quote, from *Wuthering Heights*. The speaker is servant 'Joseph':

'What are ye for?' he shouted. 'T' maister's down i' t' fowld. Go round by th' end o' t' laith, if ye went to spake to him.'

'Is there nobody inside to open the door?' I hallooed, responsively.

'There's nobbut t' missis; and shoo'll not open 't an mak' yer flaysome dins till neight.'

[*Wuthering Heights* Chapter 2]

When giving characters their voice, authors consider their sex, class, background, education, aspirations and temperament. In the case of Hannah, her loss of language in her childhood also feeds into her dialect. Nowra has given her a long list of slangy phrases and words, but he has kept her dialect simple and consistent.

She says:

- *I seen*, instead of 'I saw'
- *Me*, instead of 'my' and *meself*, instead of 'myself'
- *I were*, instead of 'I was' --- most of the time
- *Stanged* instead of 'stung'
- *Cos*, instead of 'because'
- *'Bout*, instead of 'about'

The choice of these few specific habits, plus her creative use of slang and swearing makes Hannah's voice both strong in dialect *and* an easy, enjoyable read. There is a list of Hannah's slang words at the end of this document. They can be used as a template for the dialect-building exercise below, as well as providing opportunities for considering slang in general as a linguistic mode that speaks outside any particular 'normality'. In addition, you can go to <http://www.civilwararchive.com/LETTERS/canter.htm> to study an instance of *written* dialect,

provided in this letter from a 20-year-old Union soldier to his mother during the American Civil War.

ACTIVITY 1: Investigate slang using BLM 1, at the end of these notes.

ACTIVITY 2: write a piece in your own dialect

One of the most enlightening dialects to find is your own. We tend to think we don't have a dialect; that other people have them. Written English is taught to us all similarly, so the way we write tends to even out differences in syntax and vocabulary. When writing we *try* to write—we rarely *try* to talk, or to think. The key to this exercise is not to censor yourself in any way, and for this reason it would make a good diary exercise.

CHOOSE a small event of your day to retell. SIT quietly for a few minutes listening to your thoughts flow.

MAKE A LIST of any repeating phrases and words, any dropped letters or contractions, any swearing or emphases.

WRITE the first paragraph of your chosen event using the list.

Don't think too much; jump in with your strongest slangy, grammatically-wrong, personal voice!

Literature: intertextuality

Vocab stop

Meaning: *intertext* --- the idea that no text is original and unique in itself: rather, it is a tissue of inevitable, often unwitting, references to other texts.

[http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_G.html]

Origin: *intertextuality* has been a much-used term since its first introduction by Julia Kristeva in her essay of 1969 translated at 'Word, Dialogue and Novel'.

[<http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1229>]

Intertext: white whales and wild things in *Into That Forest & Moby Dick*

Authors often invoke elements of more well-known works in order to add richness to their own. Readers are good at picking up on these allusions and interestingly do not need to consciously recognise the prior work in order for the intertext-effect to be successful. One of these effects is to underscore the fact that the author is grappling with similar themes to the original work without being overt. *Into That Forest* uses emblems and themes recognisable from Herman Melville's 19th century classic *Moby Dick*.

Hannah O'Brien is a practical sort of person, uneducated and unreligious, and she is no subtle philosopher. Her narrative is direct and concrete in the most part, so, instead of a contemplative protagonist who ponders on the themes throughout, the author has layered his philosophical themes throughout the text using *allusion*, *metaphor* and *intertext*.

For instance, he has chosen a strong central object that moves with the story, providing links to the past and reminding us always of the presence of whales, in the mysterious substance ambergris. Ambergris is a wax-like substance secreted in the intestines of the sperm whale, found floating in tropical seas and used in making perfume. Early on, ambergris links Hannah emotionally to her absent father, the whaler. After the girls are lost in the wilderness, it connects the tigers, Becky and Hannah as they play out their new 'family' on the beach. Its intoxicating effects link her directly into the cosmos, or the broad natural world. Later it is a link to the absent Becky, and finally it is the tragic object that results in Becky's death.

It is described as 'stinking' but under the stink is the scent of flowers.

In addition to the resonance of the ambergris there is the matter of Becky's father, Mr Carsons. He is a tormented, obsessive figure more concerned with reclaiming what was lost than accepting what is left. He seems to have taken the loss of Becky personally, as if the wilderness

has 'stolen' his daughter. He has an intertextual connection with Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick*, who takes it personally that a whale took his leg.

Like Ahab, Mr Carsons searches obsessively for Becky. When he finds her, his goal is to return her to her former 'domestic' self. He sees the 'wild' in his daughter as something that can and should be removed. When he realises that particular daughter is lost to him, he sets a course that results in the death of Becky herself—instead of just the wilderness inside her. Finally, the consequences of his obsession with the hunt lead him to his own death. As Ahab dies by his hunt for the whale, so Mr Carsons dies by his hunt for his daughter; but a daughter who is now a mirage. Ahab's 'malicious' whale and Carson's 'domestic' daughter are both fantasies.

Mr Carsons is full of pride. Like Ahab, he seems to believe the wilderness and its creatures to be consciously malicious. In his hunt for Becky he is as grim and obsessed as Ahab in his hunt for the white whale. Like Ahab, Mr Carsons has an offsider who is more sensible, more compassionate, but ultimately unable to stop the tragedy unfolding.

And then there are Hannah's whale-hunts. At different points Hannah is represented as both the hunter and the whale. Consider this passage from the start of the whale-hunt:

'I seen the flukes of two other whales near the first one. The ship bore down on the whales. Me body was tingling and me heart was beating fast like I were back with the tigers hunting down our prey.' p.128

And this, from after the whale-hunt:

'And as I nibbled at it the past came back to me – a storm of memories, good and bad. There were Mr Carsons telling me that me mother and me father were dead. And in remembering that terrible moment – like me flesh were pierced with the lance of truth – I knew that I would not find me father. He were dead..' p.131

Into That Forest and *Moby Dick* are texts that interrogate similar themes:

- The natural world: is humanity inside it, above it, or what?
- Wild animals: are they malicious to humans, or are we malicious to them? Or perhaps even worse, are we irrelevant?
- What is a human being's proper relationship to the wild world?

Into That Forest explores all these questions, but it also asks us more overtly than *Moby Dick* to consider the wild world in its totality—that is, not only the wild world outside ourselves but also the wild world inside: the wilderness of ourselves. Louis Nowra suggests that by denying our own connections to the wild world we become a danger to it, and eventually to ourselves. *Into That Forest* can be more overt about such matters because Melville's time did not have the same widespread concern our time has about the environment and its degradation.

But that's for another discussion.

ACTIVITY: compare & contrast literary figures

WATCH a film version of *Moby Dick*.

CONSIDER Mr Carsons as a type of Ahab figure.

LIST similarities and differences in their manner, their attitude, their emotional response.

Literacy: reading and writing emotions

Feelings act as motivating forces in stories, for characters and for readers. The characters are motivated into a whole range of possible actions by their emotions, and readers keep reading because they're emotionally invested in the characters.

Into That Forest is a deeply emotional narrative. It is filled with close descriptions of feeling events, especially those of attachment and loss. Physical events such as pain or hunger are accompanied by emotional events of fear, rage and ecstasy. Writers foreground emotional experience because most readers identify strongly with feelings. Readers have personal experiences of loss, joy, anger and other emotions. Our empathy is aroused by close description of suffering or pleasure, and we are more likely to keep reading.

Hannah is characterised by the many losses she endures and overcomes, including the loss of her parents, the tigers, Becky—and finally the loss of her hope her parents have somehow survived. Here she recalls the initial boating accident that made her an orphan and left her lost in the forest:

'Where were me parents? Where were Becky? I felt so alone, so lost that I could not see. By that I mean, everything round me were a blur, everything inside me were a blur of fear and shock. I heard meself crying and moaning, *My oh my, my oh my . . .* I still have nightmares 'bout that time. I still feel like a sharp piece of ice has stabbed me heart real deep. I was filled, filled to the brim with utter baffle and utter loneliness.' p. 15

Emotions are not 'moods' felt in the mind, they are physical experiences. We feel them in our bodies. In the above passage Louis Nowra describes Hannah's terror by giving her 'blurred' vision, and a sense of having been thrown out of her own body (hearing herself from a distance). Even seventy years later she still feels as though she has been 'stabbed' in the heart. It is the detail that differentiates between a general reference to a feeling such as 'fear' or 'shock', and a description of emotion that *moves* readers. Notice Hannah is not stabbed with just anything or just anywhere. Nowra is very particular about telling *where* Hannah feels stabbed and *with what*. It is these details of 'heart' and 'ice' that make the passage so strong.

ACTIVITY 1: showing not telling

Telling readers that a character is 'happy' or 'sad' does not have much impact beyond basic information. Finding the physicality of the emotion and showing it, is the key to imparting the lived sensation of an emotion. You only need one strong physical image. For instance, *Into That Forest* uses the detailed image of being stabbed in the heart with a piece of ice to describe Hannah's sensation of shock and fear.

The above image works through the mix of sensations caused by its suggestive language; the sudden, sharp pain associated with stabbing paired with the cold associated with ice.

DISCUSS how the images below work.

- Corinne, the female tiger, shows the girls she likes them by 'licking us and curling up with us whenever we slept' p. 39
- When Becky is taken from Hannah she 'has this fist of terror in my heart' p. 115
- Upon losing his daughter Mr Carsons howls 'like an animal caught in a steel trap' p. 165

SHARE your favourite emotional passages from *Into That Forest*.

ANALYSE how these images work to impart to readers something real about the lived experience of feelings.

ACTIVITY 2: e-motivation

Characters, like real people, are motivated by their emotions. In *Into That Forest* Hannah is motivated to love the tigers out of her loss of her parents. Corinne, the female tiger, is motivated to love the girls out of the loss of her pups. Becky is motivated to hold on to her human socialisation by homesickness and Mr Carson searches for Becky out of love.

THINK about a time when you did something out of strong emotion. Maybe you just laughed too loud or ate the last piece of cake, or maybe you hit somebody. It should be something you don't mind sharing.

CONTEMPLATE the following:

- What thought was running through your mind?
- What were you feeling in your body?
- Was there one overriding feeling or were there many feelings at once?

WRITE one paragraph on the event, paying close attention to the above. DESCRIBE the emotions using one strong physical image.

WRITERS' TIP: using weather events or natural phenomena to describe feelings is a traditional device that is fun and usually successful. Large events like storms and volcanos, floods and droughts, as well as small ones like bubbles, wasps and seeds, are all good.

Literacy: Ernie's Edison Phonograph

Vocab stop

Meaning: *canon* [noun] those works that have come to be traditionally included in the classroom as epitomes of their type; the body of literature traditionally thought to be suitable for admiration and study.

[http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_G.html]

Origin: Originally 'a general law, rule, principle, or criterion by which something is judged'.

[<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/canon>]

Into That Forest mentions two types of text belonging to Hannah and Becky's language tradition. The two types represent two poles of cultural expression that aren't often seen together: the canonical and the vernacular. On their hunt, Mr Carsons quotes Shakespeare easily from memory, while Ernie is employed collecting folksongs on his brand-new cutting-edge phonograph machine. The *written tradition* preserves works such as the canonical Shakespeare, while the *oral tradition* of folksong and story is vulnerable to loss and change.

The Edison Phonograph was patented by Thomas Edison in 1877. It developed out of his work on the telephone and the telegraph. Edison suggested a few uses for his new machine including recording languages so that they should not be lost to history and, indeed, in the 19th and early 20th centuries there were efforts in the USA, the UK and Europe to collect and save as much of the oral tradition as possible. Such a project was undertaken in Tasmania around the turn of the 20th century.

Like Ernie in *Into That Forest*, Horace Watson lugged his Edison Phonograph about Tasmania recording folksongs and indigenous music. His most famous recording is of Fanny Cochrane Smith (see photo below), the self-described last remaining Tasmanian full-blood Aboriginal person.

The phonograph's wax cylinders are fragile and are today stored at the Tasmanian Museum, with publicly accessible copies held at the National Sound and Film Archive in Canberra.

ACTIVITY 1: The phonograph and audio archives

In preparation for creating your own audio archive, listen to Fanny Cochrane Smith singing and talking at <http://aso.gov.au/titles/music/fanny-cochrane-smith-songs/> [see BLM 2 - handout]

ACTIVITY 2: make your own audio archive

In a group LIST some simple songs that are meaningful to you.

SING them unaccompanied into a recording device, taking careful NOTES on the song, its origin, the singer, date, time and place.

Let each singer TELL why this song is meaningful to them.

MAKE COPIES for each member of the group and the school library/English department.

Even after one year your archived material will sound historical, and it will be. It will be a record of you and your friends at a particular moment in time. Future students who study *Into That Forest* will be able to hear you as students from the past, and add their own recordings to the archive.

HISTORY

Then and Now: extinction of the thylacine—a case study in shifting social attitudes

'When the comparatively small island of Tasmania becomes more densely populated, and its primitive forests are intersected with roads from the eastern to the western coast, the numbers of this singular animal will speedily diminish, extermination will have its full sway, and it will then, like the Wolf in England and Scotland, be recorded as an animal of the past.'

[John Gould, *Naturalist*, 1863]

The Tasmanian tiger, or thylacine, once lived throughout Australia and New Guinea. Recent thylacine fossils have been dated at 2200 years, and the animal occurs in Aboriginal rock art across the country. Competition from the dingo may have played a part in the thylacine's disappearance from the mainland, but until European settlement it survived in the island state of Tasmania. Settlers started arriving in Tasmania in 1803 and within a century the tigers were on the edge of extinction.

The thylacine was observed by explorers and seafarers at the outset of settlement. Abel Tasman sighted Tasmania on 24th November 1642 and named it Van Diemen's Land in honour of the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. A week later, while exploring the shore, Pilot-Major Francois Jacobsz saw 'the footings of wild beasts, having claws like a *tyger*.' Such tiger-like footprints were also reported by Dutch East India Company representatives through the 17th and 18th centuries.

In 1825 the Van Diemen's Land Company was founded by Royal Charter. This company was comprised of a group of British merchants keen to supply the British textile industry. They brought sheep to Tasmania and ran them on their 250,000 acres in the north-west of the country.

The thylacine's hunting grounds were cleared and degraded. Eventually, just like wolves in Europe (until they were hunted to extinction), hungry tigers started killing the sheep. Some people defended the tigers, saying the loss of sheep to them was negligible relative to the losses caused by dogs and disease. Nevertheless the company issued a bounty on the animal in 1830.

It was the beginning of the end. European settlers had no love for these wolf-like predators reportedly killing sheep and ruining the economy. Farmers, in line with agricultural practice of the time, were keen to clear their land of native flora and fauna. To the mind of the average 1800s settler the thylacine was a 'pest'.

Eventually, in 1888, the Tasmanian government introduced a bounty of £1 per skin. By the end of the scheme in 1909, over two thousand bounties had been collected.

On 13th May 1930, in the Mawbanna district of north-eastern Tasmania, farmer Wilf Batty heard a ruckus from the chicken coop. His dogs would not attack and the animal retreated. Batty then shot and killed the last known wild thylacine.

[See Extended Study below for link to photo of Mr Batty and the thylacine]

The last captive Tasmanian tiger, called Benjamin, died on 7th December 1936, in Beaumaris Zoo, Hobart. Thylacines are officially considered extinct, though there are still anecdotes of sightings.

[See Extended Study below for link to footage of last thylacine, Benjamin, in the Hobart Zoo, 1937]

ACTIVITY

Get involved in efforts to help endangered wildlife.

CHOOSE an animal or habitat that you love.

VOLUNTEER as an individual, in groups or as a whole class. Keep a DIARY of your experiences.

Take PHOTOGRAPHS and create a photo-essay.

REPORT BACK to the class, using your work to illustrate the experience.

Here are some places that will help you:

The Land Down Under site has links to organisations, sanctuaries and zoos where you can volunteer. Also posted is the Federal Government's most recent list of Endangered and Extinct Species http://thelanddownunder.com.au/what_can_i_do

Link to FAME site (Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species Ltd). You can become a member and join in the foundation's projects, including Tassie Devil rescue http://esf.inex.com.au/how_can_i_help.html

Loss of habitat is one of the biggest threats to endangered species. Here's a link to the Wilderness Society http://www.wilderness.org.au/get-involved/get-involved/act-now/volunteer?utm_source=getinvolved&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=volunteer

SCIENCE

Vocab stop

Meaning: *binomenclature* --- a two-part name, especially the Latin name of a species of living organism.

[http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_G.html]

Origin: Mid-16th century: from French *binôme*, or modern Latin *binomium* (from bi- 'having two' & Greek *nomos* 'part, portion').

[<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/binomial>]

The first scientific description of the thylacine was made by Deputy Surveyor-General George Harris in Sydney. He sent his drawings and description to Sir Joseph Banks, who read the paper to the Linnean Society in April of 1807. He gave the Tasmanian Tiger its first binomial scientific name: *Didelphis cynocephalus* meaning 'double-wombed dog-headed one'. He named it didelphis after an American marsupial opossum, into whose family tree the thylacine was mistakenly inserted.

Vernacular names included:

- marsupial wolf
- kangaroo wolf
- pouched wolf
- native wolf
- opossum hyena
- dog-faced dasyurus
- dog-headed opossum
- zebra opossum

Today its binomial name is *Thylacinus cynocephalus*, meaning 'pouched dog-headed one'.

Latin was, and is, the language of scientific naming. *Thylacinus cynocephalus* is an example of Linnean binomenclature --- or double-naming. Carolus Linnaeus devised this method of naming in his book *Species Plantarum* published in 1753. Before this, plants were given long Latin names describing their features. As more plants turned up, longer names were needed until there were plants such as this: *Geranium pedunculis bifloris, caule dichotomo erecto, foliis quinquepartitis incisae: summis sessilibus*. A loose translation of this would read as 'the geranium with a two-flowered stalk, erect stems, divided into two parts: leaves with five 'cuts' attaching direct to the stem'.

Linnaeus devised a method whereby the first name places the plant in its genus, and then the second, or trivial name, describes it as a species within the genus. The plant above becomes *Geranium maculatum* or spotted geranium. Scientific categorisation of all plants and animals now follows this naming convention.

ACTIVITY

FIND the binomial names of the following list of animals.

Use <http://www.scientificname.net/animals/>

- Cat
- Elephant
- Panda
- Rattlesnake

Now TRANSLATE the Latin into English using <http://archives.nd.edu/words.html>

RESEARCH the following list of animals mentioned in *Into That Forest*.

- dunnart
- pademelon
- potoroo
- quoll
- dunnart

FIND their binomial names and the English translation.

PSYCHOLOGY/PHILOSOPHY

Vocab stop

Meaning: *eugenics* [plural noun] --- the science of improving a population by controlled breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable heritable characteristics

[http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_G.html]

Origin: 1883, coined (along with adj. *eugenic*) by English scientist Francis Galton (1822-1911) from Greek *eugenes* 'well-born, of good stock, of noble race', from *eu-* 'good' + *genos* 'birth'.

[http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=eugenics&searchmode=n one]

Nature vs. Nurture debate

Are we born with our characters and abilities fixed, or are we products of our experience and environment? This is the question at the heart of the nature vs. nurture debate, which has been going on since the 1870s. Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), a cousin of Charles Darwin, initiated the debate after reading the latter's *Origin of Species*. That work stirred Galton's interest in heredity, particularly hereditary intelligence. It was his contention that intelligence ran in families. Being a cousin of the already famously intelligent Charles Darwin makes this a rather self-serving contention, and nowadays a rather obvious one, too. But what is obvious today wasn't so 100 years ago. As what will be obvious in 100 years from now, isn't to us as we live today.

The basic assumption of the hereditarians is that our genetic inheritance rules who we are and of what we are capable. In other words we are 'born that way'. In opposition, the environmentalists believe these characteristics are formed by experience. In the beginning these positions were quite polarised, with hereditarians admitting no environmental factors at all, and the environmentalists admitting no genetics. Over a hundred years of research has shown, as might have been expected, that a person is a product of interactions between genetic inheritance and environment working together.

The beginning of the debate, however, was responsible for some of the most exploitative and abusive behaviour in our history. Galton, author of *Hereditary Genius*, developed a theory called eugenics, a theory which states breeding better human beings was a possibility and worthy goal. He advocated selective breeding of human beings, to increase the species' intelligence and to breed out 'unfavourable' traits. At first eugenics had a misguided sort of humanitarianism about it but it wasn't long before eugenics' theory and research were being used to prove the 'natural' inferiority of non-European peoples (called the less-suitable Races), the 'natural'

subordination of women—and culminating in the 1939–45 Nazi attempted extermination of the Jews in Europe. After WWII there was a marked pulling back from the theory. People started looking more closely at the environmental factors shaping people’s development.

ACTIVITY

There are many philosophical and practical questions raised by the nature vs. nurture debate. They may not seem relevant but issues of the genes vs. environment arguments underlie much of the public debate in recent times about homosexuality, gendered sex roles and inherent (‘acceptable’ levels of) violence in men.

In groups of 6-8 people, CONSIDER & DISCUSS the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers in this discussion, only interesting ones.

- *What are the consequences of believing behaviour is controlled by genetic impulse?*
In the old days, for instance when caught stealing or raping, a person might have said they couldn’t help it because ‘the devil made them do it’. Nowadays people could, and do, say they couldn’t help it because it’s in their genes.
- *What does it mean for the notion of free will if we are controlled by genes?*
What does free will mean to you? How much free will do you feel yourself to have? Is it important to you?
- *What happens to people when they believe their lives are predetermined by God, by the environment, or by their genes?*

RESOURCES & FURTHER READING

Further reading

Harlan Lane *Wild Boy of Aveyron*, Paladin 1979

Michael Newton *Savage Girls and Wild Boys: A History of Feral Children*, Faber and Faber 2003

Rudyard Kipling *Mowgli*

Edgar Rice Burroughs *Tarzan*

Websites

Noble Savage: Rousseau’s entry in the online Encyclopedia of Philosophy
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/rousseau/>

Department of primary industries and water website, providing comprehensive general information on the thylacine, its habitat and behaviour, with a short version of its extinction
<http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/webpages/bhan-53777b>

Listen to this half-hour BBC Radio 4 documentary discussing the boy Victor who in 1800 emerged from the Aveyron woods, in France, naked and feral. He was 12 years old when he emerged, and he had been living wild since about 4. Part of the 2008 ‘Case Study’ series presented by Claudia Hammond.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/case_study_20080514.shtml

The Linnaeus Society online—all about Carolus Linnaeus, including his devising of the binomial naming system for plants and animals

http://www.linnean.org/fileadmin/images/Publications/LinbrochureF_NAL0407LOW.qx.pdf

All about Edison’s development of his phonograph

<http://edison.rutgers.edu/tinfoil.htm>

Nature vs. Nurture debate explained, with introduction to Galton’s work on hereditary intelligence

<http://www.macalester.edu/psychology/whathap/ubnrrp/intelligence05/Rheredity.html>

Nature vs. Nurture debate extended into its contemporary manifestation, sociobiology. The author wonders what would happen to society if we blamed our bad behaviour on genes, as we

used to blame it on the devil. This is a lively and passionate discussion with plenty of links and books mentioned for those who want to extend themselves

<http://www.trinity.edu/mkearl/socpsy-2.html>

Primary source material

Deputy Surveyor-General George Harris's 1807 report to the Linnean Society in London. The first scientific description of a thylacine. Read to the society by Sir Joseph Banks

<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/13719#page/198/mode/1up>

Farmer Wilf Batty shot and killed the last seen wild thylacine on 6th May 1930. See a picture of Mr Batty and his kill @

http://www.naturalworlds.org/thylacine/additional/persecution/image_6.htm

Footage of the last captured thylacine, held in Hobart Zoo

<http://aso.gov.au/titles/historical/tasmanian-tiger-footage/clip1/>

Scan of George Harris' 1807 drawing of a thylacine and a Tasmanian Devil, with source info.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Didelphis_cynocephala_and_Didelphis_ursina,_1808.jpg

ABOUT THE WRITERS

Louis Nowra

Louis Nowra is the author of such plays as *Inner Voices*, *Visions*, *Inside the Island*, *The Precious Woman*, *Sunrise*, *The Golden Age*, *Capricornia*, *Byzantine Flowers*, *The Watchtower*, *Summer of the Aliens*, *Cosi*, *Radiance*, *The Temple*, *Crow*, *The Incorruptible*, *The Jungle*, *The Language of the Gods* and *The Boyce Trilogy*. He has written five non-fiction works and the novels *The Misery of Beauty*, *Palu*, *Red Nights*, *Abaza* and *Ice*. Louis has also written radio plays and telemovies and has translated some European plays into English. His screen credits include *Map of the Human Heart*, *Cosi*, *Heaven's Burning*, *The Matchmaker*, *Radiance*, *K-19: The Widowmaker* and *Black and White*. He was co-writer of the documentary series *First Australians* and created the TV series, *The Straits*. Also a librettist and an essayist, he lives in Sydney and is married to the writer Mandy Sayer.

Louis was born in Melbourne on a housing commission estate. He had a bad head accident when he was 11 which meant he had to learn to talk and think properly again. At university he was in a theatre group and began to write plays. After failing university he became a playwright and novelist and shifted to Sydney in his late twenties.

Louis became an Associate Artistic Director of Sydney Theatre Company and the South Australian Theatre company, wrote telemovies for the ABC, created two TV series and wrote screenplays in Hollywood, Australia, England, Hungary and Venice. He has stayed and worked with Eskimos (Inuit), Russian gangsters and even New Zealanders.

Louis says:

I have a huge collection of books and music. One of my hobbies is mycology (the study of fungi and mushrooms – hence their appearance in the novel).

My fiction is written in longhand on large index cards and then transferred to the computer. I work from 7 am to about 4 pm when I take our Chihuahua, Coco and our new Miniature Pinscher, Basil (whom Mandy bought from a drug dealer in order to rescue it), for a walk –generally finishing at my local watering hole in Woolloomooloo. I follow the Sydney Swans (and still occasionally watch the 2005 Grand Final, nervously waiting for the final siren, even though I know we won it).

Why don't I have a Facebook or Twitter account? Because they interfere with the intense concentration and thought needed to write. It's crucial for a writer to have long periods of solitude.

On how he came to write *Into that Forest*, Louis says:

Over a decade ago the New Zealand film director, Vincent Ward and I came up with a story based on two girls brought up by Tasmanian tigers. The film never eventuated but, like Vincent, I always thought it would make a good novel. Over the years I collected more information about tigers, went to Tasmania for research and developed the story differently from the original until I sat down to write it in 2011.

I didn't want to write a realistic novel but one that was more mysterious and epic. I also wanted one where the landscape is as much a character as the main characters.

Ananda Braxton-Smith

Ananda is a community journalist and author. She has written four books for young adult readers. These include a history of the bubonic plague from 1347 - 1900 entitled *The Death: the horror of the plague* (2009), and two novels in the Secrets of Carrick series: *Merrow* (2010) and *Tantony* (2011). *Merrow* was a CBCA 2010 Notable Book, and was also shortlisted for a 2010 Aurealis award. She was a guest at the Reading Matters youth literature conference 2011, and speaks at libraries around Melbourne. With her husband she sings in a bluegrass band called the HillWilliams, and lives in Victoria's Dandenong Ranges with him and two young adult sons. Ananda is currently working on a third novel in the Carrick series.

SLANG AND DIALECT

Here is a list of some of Hannah's slang-words.

First, complete Column 3 to show whether you are familiar with each word or phrase.

Then, using the page reference, record in Column 4 what you think it means in Hannah's dialect.

Compare your answers with a partner or group. Do you think any of this slang is used nowadays? Have any of the meanings changed?

Hannah's slang	Page	Familiar?	What do you think it means?
yonney-sized	p.17		
gink	p.18		
natter	p.24		
chockablock	p.24		
gloaming	p.26		
deep tara territory	p.31		
full as googs	p.38		
full up to dolly's wax	p.46		
brilla	p.46		
antsy	p.82		
kerfuffle	p.90		
piccaninny light	p.122		
chiacking	p.151		

Make a list of ten slang words you hear at home or at school. Do you know where they came from? Do you think they will be familiar to people in 100 years time? Give your reasons.

THE PHONOGRAPH AND AUDIO ARCHIVES

The Edison Phonograph was patented by Thomas Edison in 1877. It developed out of his work on the telephone and the telegraph.

In July 1877, while developing his telephone transmitter, Edison conceived the idea of recording and playing back telephone messages. After experimenting with a telephone "diaphragm having an embossing point & held against paraffin paper moving rapidly," he found that the sound "vibrations are indented nicely" and concluded "there's no doubt that I shall be able to store up & reproduce automatically at any future time the human voice perfectly."

Edison periodically returned to this idea, and by the end of November, he had developed a basic design. The first phonograph consisted of a grooved cylinder mounted on a long shaft with a screw pitch of ten threads per inch and turned by a hand crank. Instead of paraffined paper, Edison used a piece of tin foil wrapped around the cylinder as a recording surface. The first phonograph had separate recording and playback mechanisms, but later designs combined them into a single unit.

Edison suggested a few uses for his new machine including recording languages so that they should not be lost to history and, indeed, in the 19th and early 20th centuries there were efforts in the USA, the UK and Europe to collect and save as much of the oral tradition as possible. Such a project was undertaken in Tasmania around the turn of the 20th century.

Like Ernie in *Into That Forest*, Horace Watson lugged his Edison Phonograph about Tasmania recording folksongs and indigenous music. His most famous recording is of Fanny Cochrane Smith (see photo below), the self-described last remaining Tasmanian full-blood Aboriginal person.

The phonograph's wax cylinders are fragile and are today stored at the Tasmanian Museum, with publicly accessible copies held at the National Sound and Film Archive in Canberra.

In preparation for creating your own audio archive, listen to Fanny Cochrane Smith singing and talking at <http://aso.gov.au/titles/music/fanny-cochrane-smith-songs/>

Curator's notes and information about accessing the collection can be found on the same website.

