

The Two-Hearted Numbat Ambelin & Ezekiel Kwaymullina

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Synopsis

This book is the story of a numbat who has two hearts — one of stone, and one of feather. Numbat's feather heart makes him kind and caring, but too giving to others at the expense of himself. His stone heart makes him strong and independent, but unable to ask for help. Growing tired of having two hearts, he goes to see Eldest Numbat, who sends him on a journey through the bush.

As he journeys, Numbat encounters challenges. To overcome them, he must use either his stone or feather heart. When he meets Eldest Numbat again at the end of his journey, she explains to him that he needs both his hearts. So Numbat merges the stone and feather together, and finds his true heart at last. He is then able to pass on the wisdom he has learned to the next generation of numbats.

Themes

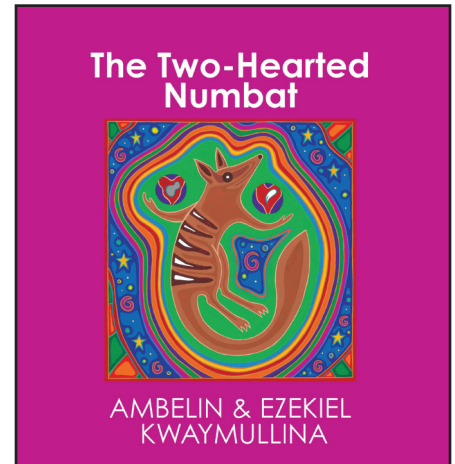
The Two-Hearted Numbat explores issues of role expectations and of achieving a balance between helping others and looking after yourself.

Writing Style

The Two-Hearted Numbat is written in the tradition of Aboriginal teaching stories. Its simple language reinforces the fundamental message of the book, and the colourful illustrations are painted using gouche.

Author Motivation

The writing of the story was a collaborative process between Ambelin and Ezekiel, and the story itself reflects the coming together of two different types of strength. Ambelin and Ezekiel were inspired to write the story both by their own differences in approaching life's challenges, and by their Indigenous culture which contains strong teachings about the need for balance.



Author / Illustrator Background

Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina are Indigenous writers who come from the Bailgu and Njamal peoples of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Their mother is acclaimed Indigenous writer and artist, Sally Morgan.

Study Notes

1. Write to the author of your favourite book, or of this book (if to Ambelin or Ezekiel Kwaymullina, send the letter c/o Fremantle Press) describing what you did and didn't like.
2. Examine the final illustration of the book. Can you find the dingo, the river, the berries and the magpie in the landscape surrounding Numbat?
3. Discuss the importance of the illustrations to the story. Would the story work just as well with different illustrations? Why do you think it is important that Eldest Numbat watches over Numbat's journey?
4. Why do you think it is important that Numbat eventually has a heart of both stone and feather? What is wrong with just having a heart of stone, or just having a heart of feather?
5. What did the other numbats expect when Numbat wore his feather heart? What was wrong with these expectations?
6. What did the other numbats think of Numbat when he wore his stone heart? What was wrong with what they thought?
7. Write an alternative blurb for the book.
8. Create another title for the book.
9. Act out the story.
10. Draw your own version of a scene from the book.
11. Research why numbats are endangered, and what can be done to help them.
12. How many species do you know that are endangered, like numbats?
13. Choose an endangered species, and describe what you know about it.
14. Write a poem or song about the endangered species.
15. Draw a picture of the endangered species.
16. Read other Indigenous animal stories (*Bawoo Stories*).
17. Discuss the role of teaching stories. Do other cultures use teaching stories? Do you know any other teaching stories?
18. Locate the Pilbara on a map of Australia.
19. Find out more about the Bailgu and Njamal people.
20. Find out more about the Indigenous people of your area.
21. Invite a spokesperson from the local Indigenous community to speak to the class.