NSW Curriculum outcomes

Leonard the Lyrebird ~ A Musical Story is a classical music adaptation of the award-winning children's book ***Leonard the Lyrebird***, written by **Jodie McLeod** and illustrated by **Eloise Short**. Composed by Australian composer **Ian Munro**, this musical retelling combines narration of the original story with cello, piano and clarinet.

Learning outcomes overview

When enjoyed together with the book in the classroom, *Leonard the Lyrebird ~ A Musical Story* becomes a **full-body literature experience** where students engage simultaneously with **narrative meaning**, **expressive oral language**, **visual representation** and **music as storytelling** allowing rich outcome coverage from ES1 to Stage 3.

Leonard the Lyrebird ~ A Musical Story is a **knowledge-rich, multimodal text** that strengthens **background knowledge**, **vocabulary**, **contextual understanding**, and **schema formation** – all of which education writer Natalie Wexler identifies as essential for moving students from basic **comprehension** to deep **understanding**. This aligns directly with the **NSW Curriculum Reform**, which emphasises explicit teaching, knowledge building and the Science of Learning.

Leonard the Lyrebird becomes a multisensory narrative experience where:

- the **illustrations** establish mood and place
- the **narrator's expressive voice** conveys character, emotion and tension
- the **classical score** deepens understanding of mood, movement and story arc
- the **written text** anchors the narrative structure

Together, these modes allow students from ES1 to Stage 3 to explore **how stories come alive when language, sound and image work in harmony.** ***LISTEN NOW on Spotify, YouTube, iTunes***

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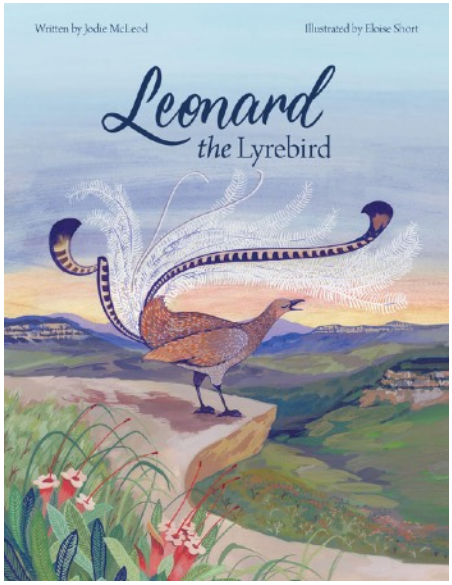
About the book:



Leonard is friends with everyone, and boy can he sing! But will his singing talents impress the one friend he really wants?

Join this charismatic Blue Mountains bird in his search for the song that will change his life…

Created by Blue Mountains writer Jodie McLeod and local illustrator Eloise Short, *Leonard the Lyrebird* is a story about friendship, bravery and being yourself, set in the beautiful Blue Mountains of Australia.

In 2019 *Leonard* won the Whitley Award for Best Children's Book from the Royal Zoological Society of NSW and was shortlisted for the REAL Awards for best picture book. It was translated into Italian and published by Italian publisher Voglino Editrice in 2022.

Book details:

- *Publication date: 1 Sep 2018*
- *RRP: Hardcover $26.95*
- *ISBN: 9780994450753*
- *Readership: Ages 2-8*
- *Publisher: Wollemi Press*
- *Author: Jodie McLeod*
- *Illustrator: Eloise Short*
- *Design: Melissa Mylchreest*
- *Genre: Children's picture book*
- *Available in selected bookstores and at wollemipress.com.au*

About the music:

Leonard the Lyrebird ~ A Musical Story is an original composition by acclaimed Australian composer Ian Munro. Featuring award-winning concert pianist Grace Kim, Opera Australia Orchestra principal cellist Teije Hylkema and associate principal clarinet Philip Green, and narrated by the composer himself, this adaptation of children's book *Leonard the Lyrebird* captivates listeners with an imaginative blend of storytelling, instrumentation and – if enjoyed along with the book – illustration.

Music recording credits:

- *Composer/narrator: Ian Munro*
- *Piano: Grace Kim*
- *Clarinet: Philip Green*
- *Cello: Teije Hylkema*
- *Premiere: Scenic World, Katoomba 2019*
- *Listen now*

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NSW ENGLISH OUTCOMES (ES1–Stage 3)

Focus: Understanding & Responding to Literature, Listening, Character & Setting, Narrative Structure, Author's Purpose

Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten)

- **ENe-URB** – Responds to and composes simple texts; listens to **expressive narration** to identify characters, settings and events.
- **ENe-UAR** – Demonstrates understanding that texts can evoke **feelings and mood**.
- **ENe-LA** – Listens actively to **spoken stories** and identifies key ideas.
- **ENe-AC** – Recognises how voice, sound and images work together to convey meaning.

How Leonard supports this:
Students hear mood shifts in the narrator's voice, recognise Leonard's emotions, and match illustrations to story events.

Stage 1 (Years 1–2)

- **EN1-URB** – Describes how **narrators convey meaning** through tone, pace and expression.
- **EN1-UAR** – Identifies how authors and illustrators use **language and images** to represent characters, settings and emotions.
- **EN1-LA** – Listens to multimodal texts and explains how **sound contributes to meaning**.
- **EN1-AC** – Retells events in sequence, identifying complication and resolution.

How Leonard supports this:
Students track the narrative arc while hearing musical cues that signal tension, calm, excitement or danger.

Stage 2 (Years 3–4)

- **EN2-URB** – Explains how **narrative voice** and musical elements shape audience understanding.
- **EN2-UAR** – Identifies techniques used to create **mood, atmosphere and characterisation**.
- **EN2-LA** – Listens to extended texts and analyses how **audio features** support meaning.
- **EN2-AC** – Compares how written, spoken and visual modes each contribute to the story.

How Leonard supports this:
Students compare the book's illustrations with the musical motifs and narration to see how each mode builds character and setting.

Stage 3 (Years 5–6)

- **EN3-URB** – Analyses how **multimodal storytelling** influences interpretation.
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- **EN3-UAR** – Evaluates how composers, illustrators and authors use **symbolism, tone and mood** to shape meaning.
- **EN3-LA** – Critically listens to literary audio texts, identifying **purposeful vocal choices** and their emotional impact.
- **EN3-AC** – Explains how narrative structure, complication and resolution are enhanced by music and voice.

How Leonard supports this:
Students examine how Ian Munro's composition mirrors the emotional arc of the story and how the narrator's delivery shapes interpretation.

NSW VISUAL ARTS OUTCOMES (ES1–Stage 3)

Focus: Visual Representation, Colour & Mood, Illustration as Meaning-Making

ES1–Stage 3 (general progression)

- VAES1.1 / VAS1.1 / VAS2.1 / VAS3.1 – Makes artworks that communicate ideas and feelings inspired by stories.
- **VAES1.2 / VAS1.2 / VAS2.2 / VAS3.2** – Uses **colour, line, shape and composition** to represent mood, setting and character.
- **VAS1.4 / VAS2.4 / VAS3.4** – Responds to artworks and describes how artists (e.g., Eloise Short) use **visual techniques** to convey meaning.

How Leonard supports this:
Eloise Short's romantic art-deco style gives students a rich visual language to analyse – soft palettes, sweeping lines, stylised Australian bushland, expressive character poses.

NSW MUSIC OUTCOMES (ES1–Stage 3)

Focus: Music as Storytelling, Mood & Emotion, Listening & Responding

ES1–Stage 3 (general progression)

- **MUES1.4 / MUS1.4 / MUS2.4 / MUS3.4** – Responds to music and identifies how **musical elements** (tempo, dynamics, timbre) create mood.
- **MUES1.1 / MUS1.1 / MUS2.1 / MUS3.1** – Uses voice, movement and instruments to **interpret musical ideas**.
- **MUS2.3 / MUS3.3** – Describes how composers use **motifs and patterns** to represent characters or events.**How Leonard supports this:**
  The cello, piano and clarinet each act like "characters", echoing Leonard's emotions – curiosity, fear, bravery, joy – similar to *Peter and the Wolf* but with an Australian soundscape.

Bringing It All Together (Integrated Learning Statement)

Leonard the Lyrebird becomes a **multisensory narrative experience** where:

- the **illustrations** establish mood and place
- the **narrator's expressive voice** conveys character, emotion and tension
- the **classical score** deepens understanding of mood, movement and story arc
- the **written text** anchors the narrative structure

Together, these modes allow students from ES1 to Stage 3 to explore **how stories come alive when language, sound and image work in harmony.**

A knowledge-building engine of vocabulary, schema and deep understanding that echoes long after the story ends

Core Takeaway

Leonard the Lyrebird ~ A Musical Story is a **knowledge-rich, multimodal text** that strengthens **background knowledge**, **vocabulary**, **contextual understanding**, and **schema formation** – all of which education writer Natalie Wexler identifies as essential for moving students from basic **comprehension** to deep **understanding**.

This aligns directly with the **NSW Curriculum Reform**, which emphasises explicit teaching, knowledge building and the Science of Learning.

1. How the Knowledge-Building Lens Applies

Wexler argues that comprehension improves when students have:

- **Background knowledge**
- **Vocabulary depth**
- **Contextual understanding**
- **Schema for narrative structures**

Leonard the Lyrebird builds all four simultaneously.

A. Background Knowledge

Students learn about:

- Australian fauna (lyrebirds, bushland habitats)

- Sound, music, echo, mimicry
- Emotional states and social interactions
- Narrative structure (orientation → complication → resolution)

This gives them **mental "hooks"** to attach new learning to – the foundation of the Science of Learning.

B. Vocabulary

The combination of:

- expressive narration
- rich descriptive language
- musical cues
- visual illustrations

…creates **multiple pathways** for students to understand new words.

This is exactly what Wexler describes: vocabulary grows when students encounter words in **meaningful, knowledge-rich contexts**, not isolated lists.

C. Context & Schema

Students build a schema for:

- how Australian animals behave
- how music communicates emotion
- how stories are structured
- how characters respond to challenges

Schema = comprehension power.
Schema = better writing.

2. How This Supports the NSW Curriculum

The NSW reform emphasises:

- **Explicit teaching**
- **Knowledge-rich content**
- **Vocabulary development**
- **High-quality literature**
- **Multimodal comprehension**
- **Science of Learning principles**

Leonard the Lyrebird hits every one of these.

A. Knowledge-Rich Content (Reform Priority)

The story builds disciplinary knowledge across:

- English
- Music
- Visual Arts
- Science (animal behaviour, sound)
- Geography (Australian bushland)

This aligns with the reform's push for **integrated knowledge building**.

B. Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

The text allows teachers to explicitly teach:

- mood words
- emotion words
- descriptive vocabulary
- musical vocabulary
- setting and environment vocabulary

This is the exact shift NSW is making: **Vocabulary is not incidental – it is taught.**

C. Multimodal Comprehension

The reform emphasises that students must interpret:

- written text
- spoken text
- visual text
- auditory cues

Leonard is a perfect multimodal text for this.

3. How This Supports the Science of Learning

The Science of Learning emphasises:

- **Cognitive load**
- **Dual coding**
- **Retrieval practice**
- **Schema building**
- **Explicit instruction**

A. Dual Coding

Students receive information through:

- narration
- music
- illustrations

This strengthens memory and comprehension.

B. Cognitive Load Reduction

The music and illustrations **support** the narrative rather than distract from it.

This reduces extraneous load and increases germane load – ideal for learning.

C. Retrieval Practice

Students can:

- retell the story
- sequence events
- recall musical cues
- describe illustrations
- explain character emotions

This strengthens long-term memory.

D. Schema Building

Students form a schema for:

- Australian wildlife
- musical storytelling
- narrative structure
- emotional expression

Schema = better comprehension and better writing.

4. How This Leads to Better Writing

Wexler's argument is clear: **Students cannot write well about what they do not understand.**

Leonard the Lyrebird builds the knowledge needed for writing by giving students:

- **rich vocabulary**
- **clear narrative structure**
- **emotional depth**
- **sensory detail**
- **contextual understanding**

This allows them to move through the hierarchy:

1. **Literal retrieval**
2. **Inferential understanding**
3. **Implied meaning**
4. **Connections**
5. **Reflection and evaluation**
6. **Extrapolation**

This is the shift from **comprehending** to **understanding** – the heart of NSW reform.

5. Why "Leonard the Lyrebird ~ A Musical Story" is a model text for reform

Because it:

- builds knowledge
- builds vocabulary
- builds schema
- supports explicit teaching
- supports multimodal comprehension
- supports the Science of Learning
- supports the NSW English outcomes
- supports writing development
- supports deep understanding

It is not just a story.

It is a **knowledge-building engine**.

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