

**18.**  
**The crying Boy and the Rainbow Serpent.**



*Picture 18. The Rainbow serpent caught the whole tribe with her tail.*

An orphan cried as he walked around a camp at Mayawunji. An old woman asked why he was crying and the boy replied that he wanted some lily roots to eat, and no one would give him any.

The old woman went out looking. She could not find the kind of lily roots the boy wanted, so she dug up a full bag of a different kind of roots. She lit a fire and cooked them. But these were not what the boy wanted, and he kept crying.

An old man went into the bush and collected some honey. He came back and offered honey to the boy. But, honey was not what he wanted, and he kept crying.

Another woman went into the bush and filled her dilly bag with long yams. She brought them back, ground them, went for firewood, lit a fire, roasted the ground yams and offered this delicacy to the boy. But this was not what he wanted, and he kept crying.

There was nothing more the people could do.

The old people in the camp were concerned and told the boy that if he kept crying, he would disturb the Rainbow Serpent at Miya, in the north, and she would come and eat everybody. But the boy did not stop.

As the old people feared, the Rainbow Serpent heard the crying and decided to go and eat the people of the tribe. She travelled underground and came up a little south of the camp.

When they saw the Rainbow Serpent the men of the tribe tried to spear her, but all their spears missed. Everyone then tried to run away, but the Rainbow Serpent wound her tail around them. She bit off the orphan's head and swallowed it, and then ate the rest of the tribe. She went back underground and slept with a full belly.

### **Things to think about**

This story tells of a boy who was crying for a special meal (which was not available). He didn't stop, even when people went to a lot of trouble to get and prepare food (including honey) for him. The story tells us to be reasonable and grateful.

We might think this boy was behaving "like a spoilt child". But those words are used when a person is used to getting everything they want. This boy was an orphan, and so was probably not used to getting everything he wanted. Instead, he had probably never been taught to be reasonable and grateful. Perhaps you have another explanation?

The old people warned the boy that if he did not stop crying, they would all be eaten. And this is what happened. So, the story tells children to take notice of what they are told by their elders. But again, being an orphan, perhaps he had never been taught to do what he was told? And, being an orphan he may have been very unhappy. We could think that this boy was just "being naughty", but perhaps there are other explanations?

19.

The Topknot Pigeon



*Picture 19. A topknot pigeon*

Goola-willeel (whose totem was the topknot pigeon) was an unusual boy. He did not make many friends or play much with the other children. He enjoyed being by himself, he liked making figures out of sticks and leaves, and drawing in the sand. He was not interested in learning to throw spears and track animals. He preferred the models he made himself, and his own private world.

But boys were not allowed to go their own way. The strength of the tribe depended on the number and skill of its hunters and warriors. Goola-willeel was taken through the long initiation ceremonies, and he proved that he could conquer hunger, pain and fear.

Goola-willeel was sent out hunting every day. His mother and sisters expected him to bring home kangaroos or emus for them to eat. But each day he returned without any meat at all.

In stead of hunting, each day, Goola-willeel gathered gum from wattle trees, which he was using to make a model of a kangaroo.

Each day he endured the anger of his mother and sisters. One morning, he said, “Today I will bring back a kangaroo for you”.

He spent the day putting the finishing touches on his kangaroo statue. Then, he put it over his shoulder and carried it home. When his mother and sisters saw him coming with a kangaroo over his shoulder they were delighted and made a large fire.

However, when they found he had been carrying only a model made of wattle gum, they were furious. “You said you would bring a kangaroo”, they shouted, angrily. “And so I did”, replied Goola-willeel, smiling with pride, because he knew this model was very cleverly made.

The smile disappeared from his face when his mother and sisters did not congratulate him. Instead, they gave him a good beating and he was never allowed to go out hunting alone again. Ever since, the Goola-willeels (the topknot pigeons), have always gone in flocks, never alone, in search of food.

### **Things to think about**

This story refers to a totem (in this case the topknot pigeon), which is an entity which watches out over a tribe.

We do not have enough details to know exactly what was going on in Goola-willeel’s mind. We do know that he was different to other children: he was happy to be alone with his own creations. We know he was clever with his hands and could make an excellent model of a kangaroo out of wattle gum.

He knew that his mother and sisters wanted him to catch animals. They were relying on him to provide them with food, but he didn’t do that. From one point of view, you could say that he was being lazy and doing the wrong thing.

He pretended to be hunting, but instead, he was gathering wattle gum and making a model, which is sort of not telling the truth.

However, maybe he didn’t really understand his mother and sisters: he told them he would be bringing back a kangaroo that night, and was surprised when they didn’t congratulate him on his excellent model, but gave him a beating instead.

Some would say that Goola-willeel was telling lies. Some would say that he just wasn’t thinking very clearly and was therefore not really telling lies. What do you think?

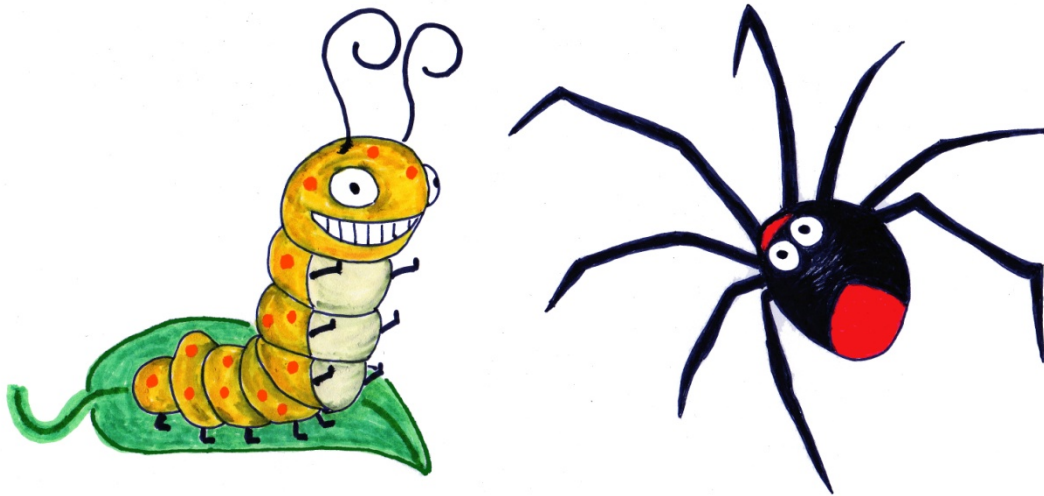
Whether Goola-willeel was telling lies or not, there are a couple of things we do know about lying. A lie may work at the time it is told. But, the truth usually comes out, and if you tell lies, people will not like you or trust you in the future.

This story raises many questions. We would probably all agree that Goola-willeel was not interested in being a hunter and warrior, and he would have preferred to do something else (make sculptures, and perhaps, painting). However, the story says that “the strength of the tribe depended on the number and skill of its hunters and warriors”, and so he had to become a hunter and warrior. What do you think of that?

It is probably necessary for the survival of the group, particularly when the group is small and there are large groups of enemies nearby, that everyone becomes a hunter and warrior. But, when a group is safe and food is not a major problem, we often say that the work of artists adds to the richness of our lives. What do you think?

20.

**The Spider and the yellow Caterpillar**



*Picture*

20. *The Spider and the Caterpillar talked about what should happen to people after they die.*

The Spider (known as Adambara by some people) and the yellow Caterpillar which lives under the bark of the eucalyptus (known as Artapudapuda by some people) were deciding what should happen to people when they die. They had a talk and then went away to think some more. They made a plan to come back later and make a final decision.

The Spider thought that dead people should be wrapped in a web with a trap door, for three days. During this time there should be a healing process, and then the person would come out alive, as a butterfly comes out of a cocoon.

The Caterpillar strongly disagreed and said that dead people should be put in a grave, and three days later, their spirit (and only their spirit) should rise.

In the end, the Caterpillar won the argument, and the decision was made that dead people would be put in a grave and only their spirits would rise.

However, the Caterpillar soon began to miss his relatives when they died. His ideas changed and he became ashamed of what he had said and decided. So, he hid himself under the bark of the eucalyptus tree, and has remained there ever since.

The Spider, on the other hand, remained in the open.

**Things to think about**

When we feel ashamed, we want to hide. The Caterpillar hid forever. Some people would say that he shouldn't have been so hard on himself.

Perhaps it depends on what you were thinking at the time that you make decision or take actions. If at the time the Caterpillar made his decision, he was saying what he thought was

right then he had nothing to feel ashamed about (even if he later thought that another decision would have been better).

Also, when you do something wrong on purpose, perhaps you should be forgiven and accepted by people, once you have admitted what you did, and apologized. What do you think? Does it all depend what you have done? If you break a window on purpose, is that the same as if you break a window by accident?

The Spider had said what he thought was best and had nothing to feel ashamed about. In this sort of situation, some people are too hard on themselves and still blame themselves, saying, "I should have tried harder". That is a bit silly. You can't do better than your best.

21.

**How the Koala lost his tail**



*Picture 21. The Kangaroo cut the Koala tail off where it came out of the hole.*

Long ago the Koala and the Kangaroo were the best of friends. They shared the same gunyah (hut), hunted together and were both very proud of their beautiful long tails.

Then a drought came over the land. The friends camped by a shallow waterhole. The water was stagnant and bitter, but it saved their lives. Eventually, however, even this last bit of water dried up and the friends were in serious trouble.

The Kangaroo could remember a similar drought, when he was still being carried in his mother's pouch. He remembered his mother struggled to a dry creek bed and dug a deep hole in the sand. Fresh water had seeped into the bottom of the hole and saved their lives. The Kangaroo told the Koala this story, and they decided to find a river bed and to try digging for water.

When they reached a river bed the sun was very hot and the friends were both very tired. The Koala suggested that the Kangaroo start digging, because he knew most about the plan. So, the Kangaroo dug until he was exhausted. He then asked the Koala to help. The Koala said he would like to help but he was feeling very ill and was afraid he was about to die. Hearing this, the Kangaroo forced himself to keep going, and he even dug faster, in an effort to save his friend.

At last a trickle of water appeared and in the bottom of the hole. The Kangaroo told the Koala that he had found water, and that he would bring him some. But the Koala was only pretending to be nearly dead. Without replying, he dashed to the hole, got right in, and started drinking.



The Kangaroo was very angry because his friend had been lazy and lied. The Koala's tail lay on the ground behind him. The Kangaroo took his boomerang and cut the Koala's tail off where it came out of the hole.

### **Things to think about**

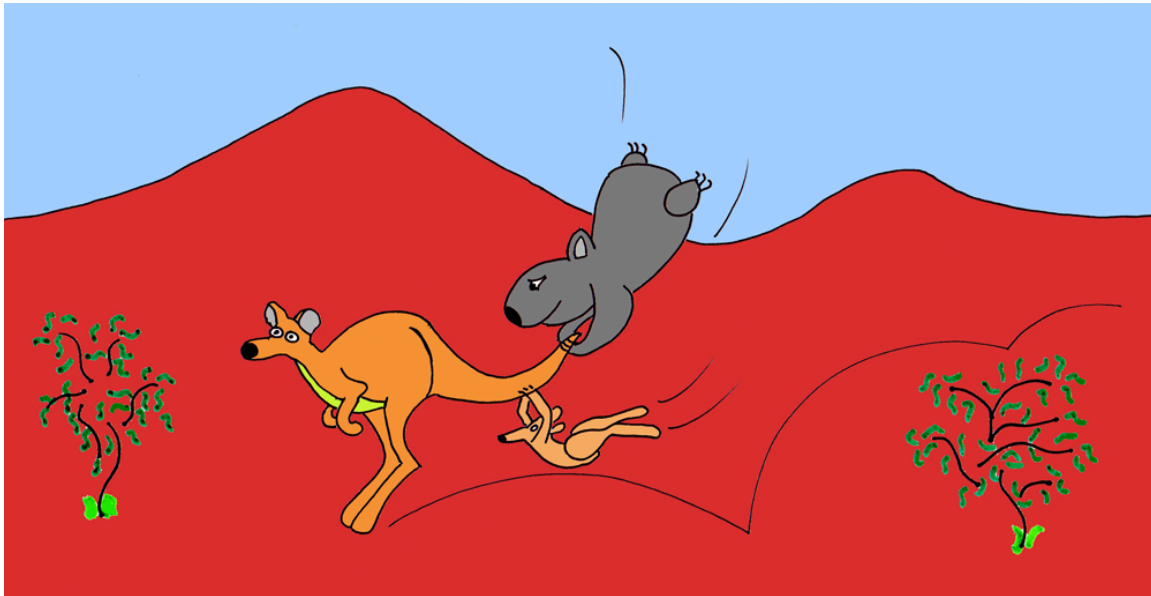
This is another story in which a person who tells lies gets into trouble.

The Kangaroo was also angry because the Koala had been lazy and used trickery to get his friend to do all the work.

When someone tricks us, do we get angry because they have been dishonest, or because we feel like a fool at being tricked? Or is it both?

22.

**Kangaroo gets a pouch**



*Picture 22. The mother Kangaroo saw hunters approaching, she told the Wombat and her Joey to grab onto her tail and hopped away to hide in some bushes.*

A mother Kangaroo had a very active Joey. He hopped this way and that and she was forever losing him. She lost sight of him yet again, and hopped over to where she saw some bushes moving. In the bushes she bumped into a Wombat.

The Wombat was very annoyed. He complained that the bigger animals did not take enough care, and that the smaller animals could easily be injured. He went on to say that now that they had met, the Kangaroo should help him find some good grass.

The mother Kangaroo said that she would like to help, but that she had to find her Joey. The Wombat pointed out that he had very poor eyesight. So, in the end, the Kangaroo told the Wombat to hold onto her tail and she would take him looking for some good grass.

As they were travelling along the Joey hopped passed them and disappeared again.

Then the Wombat fell in a hole, and complained that the Kangaroo was going too fast and that he needed a rest.

The mother Kangaroo wanted to look for her Joey, but she did not want to leave the wombat; she felt he couldn't look after himself, because his eyesight was poor.

The Wombat then said that he was thirsty, and that he wanted the Kangaroo to take him to a waterhole. The Kangaroo was still worried about her Joey, but she told the Wombat to hold onto her tail again, and they headed off towards a waterhole. The Wombat continued to grumble.

When they arrived at the waterhole, they found the Joey asleep in the shade of a tree.

Then the mother Kangaroo saw some men approaching the waterhole carrying spears. She told the Wombat and her Joey to grab onto her tail and she hopped away to hide in some bushes (the Wombat complained all the way). She told them to be quiet, and reassured them that they would be safe.

When the hunters had moved away, the Kangaroo looked around for the Wombat, but he wasn't there – he had turned into The Great Spirit.

The Great Spirit explained that he had come down from the sky to find the kindest animal in the land. He said that he had decided that the mother Kangaroo was the kindest animal in the land. He made this decision because while the mother Kangaroo was worried about her own Joey, she had still helped a grumpy old Wombat.

As a reward The Great Spirit gave the Kangaroo a piece of bark and told her to tie it around her waist. She did, and it turned into a pouch. The Great Spirit said the pouch was to help her to look after her Joey, who was always getting lost.

The Kangaroo was very pleased, but said that she felt sorry for all the animals that did not have a pouch to help them with their children. The Great Spirit said this was another example of the kindness of the mother Kangaroo, and then gave pouches to all the other marsupials a pouch as well.

### **Things to think about**

This story tells us what our mothers told us: kindness is very important and we should always try to be kind. Here, the mother kangaroo was rewarded for her kindness (and so were all the other marsupials).

But we do have to look after ourselves. There is no point helping someone else if doing so causes us great loss. There is no point giving someone your money so they can buy a packet of cigarettes, if that leaves you without enough money to buy your school books.

Some people would think this mother kangaroo should have made sure her Joey was safe first, before she took the wombat to the waterhole. What do you think about that?

23.

**Uldanami becomes the Curlew**



*Picture 23. A Curlew and two stars in the sky.*

In the Dreamtime, when the Flinders Ranges were being formed, two brothers went out hunting. About the middle of the day they made a fire to cook an Emu they had speared.

But, a strong wind blew their fire away, and the grass and scrub were set alight. The brothers climbed up a steep slope to safety, but the fire was spreading in all directions. They kept climbing and the fire kept following. Finally, they were on the top of the rocky peak and the fire was all around them.

To save themselves the brothers flew into the sky where they became the Pointers of the Southern Cross. [The Pointers are two bright stars, alpha Centauri and beta Centauri. A line drawn through them points to, and helps you find, the Southern Cross.]

Uldanami was the hunter's mother. She had no other family.

She searched everywhere for her sons and her sad call rang through the rocky gorges. This went on for the rest of her life.

The spirits changed Uldanami into the curlew. The sad call of the curlew reminds us of Uldanami looking for her sons.

**Things to think about**

This story tells us what we all know: that it is sad for the people who are left behind, when a friend or a member of the family leaves forever.

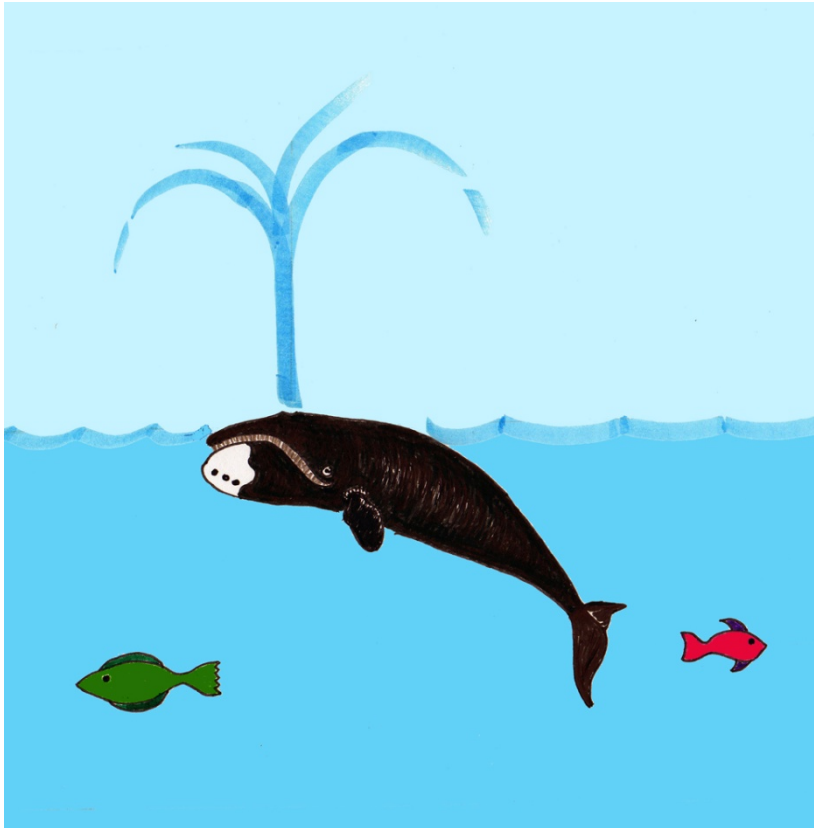
But, death or separation is inevitable. The usual thing is that parents grow old and finally die. Years later, their children also grow old. It is sad when old people die, but they have had a long life and everyone knows, we can't live forever.

This story tells of something slightly different. Here, the children were lost and the parent was left behind. The natural order is for the parents to die before the children, not the other way around. Some people believe that the pain of parents losing children is worse than the pain of children losing parents. But this sort of statement doesn't mean very much. For example, the pain felt by a child losing a parent will be different if the child is 6 years compared to 66 years of age, at the time of the loss.

Sometimes, young people think they will take their own lives. In this situation, it is important to think about the pain you would leave behind, for the people who love you.

24.

**Kondole become the Whale**



*Picture 24. Kondole became a whale, and spurted water from the hole in the back of his head.*

This is a short piece from a long story, which comes from the region of Encounter Bay in South Australia.

On a very hot day, people were dancing so hard that the sweat from their bodies made springs and rivers, which can still be seen.

The dancers wanted to keep dancing into the night, but they did not have any light. They decided to invite a very large man called Kondole. He was the sole owner of fire, and they hoped that he would come and bring his fire so they could see to dance.

However, Kondole was mean and disagreeable and hid his fire before coming to the ceremony.

The dancers were angry with Kondole for his meanness. One crept up behind him and threw a spear, which went into his head.

At that moment, all the people at the ceremony were transformed into animals. Some became possums, and other kangaroos. Some became birds and other became fish. Kondole, who was the largest, became the Whale. And since that time, he has spurted water from the hole in the back of his head.

## **Things to think about**

Was it fair to become angry with Kondole because he did not share his fire with the rest of the people? This is a matter of opinion, and it depends to a large extent on the rules or the way the group usually behaves. In some groups [Europeans, for example] people tend to own things and not to share them, while in other groups [Aboriginal Australians, for example] there may be less “private property” and a greater tendency to share things. What do you think? Was it fair to become angry with Kondole because he kept his fire for himself?

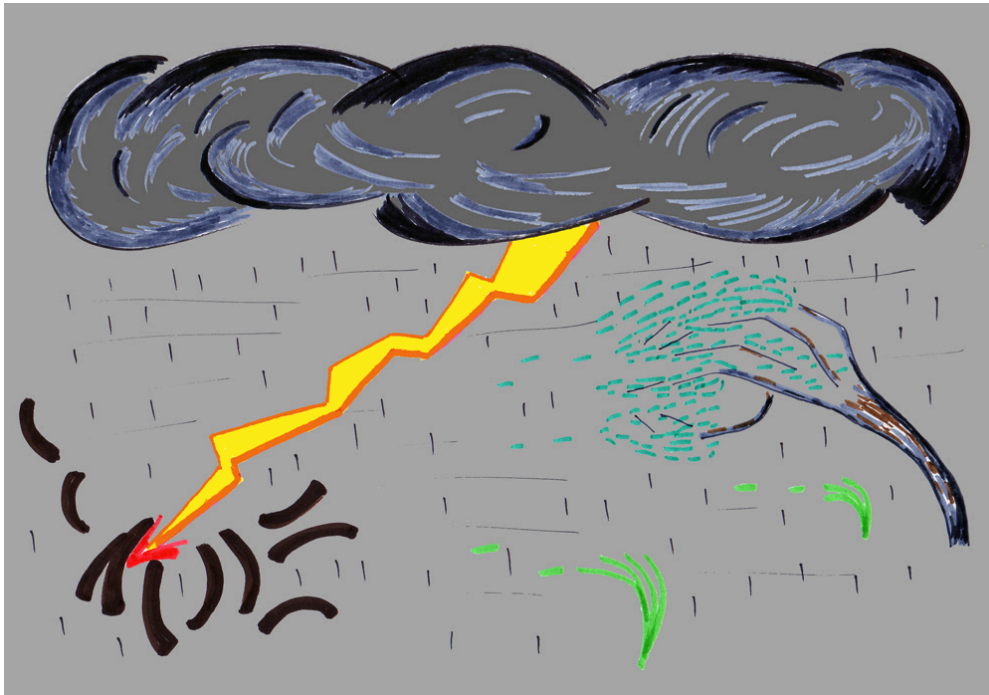
Most of us would agree that Kondole was mean. Many of us would think he deserved to be “paid back” for his meanness. But, did he deserve to be killed? Some would say “yes” and some would say “no”. But, what do you think?

Those who were paying attention could answer, well Kondole wasn't killed, he was changed into a whale. There is an interesting point here: the man who through the spear wasn't trying to turn Kondole into a whale.

Would you rather be killed or changed into a whale? Would you like to be a whale? If yes, why? If no, why?

25.

Eagle and the crow



*Picture 25. Wahn used magic to call up a terrible thunderstorm, and a bolt of lightning crashed into Mulyan's bark house.*

This piece is more like a list of facts than a story with an interesting plot.

Mulyan, who was of the eagle tribe, had a camp on the banks of the Murray River. He married a young woman from the crow tribe. They had a baby son, of whom they were both very proud.

One day Mulyan saw his wife talking to a man of the Magpie tribe. He became jealous and later punished his wife so severely that she died.

Wahn, the brother of Mulyan's wife, was of the crow tribe. Wahn was furious when his sister was killed. However, Mulyan was very powerful, so Wahn decided to do nothing at that time, but to wait for a good opportunity to take revenge.

Wahn waited until his nephew (Mulyan's son) had grown into a child. Then, one day, Wahn arrived at Mulyan's camp, tired and with sore feet, and asked if he could rest for a while. Of course, he was made welcome.

But, when Mulyan went hunting, Wahn speared and killed Mulyan's son.

Wahn then trampled down the surrounding bushes. When Mulyan came home, Wahn told him that a band of unknown men had run into the camp without warning, speared the boy and then run away again.



Mulyan was a clever hunter. He could see that all the tracks had been made by Wahn, but he said nothing.

Instead, Mulyan asked Wahn to dig a grave for the boy. Of course, he did so. But, when Wahn was at the bottom of the grave, putting down the boy's body, Mulyan took his revenge. He pushed all the earth back into the grave on top of Wahn and stamped it down.

Believing he had killed Wahn, Mulyan returned to his camp.

However, Wahn used magic to escape, and then called up a terrible thunderstorm. Strong winds roared and suddenly, a bolt of lightning crashed into Mulyan's camp and scattered fragments across the land.

Wahn thought he had finally destroyed Mulyan, but then he saw Mulyan fly away as an eagle.

Wahn, too, was injured. The lightning bolt had also burnt him, and that is why crows have black feathers to the present day.

### **Things to think about**

There are some interesting points in this story.

In the beginning, Mulyan becomes angry when his wife speaks to a man from the magpie tribe.

Before we ask whether Mulyan should have become angry, we must ask, did his wife break any important rules when she spoke to the man from the magpie tribe? It was so long ago we cannot be sure, but we don't think Mulyan's wife broke any important rules, we think it was simply that Mulyan was jealous and strict.

Even if Mulyan's wife did do something wrong, what should happen next?  
Should she be punished or forgiven?

Even if someone deserves to be punished, do they deserve to be beaten to death?

At the present time, any domestic violence is totally unacceptable. In the past, a degree of domestic violence was acceptable. In the past, in Fiji, for example, the men had two sets of clubs: one set was heavy and used in battle, the other set were light sticks, which were used to discipline the women.

At the present time, any domestic violence is totally unacceptable.

Can you understand Wahn being very angry?

This story then goes on with Wahn "paying back" Mulyan by killing his son, Mulyan "paying back" Wahn by burying him alive, and Wahn "paying back" Mulyan by having him struck by lightning.

At every step we could ask the questions, was that response justified?

Some would say that the “pay back” system never works, because it never stops. They would say that one side has to break the cycle, to forgive rather than “pay back”. Perhaps the legal system and courts of a country help to reduce “pay backs”. What do you think?