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**The Dream of the Thylacine by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks**

In a few spare words, brimming with emotional pull, Margaret Wild tells the tale of the last thylacine, locked in a desolate cage in the Hobart Zoo. It rages and howls as it paces the cage, locked away from the bracken and bush of its wild lands, where snow falls and the creeks are filled with shimmering fish. In 130 words, Wild recreates the home range of the thylacine in the Tasmanian wilderness, and in between these words tell us of its life now, shut behind wire, pacing on a concrete floor. The words sting the reader, tugging at the heart, bringing a lump to the throat, as we read of this animal’s eventual end, but the word ‘dreaming’ implies it remains part of the environment it once roamed.

As with *Fox*, Wild has collaborated with Ron Brooks, an illustrator with a prodigious talent and range of skills. ‘Champing at the bit’ to illustrate this book, he has used a fascinating mixture of styles and techniques, bringing in hints of John Olsen, Brett Whitely, Fred Williams and Arthur Boyd. Mixing his breathtaking illustrations with photos of the wood and wire of the cages is visually arresting and impels the reader to stop and think. The end papers with their overlay of chicken wire reinforce the caged end of this stunning animal, and remind us again, of Brooks’ love of the outdoors.

**The Dream of the Thylacine** heralds the importance of keeping our environment safe and secure for all species, as every loss is a loss for us all. Students will fall over themselves finding out more information about the thylacine and its extinction relating this to an environmental awareness that we all must share to prevent this happening again.

**Fran Knight, South Australia**

“Stunning, imaginative, confronting” were the first three words evoked by my reading of *The Dream of the Thylacine*, the latest picture book by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks, author and illustrator, whose previous collaborative endeavours, *Old Pig*, *Rosie and Tortoise* and *Fox* have all been enthusiastically received by young readers and their adult parents and teachers.

The use of the term ‘picture book’ is technically accurate: few words set among appropriate illustrations, but falls far short of capturing the essence of this outstanding work. The words set the scenes, sparsely and effectively, not one wasted or included gratuitously. They are explained, expanded upon and enhanced in beautiful double-page spreads of amazing art works.

Scenes which drew their inspiration from photographic stills of a 1937 BBC of the last thylacine (AKA Tasmanian Tiger) which died in Hobart Zoo, are contrasted with the vibrant colours of the dreams which this poor creature may have had of its former life of freedom. The reader develops a deep empathy and great sadness for this animal, even while catching the breath at the amazing landscapes created on the page.

While the book is, on face value, a simple story, the depth of discussion and thinking it evokes has potential to consider a wide range of issues related to environment, preservation of endangered species and decisions we make about land use and sustainable development.

This book could be used in the classroom with a wide range of ages: K-2, as part of literature study of Margaret Wild’s books, through the primary ages, in a unit on endangered/extinct species in Australia and with Visual Arts students of many ages, as inspiration and appreciation of different techniques.

In summary this book is indeed **stunning**: in concept and expression; **imaginative**: in words and their reflection in art; **confronting**: in making us think about our responsibilities as guardians of our world.

**Barbara Wilson, St George Christian School, Hurstville NSW**

*The Dream of the Thylacine* is an intriguing picture book to teach probably for a Stage 4 level. It documents the perspective of the extinct Tasmanian Tiger. Words are sparse in this picture book as it alternates between real images of the last known Tasmanian Tiger from Hobart Zoo in the 1930s to beautifully drawn colourful images demonstrating the Tasmanian Tiger free in his natural landscape (“the dream”). Powerfully evocative words accompany the black and white images of his imprisonment demonstrating his pain and suffering at the hands of his captors. This picture book not only captivates because it is a study of a lost
species but also because it stimulates thought into notions about captivity and freedom. This is definitely a recommended read.

Gersha Shteyman, Kesser Torah College, NSW

*The Dream of the Thylacine* written by Margaret Wild and illustrated by Ron Brooks is a poetic and thought-provoking book about the demise of the last Tasmanian Tiger, which died in captivity in Hobart Zoo in 1937. The endpapers juxtapose the wire of the zoo cage with the landscape through which the wild Thylacine would naturally roam. Wild’s text is minimal, stark, insightful and thought-provoking. The text is set against a background Brooks has created using sepia photo stills from the film of the last surviving captive animal, which was confined in a concrete and wire enclosure in which it relentlessly paced. Brooks’ illustrations of the changing landscape through which the Thylacine would naturally roam are expansive and stunning.

This book makes a powerful statement about many issues: the ethics of the impact of humans on the environment, the issue of captive wild animals, the issue of environmental impact resulting in extinction. It is an emotionally powerful book because of the direct impact of the message conveyed in minimal text combined with the visual images of the Thylacine’s stark and barren concrete and wire enclosure contrasted with the stunning colours and variety of its natural environment.

The tragedy of the last of a species that is confined, dreaming of roaming free is there on every page, subtle yet ever present. The reader has the knowledge that the only way the Thylacine will be free is when he dies and his spirit will roam the landscape.

This stunning book is suitable for a wide readership as there is so much to explore not only in the issues raised but the way in which the text and illustrations work together to convey such a powerful, tragic and significant story so elegantly.

Margaret Warner (casual teacher/writer), NSW

On opening this book one is exposed to wire mesh fencing which I remember from childhood visits to the zoo back in the 1960s. Immediately a feeling of desperation swamps the reader as the voice of the thylacine haunts you through every page. Sad words, a lilting cry, a lament to be free, lost on us all as we realise this creature’s destiny.

Wood’s illustrations masterfully incorporate original photos which are melded into a sepia cage like collage. These pages, surrounded by newspaper like text, contrast with the colourful paintings of the scenery of the Thylacine’s dreams. As the lament of the Thylacine becomes louder, the clarity of the animal in the photo diminishes as his spirit dissolves. We are left to deal with the shame and realisation that another element of our precious world is gone forever. Margaret Wild pulls no punches here. Her powerful language conveys a strong message to us all.

This book is ideal for upper primary students. It can be used in a variety of ways: exploring themes and environmental issues or in a study of different techniques used in Picture Books. It shows how the use of language enhances a sad story and can have such an impact on the reader. I will definitely be sharing it with my class as we explore themes of justice, loneliness and the will to survive.

Therese Reghenzani, Year 6 Teacher, Saint Paul’s Monbulk, Victoria

The pairing of two masters, author Margaret Wild and illustrator Ron Brooks, has again worked to create a text which is hauntingly powerful and strikingly beautiful. It makes the reader ashamed to be part of the human race as we continue to cause the destruction of our wildlife.

*The Dream of the Thylacine* is broken into four distinct sections, with the first three detailing the stages in the progressive decline of the captive Tasmanian Tiger and, the final part, its ultimate demise. Wild’s poetry appears on three pages, with carefully chosen words such as ‘trapped’, ‘ailing’ and ‘shadow’ used to describe the state of the tiger and its defeat. Font size and type style differs throughout the three stanzas, with harsh capitals utilised whilst the word patterns are similar in each. Only in the fourth section is a handwritten font used, creating a gentler feeling and the few words added elicit strong responses from the reader.

Brooks’ illustrations are in two forms. The descriptions of the Tiger in captivity are overlaid on photographic stills taken from a 1937 film of the last surviving Thylacine, kept in the Hobart Zoo until its death. Following each of these are three double page spreads, depicting the animal in the wild. Brooks uses acrylic paints to capture the creature’s power and the beauty and variety of landscapes through which it roamed.
This book would admirably support a classroom study on endangered or extinct animals and their survival in the wild or be paired with Elizabeth Stanley’s Deliverance of Dancing Bears, Michael Morpurgo’s Dancing Bear or The Rainbow Bear. With the first two titles, the focus would be on man’s treatment of animals and the latter on adaptations of animals to ensure their survival in the wild.

Due to the breadth of topics featured in Wild’s writing, her books provide a huge amount of diversity for students of any age to look at her work in an author study. Because she does not skirt the difficult issues of war, death, divorce, homelessness and bullying the latter being dealt with in her novel, Beast, her works provide sufficient depth even for students in the upper primary years.

Jo Schenkel, Pilgrim School, South Australia

From the moment news of another Margaret Wild–Ron Brooks collaboration was a mere whiff in the wind, you can imagine children’s book pundits pacing up and down by their bookshelves, rubbing their hands in anticipation. Well, the wait is over and no one is going to be disappointed. The Dream of the Thylacine is here – and it will leave its stamp on your emotions. This book smacks of sorrow. Everything about it is hung with sadness, regret and longing. It is a lament to the Thylacine, the Tasmanian Tiger, last seen – in captivity – in the late 1930s. The Dream of the Thylacine is as confronting as it is haunting. It will stop you in your tracks. It will reach its giant hand into your safe places and secure its grip on a fistful of feelings you didn’t know you possessed. An utterance will swirl in your mind until it burns in your thoughts – if only…

From the very beginning of the book, the mood is one of yearning. The front cover depicts an arresting image of the Thylacine, followed by the front end paper where the outside world is seen from behind wire. Then, in sepia tones, the Thylacine is portrayed confined in its cage and the narrative in the form of a poem: Trapped am I/in cage of twisty wire, cold concrete/prowl/rage/howl …

The book alternates between the narrative against its sorrowful sepia backdrop, and bold double-page colour spreads of the Thylacine in its natural habitat. Throughout the book the images of the Thylacine fade, until it eventually disappears, at last becoming one with the land in the form of a rock formation on the last page. As the lament concludes Rest now/Hear the stones chant/the wind console and on the last page, Dreaming am I, the spirit of this woebegone animal soars above the page.

The Dream of the Thylacine is a book that stays with you and calls you back, time and again. It would be suitable for middle primary school children through to adults and presents teachers with a plethora of opportunities for discussion.

Carole Poustie, Victoria

The moment you look at the cover of the book you know you are not going to be disappointed by this offering from Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks. It evokes the same need to get inside and read the story as did Fox by the same author. The feel of the book in the reader’s hands encourages a swift opening of the book. The first image, the wooden fence, immediately makes the reader think of entrapment and death. The few words throughout the book create powerful images. The changes in font size add emphasis to different parts of the image created by the author. The bright colourful artwork moves the reader from capture to freedom easily. The brush strokes and bold colours successfully create the Australian bush where the thylacine would have roamed free. The out of focus real images add to the book. The reader feels the pain of the animal and can empathise with its need to escape, to be back in its home.

This is a must for every teacher’s library from Years 1-10. It can be used in many areas of the curriculum whether as a literature study, environmental aspects or art study. Students can see how few words can create images and convey messages that are powerful. A skill to aim for in their own writing.

Roxanne Steenbergen, Windermere Primary School, Tasmania

What better way to convey the message of conservation than with this picture book for older readers? Masters of the format, its creators tell a complex story with well-chosen text and images. The thylacine, or Tasmanian Tiger, has not been conclusively identified in the wild since the death of the last known survivor in 1937. Photographic stills document the individual’s demise in a cage of concrete, chicken wire and fence palings. The thylacine rages against captivity, mourns its lost freedom, until all that remains is a shadowy image of eyes gazing outwards at the world. The accompanying poetry, written from the creature’s point of view, is rich with repetition, metaphor, rhythm and sensory detail. Vibrant illustrations envisage the animal in various Australian landscapes including tropical rainforests, coastlines, rivers, deserts and snowy mountains.
There are many striking things about this book: not least the way it contrasts real and imagined, past and present, freedom and captivity. The colours and brushstrokes of the illustrations have an impressionist quality, yet they seem more tangible than the grainy black and white images of the ailing creature’s last days. Tinged with sadness and farewell, the book warns against the fate of the thylacine becoming the model for our future. Its loss occurred in the relatively recent past, yet human impact on the environment continues to be ignored. The dream in the title belongs to us and to the thylacine itself. Although it has passed into the realm of indigenous mythology, its spirit lingers in the terrain. ‘Rest now. Hear the stones chant, the wind console. Dreaming am I.’ The thylacine’s majestic voice commands readers to take comfort from the knowledge that it is finally at peace. Where it was once imprisoned, now it is free.

The importance and urgency of the conservation message cannot be understated. Empathising with the experience of endangered fauna is likely to make a more significant impact on students’ understanding than dry passages of factual text. Therefore, this picture book would be a very effective tool in the science classroom. Students can explore ways they may make personal contributions to saving the environment, particularly with respect to other endangered species. It is to be hoped that such ideas will inspire the next generation to take better care than we have of the planet and all its inhabitants.

Sharon Hammad, Winmalee, NSW

My students milled around this book, placed upon my desk upon its arrival in my classroom. They were keen to tell me what they knew about the thylacine before we even opened the book to examine it. Opinions and commiserations were rife as my students bewailed how much ‘it was wrong’ that people were responsible for the extinction of a species. There is hope for humanity yet!

The Dream of the Thylacine is a visual feast that could only really be an Australian publication. Its emotive text, beautiful artwork and photographs along with choice of colour really grab the reader immediately to tell the true story of an important lost species, a species very close to the hearts of many Australians. The text is minimal and as a result allows the viewer to make his or her own interpretation about what the book is teaching us. Useful in my Grade 5/6 class as a talking point to find out about student’s prior knowledge, to look at artistic interpretation and to summarise what makes a piece of work truly Australian and to also stimulate interest about Australian history and eco-history and science. One thing particularly attention-grabbing about the book is the fact that many students still see picture books as the domain of the early-childhood student. This book goes a long way to prove that much can be taught by the use of this genre irrespective of age, but also that few words, and many powerful images, really do have a lot to teach us.

A real winner in this Grade 5/6 class!

Francesca Tulk, Exeter Primary School, Tasmania

Where to start with this review?

Year 8 History, immersed in an assignment on the indelible scar left by the Europeans on the indigenous people, the year 3s to whom the book was read or my two year old (just) granddaughter?

Everyone gained something from the book.

Year 8 – the contrast between the old sepia pictures on the left, balanced by the words on the right and then three double page colour illustrations of the Thylacine’s words as he remembered his past. And what a beautiful past! The colours leap off the page, the old Tasmanian tiger is one with his country as he lives the life for which he was destined until the European invaders caged him and destroyed his way of life.

His final three words, “Dreaming am I” echoed in the minds of those listening to the tale and watching the pictures unfold. They compared the fate of the tiger to the fate of the indigenous people who had also found refuge in “the arms of the mountains” so they could “hear the stones chant, the winds console.”

The Year Threes who are involved in our reading programme read the book with their older mentor. They lingered over the pages of colour as they explored the tiger’s world.

My granddaughter? She loved the story and the illustrations, the alliteration and the varying font.

Overall? A brilliant, evocative story of the last Tasmanian tiger; the sepia photos, the varying font making the ideas stand out, the language itself – trapped, twisty, cold concrete is only the beginning. The use of assonance and alliteration and the images created by the strong verbs and adjectives capture the minds of those reading and listening (and it’s a great story to read aloud simply because of the language). And then, finally, the illustrations! A haunting reminder of the past that has gone and will not be replaced, but visually stimulating as we talk about the tiger crawling through the undergrowth, past the rocks and trees; the brilliant reds of the cliff and the blues and golds of the sun; the variation of green as the tiger passes the creek of
"flickering fish" – each double page offers so much visually and so much to talk about. My favourite is the last page where the tiger is curled at peace, part of his environment, dreaming…

I recommend this book to everyone who enjoys picture books and everyone who likes to think about what they are reading.

**Robyne P Ridge, Kinross Wolaroi School, Orange NSW**

The collaborative effort between Ron Brooks and Margaret Wild is not a new one. *The Dream of the Thylacine* could possibly be used and compared to the pair’s *Fox*. Of particular interest could be the fauna’s relationship to the natural environment in *Fox* versus man’s relationship with animals in this picture book, Brooks’ illustrations, Wild’s writing style, the use of factual information versus fiction etc.

Wild’s writing style deserves attention when examining this text. Issues that could be discussed could involve the unusual reordering of grammatical units of speech. For example, the opening line reads, “Trapped am I…” Typically, the start of this sentence would read “I am trapped…” Not only could this be used to explicitly teach grammatical terms such as verbs and pronouns in this case but it could also extend to students commenting on the effect of reordering sentences such as these, as well as making connections to other texts such George Lucas’ *Star Wars* (examine Yoda’s speech patterns) and J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* series (examine Smeagol’s speech patterns). Furthermore this could be an opportunity to experiment with their own creative writing and developing an authentic voice when constructing characters or personas.

Another feature of Wild’s style is the power she develops in the verbs and in keeping with this some are capitalised for effect. A simple exercise with a thesaurus where students substitute these verbs for others could forge an interesting point for discussion. Furthermore the mixing of first and second person narrative point of view raises interesting questions in terms of the protagonist and the audience they are speaking to.

In terms of Brooks’ illustrative efforts the following points may be interesting. Have students comment on the juxtaposition of colour and black and white, trace the motif of wire established first in the end papers and used throughout the narrative, the mixing of mediums, the absence of written text during most of the coloured illustrations, the sub-textual messages of imaginative journey and the roaming spirit with Brooks’ illustrations, the use of texture and how atmosphere is created, the intended meaning within his final illustration.

**Mark Rafidi, Head of English and Drama, Shoalhaven Anglican School, NSW**

**Before reading**

View other picture books by Margaret Wild or Ron Brooks.

Investigate ways to research the past.

**Introduction**

*The Dream of the Thylacine* is a story about the end to the existence of the Thylacine. A poignant story by Margaret Wild of one of Tasmania’s extinct fauna, with text that skillfully expresses the slowly muted thoughts of hope and despair that this animal could be protected from changes that occur over time. The story is written in a poetic style and the illustrations are painted with acrylic on board. Ron Brooks creates a sunburnt landscape of blended, salient similarity to the Thylacine. His vivid pictures inspire hope, but in the end all that remains are the boulders of the sleeping ‘dreaming’ Thylacine. The irony in the story is the images of the cages; are they used to protect or capture?

**Activities during reading**

**Discussion**

1. Describe the landscape the artist has created using colour, line and texture ochre tints and thick clay lines.

Do the black and white print media give realistic historical comment?

The fences are a strong visual image. What changes are indicated by the fences? What purpose do the fences serve? Explain your reasons.

The book’s end papers are an image of day beyond the fence and night beyond the fence. What does this suggest?

2. Discuss the change and continuity in the story’s landscape; types of fences, wildlife, and land use.

3. The title suggests a dream. What is the dream composed of?

Does the illustrator use contrast in the pictures? Why?

Does the omission of words give the effect of dying thoughts?

Discuss the sentence structure ‘dreaming am I’
Figurative speech is used to humanise the landscape, eg ‘arms of the mountain’. This is an example of a metaphor. Why does Margaret Wild use this type of speech?

‘Snow falls slow’ has a rhythm to it. Why is this phrase used?

**Response to the story**

What meanings are conveyed by the author about the Thylacine? Discuss laws of protection of animals eg. When is an animal considered endangered? What does decline mean?

Why does Ron Brooks paint the image of the Thylacine with an open jaw?

What is a lament and what would it sound like?

Further recommended reading

*Megafauna of Australia*

Helen Latimer, Lakemba Public School, NSW

Powerful, evocative, mystical; *The Dream of the Thylacine* is a moving tribute to an Australian animal that was carelessly and thoughtlessly hunted to extinction by human predators. The stark contrast between the Thylacine’s life in captivity and its life of freedom in the wild is stunningly depicted in both text and illustration. The spare, poetic text takes the reader on the last surviving Thylacine’s journey from its incarceration in the Hobart Zoo when it is defiant and assertive through its gradual deterioration of body and spirit. The story concludes with the release of the Thylacine’s spirit back into the wild where it belongs. Ironically it is through death that the Thylacine obtains the freedom that it is longing for. Margaret Wild uses haunting language which employs alliteration, repetition and personification. The emotive singular words in a bold larger font encapsulate the feelings of the Thylacine. The repetition of Brooks’ sepia illustrations using photos of wood and wire and photographic stills from a 1937 BBC film followed by three wordless double-page spreads of bold colour, strong lines and round shapes highlight the Thylacine’s memories and yearning to return to the Tasmanian Wilderness. The first endpaper symbolises looking with longing from within a wire cage to freedom while the closing endpaper is from outside the cage looking into despair, darkness and death.

There always has been a great deal of mystery surrounding Thylacines which engages young people and older people alike. *The Dream of the Thylacine* will be a key book when discussing environmental issues such as extinction of animals and the need to understand the reasons why this happened and to look for ways to prevent it from happening in the future. Unfortunately we still haven’t learnt from this tragic event as animals are still becoming endangered and extinct as a direct result of human destruction and degradation of habitats and environments. Hopefully through books such as *The Dream of the Thylacine* young people will realise they have a part to play in securing the existence of all species for generations to come.

Margy Heuschele, Concordia Lutheran College, Queensland

*The Dream of the Thylacine* is a beautiful new book by Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks, who have worked collaboratively on picture story books in the past. It tells the story of a trapped Thylacine (also known as a Tasmanian tiger), who dreams of freedom and life outside the bars of its cage. The evocative images, a mix of acrylic paintings and photographic stills from a 1937 film of the last known live Thylacine, help portray the loss and longing of the creature. The story line and images are reminiscent of *Fox*, which Wild and Brooks created together, published in 2000. Like *Fox*, *The Dream of the Thylacine* is particularly for older readers, and would be enjoyed by upper primary and secondary students.

*The Dream of the Thylacine* would be a fantastic text to use when exploring the topic of endangered or extinct animals, especially as the Tasmanian tiger was a native Australian animal which died out in more recent times. The book also raises the issue of keeping animals in captivity and could lead into discussions, debates or persuasive writing about animal rights and freedom vs. conservation. The language in the text can be used to study synonyms, adjectives, word meanings and personification. This text could also be studied alongside the VCE text about the Thylacine, Julia Leigh’s *The Hunter*.

The mystery of the Thylacine intrigues readers – is there one left, or even more, still out there somewhere in the acres of wilderness of the Tasmanian forests? If you love picture books, have a fascination of the unknown or an interest in animal rights – read this book.

Sarah Windridge, Grade 5 teacher, East Loddon P-12 College, Victoria

*The Dream of the Thylacine* is a cleverly presented picture story book depicting the lament of the extinct Thylacine – Tasmanian Devil. The author and illustrator begin the book with historical black and white photographs of a Tasmanian Tiger secured in an enclosure of wooden boards and wire. The text relating to these images are brief and yet clearly describe the feelings of this trapped animal. This simple text begins
with a single emotive word to describe the Thylacine in its ‘cage of twisty wire and cold concrete’. Then the

text is written in bold using descriptive words to express the actions and movements of the animal within this

prison. The text then reduces in size and describes a scene where this creature would much rather be. The

habitat it has been taken from. The pages following this description are colourful drawings of the Thylacine

in its natural habitat, free to roam and live as it has been created to do.

There are three clear sections in the book that begin with this same format;

- black and white photo of Thylacine trapped in enclosure – text of single word to describe feelings –

large text to describe action – back to smaller text for description of the environment that would be

home to this animal – a number pages follow on illustrating the surroundings described in the text of
each section.

This format is repeated through each of the three sections using different descriptive language to

communicate the feelings of this animal in both the context of its captured environment and the natural

environment from which it has been taken.

This book has successfully used simple, highly descriptive text to communicate the unspoken words and

feelings of this captured, trapped, Thylacine. A story of extinction in a poetic format.

**Antonia Chaney, Mountain District Christian School, Victoria**

What a powerful book portraying the tragic story of one of our presumed extinct species, the Tasmanian

Tiger or Thylacine.

The photographs, taken at the Hobart Zoo, showing the last confirmed surviving Tasmanian Tiger, are a

chilling contrast to the dream pictures Ron Brooks has created depicting the untouched wilderness which

would have been this creature’s natural habitat.

Although the text is sparse, Margaret Wild is able to capture the sorry, mournful tale of this precious species’

last days living in a ‘twisty wire’ cage on a ‘cold concrete’ floor.

Her poetic style is uniform throughout the text pages, divided into three distinct parts;

the trapped, ailing and dispirited animal;

the restless, prowling, aching, yearning and fading emotions;

the dreaming spirit running free in the bush, rivers, creeks and snowy wild lands.

The words are unashamedly harsh and provoking, leaving the reader feeling truly mournful that human

intervention has caused this tragedy.

Brook’s illustrations exuberantly capture the freedom of the thylacine in the wild and its spirit can be felt

through the double page spreads portraying the feeling that in the wild it cannot be contained.

He has highlighted the intensity of colour in the Australian landscape and cleverly depicts the extinct

Thylacine in the rocks shining in the moonlight on the final page, giving the reader some sense of relief that

at last the tiger is at peace.

An invaluable resource in teaching about the need to preserve our unique species, this book would encourage

the reader to find out more about our endangered animals and what could done to help in their preservation.

In the literacy class, Wild’s poetic text would be a great example of how prose can state a message in only a

few words creating in the reader a strong emotive response.

But the students will also be able to see that the power of the book is in the combined force of the writer and

the illustrator working in unison. In *The Dream of the Thylacine* Margaret Wild and Ron Brooks have

impressively achieved this marriage in this thought provoking book.

**Jill Howard, Librarian, ACT**

The book begins with a sepia toned double page collage. The voice of the last thylacine in Tasmania is

invoked using a layered mix of a blurry contemporary shot taken from a 1937 BBC film, combined with

crisp close ups of elements of cages, overprinted by the printed words, which are also used as visual

elements. On this very first page, spoken from the point of view of the tormented creature, the protagonist
directly addresses the reader in a strong, proud voice.

This beautiful book of only 27 pages and 134 words is very powerful and moving. Patterning is part of the

book’s strength. As in all good children’s literature, the patterns are simple and repeated. After the first

double page, **Trapped**, there are 3 double pages with no written text. These pages show the thylacine in its

habitat, and the painted colours, shapes and textures are rich and soft, smooth, subtle and beautiful. We then

return to the cage, and another pattern begins to emerge. Where the thylacine at first speaks of the torment of

being trapped, and asks the reader ‘Know you not...’ how fierce he is, in this second page, **Ailing**, he is more
plaintive: he speaks of how he is ‘ailing’ in this trap, and his question to the reader invites us to share his
wildness, to ‘run with me’ – how he yearns for forest, creek, and snow. We share a further three glorious
double pages of freedom, to be brought to a third double page, Shadow, when we see that he has almost left
this world, and that he will now be free- his spirit will enter the river and the mountains.
There is now a turn in the story: the thylacine is now in the spirit world. He is resting, after the rainbow’s
end, consoled by stones and wind, in his dreaming under the white moon.
Natural History or Environmental students of all ages, those interested in Australian stories, animals and
wild country, and those interested in the collaboration between a visual artist and a storyteller would all find
this beautiful, large format hardback moving, interesting and useful for study.

Helen Wilde, South Australia

The Tasmanian Tiger, or Thylacine, is a sore spot in the Australian collective consciousness, a source of
deep shame and guilt at being responsible for the systematic destruction of one of our native fauna. Yet the
Thylacine is a favourite among Australian authors, often used as a symbol of hope and optimism, of
overcoming impossible odds. The Dream of the Thylacine is one of those stories.
The book takes the reader past those final awful images of the last known Thylacine kept in captivity in the
Hobart Zoo, and on a journey (both physical and spiritual) with the true spirit of the Tasmanian tiger – a
journey full of colour, movement and grace. The prose is sparse yet full of powerful imagery, with
illustrations that juxtapose photo-stills from a grainy film of the last Tasmanian tiger in captivity with joyous
paintings of harmony between animal and land. This book is a celebration of a spirit that honours their life
without forgetting their death.

Michael JG, ACT