



Story Summary

Shipped halfway around the world to spend the summer with her mom's eccentric Australian relatives, middle schooler and passionate violinist Louisa is prepared to be resentful. But life at the family's remote camp in the Tasmanian rainforest is intriguing, to say the least. There are pig-footed bandicoots, scary spiders, weird noises and odors in the night, and a quirky boy named Colin who cooks the most amazing meals. Not the least strange is her Uncle Ruff, with his unusual pet and veiled hints about something named Convict Rock.

Finally, Louisa learns the truth: Convict Rock is a sanctuary established by her great-grandmother Eleanor—a sanctuary for Tasmanian tigers, Australia's huge marsupials that were famously hunted into extinction almost a hundred years ago. Or so the world believes. Hidden in the rainforest at Convict Rock, one tiger remains. But now the sanctuary is threatened by a mining operation, and the last Tasmanian tiger must be lured deeper into the forest. The problem is, not since her great-grandmother has a member of the family been able to earn the shy tigers' trust.

As the summer progresses, Louisa forges unexpected connections with Colin, with the forest, and—through Eleanor's journal—with her great-grandmother. She begins to suspect the key to saving the tiger is her very own music. But will her plan work? Or will the enigmatic Tasmanian tiger disappear once again, this time forever?

Michelle Kadarusman grew up in Melbourne, Australia, and has also lived in Indonesia and Canada. Her 2019 middle-grade novel *Girl of the Southern Sea* was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award and a Junior Library Guild selection. Her previous novel *The Theory of Hummingbirds* was a finalist for the Forest of Reading Silver Birch Award, the MYRCA Sundogs Award, and the SYRCA Diamond Willow Award. Michelle lives in Toronto, Canada, and is looking forward to soon spending more time in Australia.

Middle-Grade Fiction Ages 8–12 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-054-3 | Pages: 192

Keywords: Environmentalism & Conservation, Music, STEM, Neurodivergence

BISAC Codes

JUV029010 JUVENILE FICTION / Science & Nature / Environment
JUV030080 JUVENILE FICTION / People & Places / Australia & Oceania
JUV031040 JUVENILE FICTION / Performing Arts / Music
JUV039020 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Adolescence & Coming of Age
JUV002340 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Jungle Animals

Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell: X | Lexile Measure: 730L

Dear Teacher,

Music for Tigers is a novel about making connections with nature, and with each other. Louisa's stay at her family's remote camp in the Tasmanian jungle is not her first choice of summer holidays, but as she learns about her great grandmother's past, she realizes there is more to life in the bush than she imagined.

This teaching guide has activities and responses for students to participate in either literature circles, or in class. There are lots of connections to biodiversity, sustainable development, and music!

—Colleen Nelson

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Wikipedia—Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons":
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Seasons_\(Vivaldi\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Seasons_(Vivaldi))
- RSCPA—"Wild animals in captivity":
<https://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/wildlife/captivity>
- World Wildlife Fund—Species Directory:
<https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/directory>
- Read, Write, Think—Trading Card Creator:
<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/trading-card-creator-30056.html>
- *National Geographic*—"Endangered Species Categories and Criteria":
<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/endangered/>
- World Atlas—"15 Animals Who are No Longer Endangered":
<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/15-animals-who-are-no-longer-endangered.html>
- *National Geographic*—"Species Delisted from Endangered Species Act in 2019":
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/12/species-delisted-from-endangered-species-act-in-2019/>
- Creative Writing Now—"How to Write Found Poetry":
<https://www.creative-writing-now.com/found-poetry.html>
- One Kind Planet—"Top 10 Extinct Animals":
<https://onekindplanet.org/top-10/top-10-worlds-extinct-animals/>

BEFORE READING

1. Louisa journeys from Toronto to Tasmania. Check out how long this flight would be and what time zones Tasmania and Toronto are in. What time is it in those places now? How long would it take to get to Tasmania from your home?
2. Do a word splash of the following term: “Extinction”. Add to it as you read.
3. Do a word splash of the following term: “Climate Crisis”. Add to it as you read.

DURING READING

Chapters 1–5

4. Listen to the following piece of music: Vivaldi’s “Spring”
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Seasons_\(Vivaldi\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Seasons_(Vivaldi))
Draw what you see in your mind when you hear it.
5. Make a Venn diagram with similarities and differences between the traditional ways of life of the Tarkine Indigenous people and those of your region.
6. Find three pieces of information about the pig-footed bandicoot (p. 19) and the tasmanian devil (p. 29).



Chaeropus ecaudatus
Illustration by Gerard Krefft, 1857



Devil’s Face
Photo by monkeyc.net, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

7. Louisa says on page 35 that “violin comes first”, even before learning about her great-granny. What comes first in your life?
8. When Louisa encounters her first spider on page 39, Uncle Ruff tells her she is now a “true, blue Aussie.” What do you think would make someone a “true blue” honorary resident of your country?

Chapters 6–11

9. Research photographs and newspaper or magazine articles from your community in 1939. What do you notice about life in 1939 compared to today? What’s different? What might be the same?
10. Make a T-chart as you read to record the characteristics of Louisa and her great-grandmother Eleanor. Highlight any characteristics that are the same.
11. Read the following article about wild animals in captivity:
www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/wildlife/captivity
Discuss how it relates to Uncle Ruff and Piggy (p. 64).
12. Search online to find a recording of “Watzling Matilda,” the song that is mentioned in Eleanor’s journal on page 68. A clip of the original 1926 recording by John Collinson and Russell Callow is available, although there are slight melodic variations between their version and the most popular modern one.
13. In Eleanor’s journal (page 69) she writes, “The more I study, the more I understand that the native marsupials’ habitat is in the greatest of peril. And none more so than that of our shy and majestic Tasmanian tiger.” What other animals are endangered today because of loss of habitat? Use the following website to select and research an endangered animal (sort by “Conservation Status”):
www.worldwildlife.org/species/directory
You can present your findings as a poster or as a trading card using the ‘Read Write Think’ website:
www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/trading-card-creator-30056.html

Each trading card should include the following information: type of animal, location and habitat, threat, current population, and an image of the animal. Make two copies, one to keep and one to trade with a classmate.

14. Rufus buries Piggy on page 76. Should Piggy's body have been donated to science? Write a letter to Rufus that states your opinion. Be sure to include reasons to support your opinion.
15. (p. 70–72) Losing a pet is a painful experience. The following is a first-hand account from author Michelle Kadarusman about the death of her dog, India:



Here's a photo of my sweet girl, India. She was a Rhodesian Ridgeback and in this picture she was twelve years old. Sadly, it is the last photo we have of her as she died very soon afterward. Like Piggy, she died of old age, and like Piggy, she gave us as long as she could. Losing your pet is so hard. It is strange and difficult getting used to being without a friend who was always by your side. India was a very regal dog - she didn't like getting her feet wet, so refused to go for walks in the rain! Cheesy popcorn was her favourite treat and every morning she would sit next to my bed like a statue, quietly whining, until I got up. These are some of the things I like to remember about her when I feel sad and miss her. It makes me smile remembering her quirky personality. Even through the loss, I am so grateful to have spent the years with her and she will always live on in my heart.

Do you have an experience with a pet you'd like to share? What do pets bring to our lives?

16. By the end of Chapter 11, Louisa has had a good

dose of life in the Tasmanian countryside. If Ruff was your uncle, would you want to stay with him? Make a list of criteria for "an enjoyable holiday destination." How much of the criteria does Ruff's camp fulfill?

Chapters 12–19

17. Ruff explains "critical mass" to Louisa on page 96. In your own words, explain what it is. Using the following websites, research other species whose critical mass has been brought from endangered to safe:
 - www.nationalgeographic.org/media/endangered/
 - www.worldatlas.com/articles/15-animals-who-are-no-longer-endangered.html
 - www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/12/species-delisted-from-endangered-species-act-in-2019/
18. Create a travel brochure for the Tarkine. Include: location, things to see and do, weather, and flora and fauna. Be sure to make the brochure visually appealing using images. You may choose to create the brochure using a free online resource such as these:
 - www.canva.com
 - www.padlet.com
 - www.animoto.com
19. The last paragraph on page 140 is filled with sensory details. Create a found poem using the language in the paragraph. Illustrate the poem. Visit this website for more information on found poems:
 - www.creative-writing-now.com/found-poetry.html
20. Throughout this section of the book, Louisa shows a lot of character development. Choose three events you think show the greatest areas of growth for Louisa and explain why you selected each one.

Chapters 20–Epilogue

21. Colin pranks Louisa on page 145. Have you ever been pranked? Or, have you ever pranked someone else? Share what happened. Are pranks a nice thing to do?
22. On page 148, we find out what happened to Louisa at her audition. Read the picture book *The Dance of the Violin* by Kathy Stinson and illustrated by Dušan Petricic. What connections can you make between the two? Have you ever been in a similar situation to Louisa?

23. Throughout the book, Michelle Kadarusman uses powerful sensory description to set the scene for the reader. On page 168, beginning at the paragraph “The dawn fog has lifted to reveal a piercingly blue sky”, identify as many details that appeal to all five senses as you can. Write your own description of a place using as many of the senses (sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing) as possible.

AFTER READING/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

24. One of the themes in *Music for Tigers* is the importance of biodiversity. Research a location in your area that your class could visit to learn more about biodiversity. If possible, plan a class visit or arrange to have a guest speaker.
25. Create a collage for Louisa. On one half, choose images or illustrations that show her as she was before she got to Tasmania. On the other half, include images and illustrations that reflect who she is after her time with Uncle Ruff.
26. If there was one animal that you could bring back from extinction, which animal would it be? Why? Use the list of extinct animals at this website:
<https://onekindplanet.org/top-10/top-10-worlds-extinct-animals/>