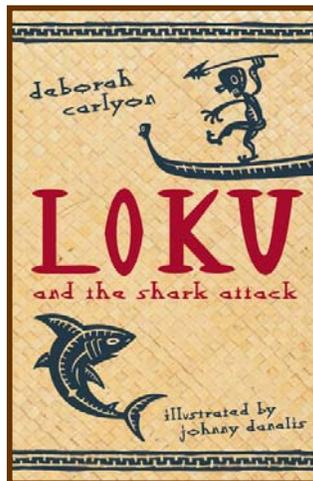


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# LOKU AND THE SHARK ATTACK

Deborah Carlyon

Illustrated by John Danalis



Teachers' Notes  
Written by Deborah Carlyon

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**ABOUT THE BOOK**

Loku is growing up in a small village in New Guinea. He is normally a happy boy taking pleasure in, and enjoying the security of, the rhythms of family and village life, but one day he feels discontent at the way in which his twin brother, Nul, and his cousins play while he works at helping his father and his mother with their daily tasks. To make matters worse that night, Nul boasts of having secretly followed the great shark hunter Jikup to a meeting and spied on the men's secret business. His finishing statement— 'You wouldn't have an adventure because you're a good boy!' hurts the more because Loku knows it is correct.

Given those circumstances what young boy wouldn't leave home the next day looking for adventure? And adventure is what Loku finds, though they are ones he would prefer to not have experienced. First he creates a bushfire on another village's land and then, when caught, is forced for his crime to catch a large turtle. This may not seem too difficult but the turtle is in shark waters and the turtle is the totem of Loku's tribes.

This story is a modern telling but has the flavour and pattern of a folk tale:

The plot is simple and direct

- *Loku and the Shark Attack* is told in direct language; the plot moves along at a good pace and once the conflict has been resolved the ending is swift and satisfying.

Time and place is quickly established

- By the end of the first chapter the reader or listener knows Loku's character, his place in his family and the pattern of village life.

The characters are not drawn in the depth; they are largely symbolic

- Loku is every-young-boy who has a moment of rebellion, pays for his indiscretions and wins through because of his innate good character. He has been true to his village totem; is deeply contrite for his misdeeds and ends up a happier and wiser boy.

The theme of abiding by the rules of one's society is carefully interwoven in the narrative

- Loku breaks the rules, is punished and repents. He has learnt by his experience and will revert to being a good son and a useful member of the community. There is also the theme of jealousy being a corrosive and destructive force.

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*Loku and the Shark Attack* is easily read by students gaining reading confidence. It is also an enjoyable chapter book read-aloud. John Danalis' drawings are a model of sympathetic illustration warranting close attention. Read the story as a stand-alone shared reading activity with the class or as part of a planned thematic reading of folk tales from around the world or from a particular part of the world. (You will need to point out that *Loku and the Shark Attack* is a modern story written in the folk-tale tradition.) Also read the story as background information for a unit of work on New Guinea.

**ACTIVITIES****Art**

- What has the illustrator/designer used as a background on the cover? Why? Research items commonly used by families in New Guinea in the home and for gathering food. Look at the style of the drawings. Find examples of tribal art—decorative and illustrative—from New Guinea and comment on how successfully, or not, the illustrator has caught the feeling of such art on the cover and within the book.

**Oral work**

- Choose a section of the story you like most and retell it to the class saying what you like about it.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Deborah Carlyon is a debut author who's first novel *Mama Kuma: One woman, two cultures* won the **2001 Queensland Premier's Literary Awards - Best Emerging Author**. The biography of her Papua New Guinean grandmother has been well received in Australia and Papua New Guinea. In January 2003 she received an Australia Day medal from the Mayor of Noosa for her cultural contribution, and in April 2003 she was awarded with a Centenary Medal for outstanding contribution to society through literature. Deborah lives on the Sunshine Coast of Australia where she was the founding teacher for the Noosa Pengari Steiner School.

**ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR**

John Danalis grew up surrounded by sick, limping, tick-infested, homesick dogs. While his parents, uncle and aunt ran the family veterinary clinic, young Johnny spent much of his time comforting the canines as they recovered in their cages. Little did he know that the memory of those forlorn doggy faces would one day serve as the ideal reference for a childrens' book.

John lives in Brisbane with his artist wife, dancing daughters and Staffordshire Bull Terrier. When he is not illustrating or writing for children, he can be found in

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the forest riding one of his three bicycles. He is also studying to become a teacher.