

# [W7t] THE FIRST BORN [Jack Davis]

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## [W8t] THE FIRST BORN [Jack Davis]

Where are my first-born, said the brown land, sighing;

They came out of my womb long, long ago.

They were formed out of my dust - why, why are they crying

And the light of their being barely aglow?

I strain my ears for the sound of their laughter.

Where are the laws and the legends I gave?

Tell me what happened, you whom I bore after.

Now only their spirits dwell in the caves.

You are silent, you cringe from replying.

A question is there, like a blow in the face.

The answer is there when I look at the dying,

At the death and neglect of my dark proud race.

~ Jack Davis

## INTRODUCTION TO INDIGINOUS PEOPLE

CUE COLUMN Questions/Cues	NOTE TAKING COLUMN Key Ideas/Important facts/Repeated (stressed) information
Colonialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is <b>UNIVERSAL</b>: Almost <b>EVERY</b> country in the world has been both a coloniser and a colonised</li> <li>'Countries', or 'peoples' don't do it, <b>specific people</b> in governments cause it</li> <li>A nationalistic (flag-waving) 'follow the leader' culture and false sense of superiority to other peoples, which allows the colonial-minded people in the government to win support for their colonial activities, which they can dress up as an assertion, or restoration, of so-called 'national pride' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A large population</li> <li>A large army</li> <li>New forms of military technology</li> <li>High manufacturing capacity</li> </ul> </li> <li>Colonialism is cruel and unjust human action, whoever is doing it</li> </ul>
	INTRI

## BASIC UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

Question	Answer
Who is in the poem? (Characters)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The brown land [refers to the Australian land]</li> <li>Her first-born [refers to the indigenous people]</li> <li>'You' - 'whom I bore after' [refers to the English (who colonised Australia)]</li> </ul>
What happens? (List ALL events, including speech and actions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The land asks about its indigenous people; asks the colonisers what happened and doesn't get a reply</li> </ul>
Where is this happening?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'dark proud race'</li> </ul> </li> <li>In countries/areas that have been colonised before: <b>UNIVERSAL</b></li> </ul>
When is this happening?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After the deaths of her first-born</li> <li>No specific date (No 'in between 1700-1900')</li> <li>Any point of time when a country was colonised: <b>UNIVERSAL</b></li> </ul>
Who is speaking?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The brown land [Australian land]</li> </ul>
Question the ideas and attitudes we already have (assumptions) which we bring, perhaps unconsciously,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>

to our reading [Critical Thinking]	
Read with Technical Awareness	•

LINE #	QUOTE/EVIDENCE	ANALYSIS
1	Where are my first-born, said the brown land, sighing;	
2	They came out of my womb long, long ago.	
3	They were formed out of my dust - why, why are they crying	
4	And the light of their being barely aglow?	
5	I strain my ears for the sound of their laughter.	
6	Where are the laws and the legends I gave?	
7	Tell me what happened, you whom I bore after.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AKA: my children who were born later <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is this surprising? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ These are the terrible colonisers, evil foreigners, invaders (Negative)</li> <li>○ However "children" (Positive) is used</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Meaning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relationship between land and colonisers: mother and children</li> <li>○ Relationship between colonisers and aboriginals: siblings</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Emotions: confusion, disappointed, anger, hurt, anxiety, grief</li> <li>○ Not hatred: mother does not hate her children</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
8	Now only their spirits dwell in the caves.	
9	You are silent, you cringe from replying.	
10	A question is there, like a blow in the face.	
11	The answer is there when I look at the dying,	
12	At the death and neglect of my dark proud race.	

### WORDS AND CONNOTATIONS

Word	Connotation
Sighing	• Negative
Womb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive</li> <li>• Hope, safety, close, protective</li> </ul>
Dust	• Negative
Strain	• Negative

### METAPHORS

MAIN METAPHOR:

- **Extended Personification Metaphor**
  - Figure: A mother
  - Ground: The land / land where colonisation has taken place
    - A mother - and the removal of her children (parallel with the removal of indigenous children from their families)
  - Figure: Her first-born / her children
  - Ground: The natives who are being killed by the colonisers
- Narrative Perspective
  - History is speaking

4	And the light of their being barely aglow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Figure: light</li> <li>• Ground: aboriginal's life, hope, happiness, spirit, freedom</li> </ul>	•
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10	A question is there, like a blow in the face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Figure: blow in the face</li> <li>Ground: question</li> </ul>	
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### TONE

Word	Tone
Where are my first-born	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sad</li> <li>Helpless</li> <li>Pain/Agony over the loss of her children</li> </ul>
You are silent, you cringe from replying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anger</li> <li>Blame</li> </ul>

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- Rhymes: ABAB - Alternate rhyme

## Homework!

I strain my ears for the sound of their laughter.

Where are the laws and the legends I gave?

- Tell me what happened, **you whom I bore after.**

Now only their spirits dwell in the caves.

**Wow!**

What is the significance of this moment of the central metaphor – narrative perspective (the part in red)? Eg how does it affect how we see the relationships between the land, the colonisers and the indigenous people, and how does it affect the tone of the whole poem towards the colonisers?

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- THE FIRST BORN INTERPRETATION
  - The image of the land as mother
    - Although Jack Davis is male, he created a female voice to embody birth, care and wisdom
    - Situation: figure (the land as a mother) suddenly arises - as if she has been asleep - and can't find her 'first born' children
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