

Rabbit proof fence and the rabbits,

[Government](#), [Colonialism](#)



How does the film Rabbit Proof Fence and the picture book The Rabbits, by Phillip Noyce and John Marsden respectively, position a responder to feel sympathetic for the Aboriginal people in the film and book? The Aboriginal people of Australia have endured great suffering since white settlement began in 1788. Despite this, they have shown both resilience and determination to maintain their cultural identity. Phillip Noyce's Rabbit Proof Fence examines such suffering through its portrayal of three indigenous girls who were victims of the stolen generations in Western Australia. The film aligns itself with an Aboriginal perspective to demonstrate how prejudiced views about race held last century in Australia led to discriminatory actions. Additionally, the film presents the Aboriginal people as having a definite culture and sense of belonging, which positions a responder to sympathise with the way they were treated by the authorities of the time. Likewise, John Marsden and Shaun Tan's picture book The Rabbits also evokes a sympathetic response through its allegorical depictions of the brutal treatment the aborigines experienced during the process of white settlement and colonisation. Prejudice invariably leads to discriminatory actions. Noyce's Rabbit Proof Fence shows this through its portrayal of 2 sisters and their cousin who were forcibly removed from their mothers because they were deemed as 'half cast'. In one scene early in the film, the girls are grabbed by the authorities and thrust into a car. Ominous non-diegetic music is played to underscore the wills of the aboriginal women and the looks of fear on the girls' faces, which are captured through a range of close-up shots. This has the effect of making a responder feel sympathetic towards the Aboriginal people in the film as they are depicted as being victims of brutal and inhumane campaign

that failed to understand their culture and feelings. Similarly, *The Rabbits* also conveys the theme of prejudice by depicting, through anthropomorphism, how the Indigenous people of the country were disregarded by the white settlers. On one double page spread, the native animals which are symbolising the Aborigines are seen floating away from their families on white kites. Giant words are help up by giant sized rabbits stating 'They stole our children'. The visual hyperbole of the giant rabbits shows their domination and the white kites symbolise the white families that the Stolen Generations were assimilated in to. The use of second person language 'our' shows that the story is from the Aboriginal perspective and helps to elicit a sympathetic response from a responder as it allegorically shows the callous and inhumane treatment that they received. In both texts, a sense of belonging and cultural pride is demonstrated to exist within the Aboriginal people. The texts also show how this culture has been damaged, again evoking a sympathetic response from a responder. In one scene in *Rabbit Proof Fence*, Daisy, the youngest sister, begins to speak in her native tongue at the Moore River Camp, she is then told by a nurse to 'stop with that jabber.' The derogatory term 'jabber' in addition to the tone of voice used by the nurse is telling of how the white authorities did not appreciate the strong connection to a cultural identity that the girls had. Furthermore, close up shots of the girls faces show them looking confused and despondent, further adding to a sense of pathos for the aboriginal people. Additionally, in the picture book *The Rabbits* it contains a large amount of visual metaphors and symbols to illustrate how the rabbits came and took regardless of cultural and environmental worth. On the 5th double page

spread, it shows the physical beginning of their dominance over the land, showing the contrast between the Bilbies' and the Rabbits', of how the Bilbies respected the land and used the trees without damaging it, however the rabbits have begun to build houses from a material obtained from an unknown source and all the while emitting exhaust into the atmosphere and plotting the land which they have 'stolen' from the Bilbys. Also, in the bottom right corner there is a rat eating a lizard, the rat is a introduced species , a visual metaphor which illustrates the destroying of the natives culture. In conclusion, throughout the white history of the nation, Aboriginal people have suffered greatly due to their displacement from their lands, and the various policies that have sought to destroy their connection with each other and to their culture. Both Phillip Noyce's Rabbit Proof Fence and Marsden and Tan's The Rabbits evoke our sympathy by showing distinct Aboriginal points of view in relation to these issues. These text therefore serve a didactic purpose in helping to establish a more harmonious future for the aboriginal people in Australia.