

# Kampung Boy

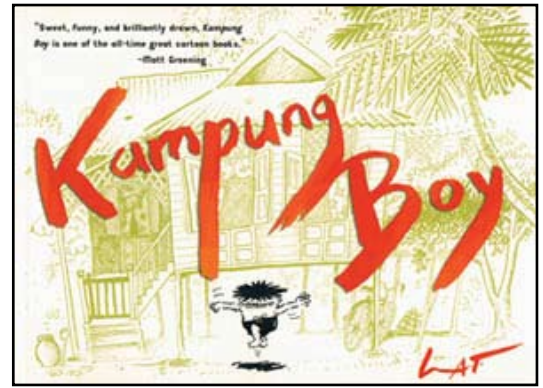
Author: Lat

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Teachers' notes and student activities compiled by Helen McIntyre



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## 1. About The Book

Lat's *Kampung Boy* is a timeless favourite of millions of readers in Southeast Asia. With masterful economy worthy of Charles Schultz, Lat recounts the life of Mat, a Muslim boy growing up in rural Malaysia in the 1950s: his adventures and mischief-making, fishing trips, religious education, and work on his family's rubber plantation.

Meanwhile, the traditional way of life in his village (or kampung) is steadily disappearing, with tin mines and factory jobs increasingly overtaking the village's agricultural way of life. When Mat himself leaves for boarding school, he can only hope that his familiar kampung will still be there when he returns.

This delightful autobiographical graphic novel is hilarious and affectionate, with brilliant, super-expressive artwork that opens a window into ordinary Malay life.

Such is the affection for this book in his native Malaysia, Lat has been honoured as one of that country's national treasures, entitled to the honorary title, 'Datuk'



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## 2. Discussion points and questions for teachers and parents

### Pre-reading questions and activities:

- Show students a map of Malaysia, and its place in relation to Australia. Are these countries in the same hemisphere? Does the map show land-use? Discuss this. Can students find out how many hours flight time between Melbourne and Kuala Lumpur, or between their nearest capital city and KL? Point out the city of Ipoh, the nearest big centre to Lat's kampung. Point out Malaysia's proximity to Indonesia.
- Do a Venn Diagram class brainstorm to establish the prior knowledge of students. Label one circle Malaysian history and traditions, the other circle Malaysia today. The intersection of the two circles will provide space for students' knowledge about Malaysia which fits both labels. This brainstorm will establish any knowledge of Malaysia.

### Cultural understandings:

- Teachers should read *The Really Big Belief Projects Book* (Costain, M, Curriculum Corporation, 2009) to consolidate understandings of beliefs including Islam from the point of view of children in Australia. They may find it useful to present to the class during the study of *Kampung Boy*.
- The text is presented in English, and is sprinkled with Bahasa Malay words. This is very similar to Bahasa Indonesian which is taught in many Australian schools. This presents opportunities for LOTE Indonesian students.
- Australian classrooms will have a range of understandings and experience about male circumcision. This will range from no understanding to having boys who have had a similar ceremony to Lat. Teachers will need to gauge this appropriately.

- If children are encountering this for the first time, Lat's drawings are endearing. They communicate both care on the adults' part, and pride and confusion on the child's part. It may be appropriate to discuss medical reasons for circumcision.
- Style: *Kampung Boy* is written in the first person 'I' voice, and much of it has a comic tone. The narrator is also the illustrator, and many of the illustrations are hilarious. At the same time *Kampung Boy* is highly informative about family relationships, cultural practices and the environment of 1950s Malaysia.
- The reading of *Kampung Boy* and the completion of the following activities will assist students to:-

Understand Asia

Develop informed attitudes and values

Know about contemporary and traditional Asia

Connect Asia and Australia

Communicate effectively

(National Statement for Engaging Young Australians with Asia in Australian Schools, 2006. [http://asiaeducation.edu.au/index\\_flash.htm](http://asiaeducation.edu.au/index_flash.htm))



## Questions:

Lat presents his 'birth to adolescence' boyhood story in the following 10 segments:-

1. Birth and toddlerhood P 4-13
2. From 4 years to 6 years P 15-43
3. Aged 6 years:- school, friendships and fun
4. The first time out of the kampung for a wedding P 66 - 73
5. Aged 9 years - fishing, mischief and drawing P 74 - 94
6. Aged 10 years - circumcision ceremonies P 95-107
7. Tin panning mischief P 108 - 123
8. Family rubber plantation lesson and future planning P124-132
9. Change in land-use in Malaysia - from plantations to tin mines P133 - 134
10. Off to boarding school and farewell kampung P 135 - 142

## Post reading questions and activities for the 10 segments:

1. Birth and toddlerhood (P 4-14)

*I was born about 10 o'clock on a Monday morning in our house...Father was under the house waiting anxiously.*

- Did you have a homebirth like Lat, or a hospital birth? If you had a homebirth, do you know who the midwife was?
- If you are Australian and you do not live in northern Australia you may find it strange that 'Father was under the house'. What are the climate and architectural reasons for this? What is the cultural reason?
- Create a time-line of the events that occur in the family household



from Lat's birth to the chanting of a sacred lyric around him. Are there any similarities with the way you were welcomed into the world? Can you find out? Explain.

- How did Lat's mother care for him as a baby? Quote from the story.
- We see the beginning of Lat's love and curiosity for the environment in this section. How does Lat, the author and illustrator, show this awakening?
- So far, what is similar and different to your house and environment?
- On Page 14 what do you think that the large pot at the bottom of the steps is used for? Why?

2. From 4 years to 6 years (P 15-43)

*At the age of four happiness was seeing Aunt Khatijah, a rubber small-holder, coming back from her daily tapping late in the morning...*

- Why would the rubber latex preparation be so interesting to a toddler? What are its attractions? How can we tell from the illustrations?
- We can tell that the Aunt paces herself through the process. Why does she need to do this? Think about the climate and the time of day indicated in the illustration.
- What is Lat's job with Maimunah? Is her 'rocking cradle' expensive? What was your first responsibility in the family?
- How do we know that Lat's mother is angry at him for wandering off to see the tin-mining dredge?

*I was so afraid of what Mum would do to me I was running like a barking deer.....*

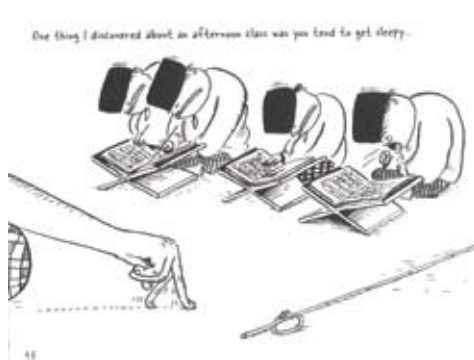
- This is funny, but it is also informative. What is a barking deer and where do they live?
- Are they now endangered in Malaysia? Why?

- Lat describes the dredge as a monster. This can be understood *literally* and *symbolically*, particularly if you have read the whole book. Explain why.
- Why does Lat see his father as a funny fellow? Create a word-web and write phrases from the story inside the web-circles for evidence. Decorate your word-web with your favourite illustration from this page 24 - 36 section.
- At the same time that Lat's father is being funny and entertaining, he is often teaching the children too. List examples of this.

### 3. Aged 6 years - school, friendships and fun (P 44 - 65 )

*My enrolment in the class was done in the traditional way....Dad handed over to Tuan Syed a bowl of glutinous rice, a fee of \$1, and a small cane and then said, 'Tuan I am handing my son over to you in the hope you will teach him The Koran. Treat him as if he is your own child. If he is stubborn or naughty don't hesitate to punish him with this cane – as long as you don't break any of his bones or blind him'.*

- Ask your parents or grandparents whether the above description of schooling was similar for them in the 1950s, for example the threat of corporal punishment.
- What techniques in Lat's drawings from P44 - 49 emphasise the fear of the six year old?
- Is it true that you can get sleepy in an afternoon class? Explain. Why do you think Lat



became sleepy?

- Did you learn in a second or third language when you were small, like Lat learns some Arabic? Explain.
- What is the Koran?
- How do kampung men socialize when they are in town?

*I had so much to learn. I couldn't swim and I didn't know how to handle a fish and I thought it was up to these fellows to teach me. I was extremely proud to be with them.*

- The pages of drawings around this extract communicate the joy of friendship, fishing, swimming and river wilderness encounters without adult supervision. Did you grow up like this at all? Did your parents? If you grew up in an urban environment, were there similarities?

### 4. The first time out of the kampung for a wedding (P 66 - 73)

*My family and I were in the party that accompanied the groom to the Akad Nikah ceremony at the bride's house.*

- Construct an A4 poster with 2 columns. Label one column Lat's relative's wedding in Malaysia, 1950s. Label the other A 21st century wedding in my family. Then list the events in the ceremonies in *Kampung Boy* from P 66- 72, and next to each event in the other column list a similar or opposite event. For example the bridegroom is late in the culture of *Kampung Boy*, but often in Australia it is the bride who is expected to be late. Decorate your poster with magazine pictures of weddings of as many faiths as you can find.
- Research the popular Joget folk dance, borrow some

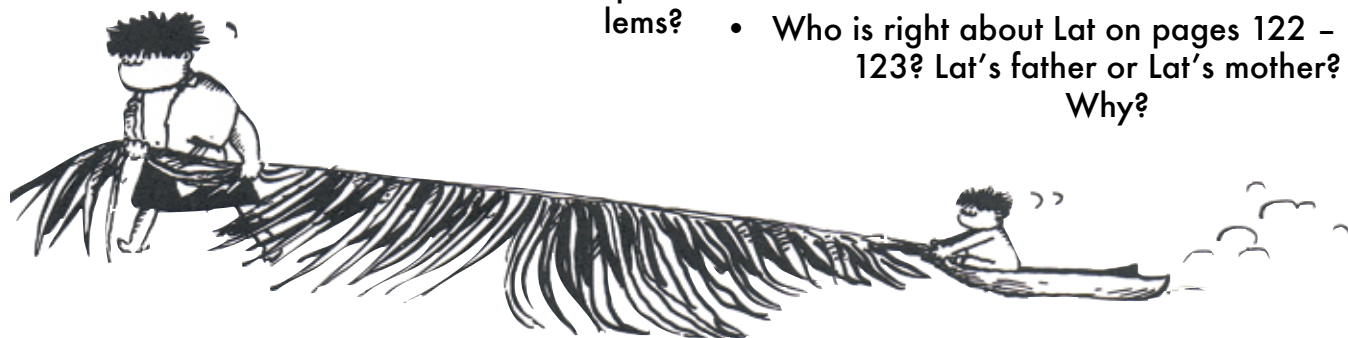


sarongs to wear and have some class dancing. There may be someone in your community to invite along to teach your class.

5. Aged 9 years – fishing, mischief and drawing (P 75 – 94)

*At the age of nine I began to feel that I was a responsible person...I had already started an extra class conducted by Tuan Syed where we learned how to pray....By this time we already had another fellow in the family, Abdul Rahman. As you can see, he enjoyed being taken for a ride on the spathe of the Pinang tree.*

- We learn that Lat is indeed becoming a responsible person because he.... (complete this sentence with 3 reasons).
- Why does Lat find going to school a difficult task? Do you empathise with him? Why?
- Lat draws his female teacher on pages 83 - 85 in a caricature style. What does caricature mean? Look it up in the dictionary. Where can we see caricatures daily? Do you like this form of humour? Why? Do you think it sometimes goes too far? If so, when? Think about sexism, racism, Islamophobia etc.
- The free powdered milk program at school sounds like a good idea, but Lat lets the reader know that it wasn't. He uses writing techniques called irony and under-statement. Find and copy an example of each on P85 - 86. Research these aid programs from Nestle and so on, which set up these programs for babies and children in Africa and Asia in the 1950s and 1960s. What were the problems?



- Research the durian fruit. Can someone bring one to school from a market when they are in season? What are the amazing characteristics of this fruit? What cultural belief is associated with the durian?

6. Aged 10 years – circumcision ceremonies (P 95 - 107)

*I was told that it was time for me to be circumcised. I was almost ten years old then. It was not something I that I was happy to hear, but I knew everyone had to pass through it. It was my grandmother's wish that the Bersunat (circumcision) ceremony be held at her house.*

- Create a PMI (Plus/Minus/Interesting) chart for this section which follows the circumcision cultural customs, ceremonies and care of ten year old boys. Your teacher will guide you through this section and you can plot the various events into the chart according to your opinions.

7. Tin panning mischief (P 108 – 123)

*Meanwhile the Meor brothers had gone in for a new pastime ..dulang washing..*

- Dulang washing or tin-panning is rather like gold-panning. Why did Lat and his friends go tin-panning?
- Why were the tin-company, the policeman and Lat's father cross about the boys going tin-panning? Was this fair?
- How do we know that the dredging machine has an environmental impact? Please quote for evidence.
- Who is right about Lat on pages 122 – 123? Lat's father or Lat's mother? Why?

8. Family rubber plantation lesson from father, and future planning (P124-132)

*A few days later my father took me to his 2 acre rubber plantation. I had no idea why he was taking me there I had never been to this area before. 'You should know about this plantation'...'But father. ..why not let the man who looks after the plantation take care of (that boundary clearing) job?'*

- Conduct a de Bono's Thinking Hats activity. Divide the class in half. One half should put themselves into Lat's father's shoes. For each colour thinking hat, record what Lat's father is thinking during the 'rite of passage' visit to the family rubber plantation (P124 - 128). The other half should put themselves into Lat's shoes. For each colour thinking hat, record what Lat might be thinking. Report back to the whole class. Remember:

White hat = What are the facts?

Red hat = How do you feel?

Yellow hat = What are the benefits?

Black hat = What are some of the problems?

Green hat = What are some solutions?

Blue hat = Thinking about thinking

- Which hat is your character mostly wearing during these events? Why?

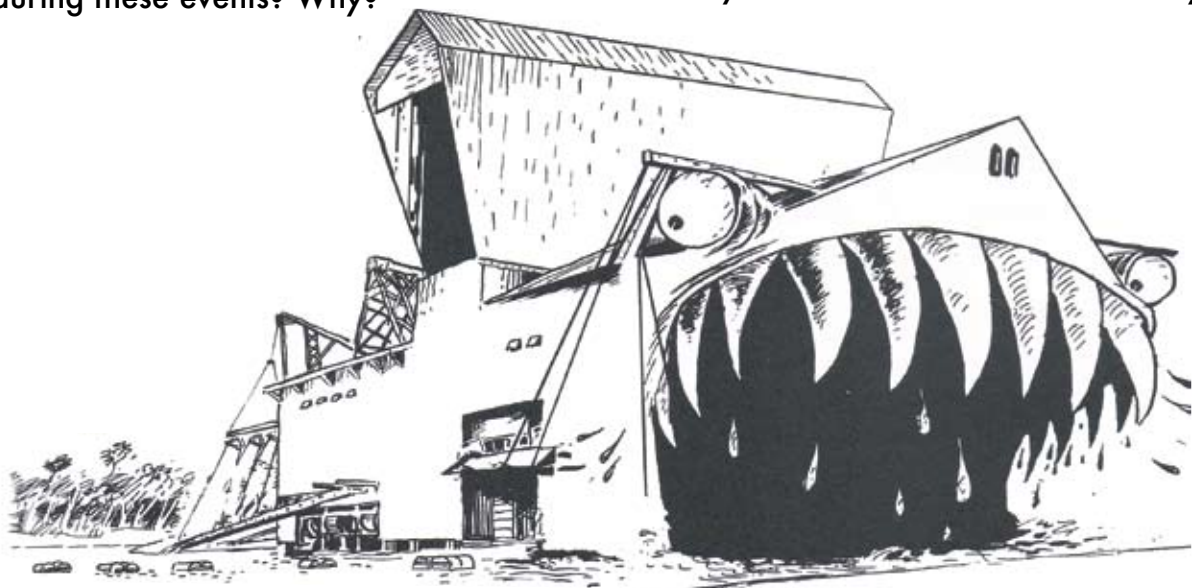
*The special exam that was approaching was for standard four pupils and several, including myself, were advised to take it. If I could pass I would be admitted to an exclusive boarding school in the big town of Ipoh. I would really be a somebody....I passed...YAHOO.....*

- Here we see Lat set himself a big goal related to his future schooling. What do we really learn about Lat when he passes?

9. Change in land-use in Malaysia – From plantations to tin mines (P133 - 134)

*If the tin company does buy your father's land, we can use the money to get a home in the cheap housing development in Ipoh. Many local folk are thinking the same.*

- As Lat looks back as an adult he can see that the development of tin-mining affected not only his kampung, but it affected many, many kampungs across Malaysia. What were the attractions of selling the rubber plantations?
- Malaysia is currently undergoing another big change in land-use with the mass planting of palm-oil plantations. Research this industry and create a PMI (plus, minus, interesting) chart.
- Today Malaysia also has a big tourism industry. What attracts tourists to Malaysia?



10. Off to boarding school and farewell kampung (P 135 – 142)

*I felt sad. I still remember what my grandmother said while we waited for the bus. 'Listen. Don't be arrogant there. Be humble because we are humble people. Always remember God and don't forget about us back here in the kampung'.*

- In a round-robin circle recount a piece of wise advice that a grandparent has given you.



### Hands-on activities

Teachers could offer students a 'jigsaw option' where groups choose to specialise/ become experts in one particular segment. They complete the activities for that one segment, then they present their findings/work back to the class.

- Make a list of all the characters in *Kampung Boy*. Run a secret ballot to vote for your favourite character or caricature.
- Lat's silhouette drawings of his parents having conversations at night, that the children are not meant to hear, are reminiscent of the style of wayang puppets which are popular in Malaysia and Indonesia. Students could make some puppets of the characters in *Kampung Boy* and produce a very funny show for the class.

- Make a model of a section of the Malay town near the kampung as depicted on pages 38 – 39, and/or make a model of Lat's house on page 14.
- Lat's representations of the patterns on the traditional sarongs are wonderful. Run a basic batik lesson.
- *Kampung Boy* includes many Malay Bahasa words. Make a flashcard for each of these words and decorate your classroom.
- Research: On page 38 we meet Mr Ah Yew and we see an Indian eating shop. What can you find out about the history of Chinese people and Indian people in Malaysia?
- Research the Raleigh bicycle, the Morris Minor and the Austin car of the 1950s, all of which feature in *Kampung Boy*.

### 3. Further references

- Asia Scope and Sequence for Studies of Society and the Environment [http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public\\_html/scope\\_sequence.htm](http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public_html/scope_sequence.htm)
- Asia Scope and Sequence for Studies of English [http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public\\_html/scope\\_sequence.htm](http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public_html/scope_sequence.htm)
- Asia Scope and Sequence for Studies of The Arts [http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public\\_html/scope\\_sequence.htm](http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public_html/scope_sequence.htm)
- Australia Kaleidoscope, Hamston and Murdoch, 2004, Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne. See Chapter 5, People – Kate Beynon: an artist promoting good spirits.
- Images of Asia: The Environment: 8 cards plus teacher guide; Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne
- Snapshots of Asia - Malaysia, Ledger and Ledger, Snapshots of Asia Big Book series, Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne.

## 4. About the Contributors

### About the author

#### Lat

Mohammad Nor Khalid was born in Malaysia on 5 March 1951. Known as 'Lat,' many of his cartoons appear in the editorial pages of the Malaysian national newspaper, New Straits Times.

One of the most beloved cartoonists in Southeast Asia, Lat published his first work when he was just thirteen years old. He has received numerous awards, including, in 1994, the prestigious Malaysian honorific title, Datuk. Most recently he was honored by the Malaysian Press Institute with their Special Jury Award, given to 'those who have contributed significantly to journalism and society and have become an institution in their own right.' He is famous throughout Malaysia.

Editions of *Kampung Boy* his most celebrated and best-loved work, have appeared in France, Germany and the US. Written originally in English, the book has sold countless thousands of copies worldwide. The book has been turned into an animated series and has also been the subject of an orchestral performance by famed modern composer Carl Davis.



### About the Publisher

#### Wilkins Farago

Founded in 1998, Wilkins Farago is an independent book publishing company based in Melbourne, Australia. We don't publish a lot of books, so we care about the ones we do publish. In recent years, we have developed a reputation for publishing acclaimed and award-winning children's books from around the world, many of them translated into English for the first time.



Through publishing the finest international children's books, we hope to expose children in Australia and New Zealand (and their parents and teachers) to new cultures, new perspectives, and new styles of illustration.

More of our titles can be seen at [www.wilkinsfarago.com.au](http://www.wilkinsfarago.com.au), we hope you enjoy reading and learning with our books.





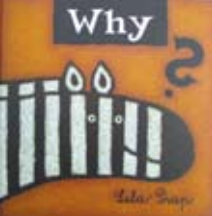


### Teachers' Notes Creator

#### Helen McIntyre

Helen McIntyre is an experienced secondary Year 7-12 English teacher, curriculum writer and Asia-literacy network leader. She has a special interest in Asia-literacy for Australian students, including rural students. She has travelled extensively in Asia, both privately and professionally, particularly in Nepal, India, China and Vietnam. She has been mentored by the Asia Education Foundation and was awarded Victoria's 'Outstanding Teacher - Excellence in Studies of Asia' in 2000.



## 5. Also Available - With Teachers' Notes

	<p><b>The Red Piano</b> Published in association with Amnesty International Australia by Andre Leblanc, illustrated by Barroux ISBN 9780980607017, RRP A\$27.99/NZ\$39.99, hb</p> <p>This stirring and beautiful picture book relates the moving and inspiring story of a gifted young girl's passion for the piano in a time of historic turmoil. Inspired by the amazing true story of the international concert pianist Zhu Xiao-Mei this acclaimed picture book from France poetically relates an extraordinary story of perseverance set against a cataclysmic period of history which is, to this day, still shrouded in mystery.</p>
	<p><b>A Dad Who Measures Up</b> by Davide Cali, illustrated by Anna-Laura Cantone ISBN 9780958557191, RRP A\$16.99/NZ\$19.99, pb ISBN 9780958557177, RRP A\$26.99/NZ\$29.99, hb</p> <p>What makes a dad ideal? One little girl is about to find out, in this funny, charming and ultimately moving story of her search for a dad who can measure up to the mummy she loves.</p>
	<p><b>Piano Piano</b> by Davide Cali, illustrated by Eric Heliot ISBN 9780980416534, RRP A\$24.99/NZ\$29.99, hb</p> <p>In this funny and entertaining picture book about finding your passion, young Marcolino doesn't want to practice the piano, but Grandfather helps him find the musical instrument that's right for him - and it's a real surprise!</p>
	<p><b>Waiting for Mummy</b> by Tae-Jun Lee &amp; Dong-Sung Kim ISBN 9780958557146, RRP A\$26.99/NZ\$29.99, hb</p> <p>Book of the Year in Korea, Waiting for Mummy is a deceptively simple story of patience rewarded. A child waits for his mother at a tram-stop. Trams come and go, people alight, yet her devoted son waits stoically and patiently.</p>
	<p><b>Why?</b> by Lila Prap ISBN 9780958557153, RRP A\$16.99/NZ\$16.99, pb</p> <p>A hit across Europe, this informative and entertaining picture book gives both funny and factual answers and features Hans Christian Andersen Award nominee Lila Prap's acclaimed pastel drawings.</p>
	<p><b>The Enemy</b> by Davide Cali, illustrated by Serge Bloch ISBN 9780958557184, RRP A\$29.99/NZ\$34.99, hb</p> <p>The Enemy is a profound, moving and poignant fable for our time about two lonely soldiers facing each other across a barren desert battlefield. Are they the only soldiers left? How can they end the war? Just who is the enemy?</p>
	<p><b>In Just One Second</b> by Silvio Freytes, illustrated by Flavio Morais ISBN 9780980416596, RRP A\$24.99/NZ\$29.99</p> <p>This ingenious and fascinating picture book depicts commonplace street scenes. The final page shows that these events have one thing in common: they're all happening simultaneously. On one street. In just one second. As well as providing a colourful and entertaining streetscape for children to explore, this striking picture book also introduces the concept of Time to kids, and encourages them to consider all the things that are happening in just one second in their own world.</p>