

And so the story of Azaria lives forever in the heart of the desert to remind us to look beyond the surface, for things are not always as they seem.



long-passed generations. And the reader is respected and not patronised. Australian indigenous stories for children are deeply rooted by Dreamtime folklore, but for the most part, our mainstream picture books can be pretty shallow and disconnected.

I think Azaria and Lindy's story is as defining a national tale as that of Ned Kelly, William Buckley, or Burke and Wills. It reveals a lot about who we are, about our maturity as a nation.

PD: You have been drawing the story for years - were you leading up to this book?

MC: Yes, since I first heard this story, it stayed with me. The loss and injustice, the unfairness really bothered me. I couldn't let it go. And also, as an artist, the imagery is iconic in the true sense of that overused word. There's the mother and child, the great rock at Uluru, an ancient place/a brand new babe, the twinkling night-time, the dingo, desert, the colours, love, loss, ignorance, the treatment of women, ideas of indigenous Australia and immigrant Australia, and The Fairytale Myth. In this single event, so many themes intersect.

The fascination does certainly continue for me, mostly because of the surprising reaction to this book, from adults. Some don't

know the name Azaria at all, the story has been lost to them completely, which in itself vindicates the book. Others are very reactive, and eager to judge once again a person whose experience and actions they still know little about. This reaction reveals that we are not done yet with this story ... even after 40 years.

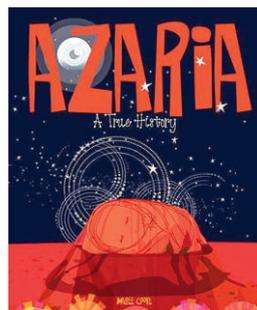
PD: You have created teachers' notes and other tools?

MC: Teachers' Notes are often supplied by writers so that schoolteachers have a package of information they can use to create classes based on the book. For *Azaria: A True History*, these include an overview of my motivations and inspirations, right through to a critique of the images.

PD: What was Lindy's reaction to the book?

MC: Lindy was funny, friendly and generous. She didn't ever try to direct me at all, unless there was a blatant mistake in my legal facts or chronology. She said she is very happy with the result.

Azaria: A True History by Maree Coope (Melbournstyle Books, \$29.95)



OPINION



Locked down & loving the Corona Sutra

Kathy Lette

Are you testing positive for Corona? I don't mean the disease. I mean, are you secretly enjoying self-isolation? I know this deadly pandemic is terrifying but, much to my amazement, I am finding some positive aspects to the lockdown. Fresh air, bird song, a return to family meal times, no rush hours, time to Face Time friends, the joy of jigsaw puzzles ...

Oh, and a lot more sex. Sex is the best, most wonderful thing in the entire world ... apart from shoe sales, scuba diving and winning the Pulitzer Prize for literature. But juggling kids, career, commutes, work functions, parent teacher nights and social commitments leaves most couples too exhausted to enjoy it. Crawling into bed late at night, the one thing most Mums are fantasising about is - sleep. For many parents, "a new position in bed" means sleeping on your other side.

But not during the lockdown. Kissing and touching may be banned in the outside world, but as long as you do it in isolation with a consenting adult who's isolating under the same roof, it's a hobby that can definitely keep your hands full.

In Italy, where they've been in serious lockdown for more than a month, the online sale of sex toys has skyrocketed. Locked in lovers are clearly pushing out the carnal envelope. But I feel there should be a few rules concerning experimentation. Inflating plastic sexual pleasure enhancers can cause the most awful migraines. And I'm sorry, but surely handcuffs are only acceptable if you're an undercover cop with ASIO. With winter setting in, no woman wants to catch pneumonia from constantly slipping into something less comfortable. I also know for a fact that fishnet friction can inflict a nasty wound on your most sensitive areas.

One of my girlfriends called to say that her husband wants to extend their R-rated repertoire with a little cross-dressing. Now, I thought "cross dressing" was what most Mums experience every morning when a closet rummage reveals that our teenage daughters have borrowed favourite clothes without asking.

But no. My girlfriend went on to explain that she'd just discovered her husband wearing her best designer dress. And she was furious. "Why?" I asked tentatively "Did he stretch it?" "No. He was wearing stockings with sandals! I mean - stockings and sandals. I can't believe I could have married a man who could do that!"

Online Zoom orgies are also enjoying a huge upsurge in popularity. The only good thing about an orgy is that it does away with the anxiety about what to wear - no dressing crossly, that day! But the very thought of filming my sexual encounters makes me suffer from a performance anxiety I haven't felt since those hedonistic hours of enforced folk dancing in primary school.

At the opposite end of the experimentation scale, beware hobbies who suddenly only want to do it with the lights off. As you go through the motions in the dark, you'll gradually realise that he's actually having sex with Beyonce ... And that she's getting many more orgasms than you are!

And don't be persuaded to shave anywhere intimate either. It may sound erotic, but when it's growing back, it looks like a shag pile that's been terrorised.

Which brings me to another upside of the lockdown - the money I'm saving on personal grooming. Women haemorrhage moolah on hair dye, pedicures, manicures, eyebrow tints, lash extensions and body waxing. Some of my friends no longer even know their natural hair colour. Well, with beauty salons off limits, we're all about to find out.

When I take my daily allocated hour of exercise in the local park, I feel as though I've taken the Tardis back to the 1970s - bearded, long-haired blokes stroll beside hairy legged, make-up free females ... And now that women have been liberated from the pain of waxing, will they ever go back? Hopefully blokes will also have learnt to appreciate the joys of a little light bush walking ...

So enjoy your fornication freedom while you may, because no doubt the government will soon issue its position on positions - a kind of Corona Sutra, advising which carnal configurations are the least likely to cause contagion.

Dear God, they've legislated on just about everything else. Till then, happy horizontal refreshing.

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