

## Task for *It's Raining in Mango*

### Extract from "Getting to know them"

*This hill, grey scrub against blue, the long grasses dry before the big rains, is where Bidiggi Tandawarra crouches with his father and uncles and brothers and all the men of the tribe. The Merkins, farther upstream, had been shunted off their fishing grounds by white men making a wild magic along the sandy beaches of the river. These men held shallow dishes that they filled with water and sand and as if they were making ritual in totem dance shook and swilled and emptied again. The men of the tribe had rested their spears against trees to show they came in peace but a white man on one of the big four-legged animals had led a charge into them where they stood defenceless, arms dangling, hands empty.*

*This morning in the predawn dark, his eyes accustomed to darkness, Bidiggi could see the white men's own totemic circle of saddles and packs stacked to make a bora ring. Behind that little wall he knew, and his father and uncles and brothers knew, the white man lay in wait.*

*There was not a whisper in the lank grass as his own tribe lay waiting for the elder to give the signal. Behind, before, and around him, the smell of family, the smell of the tall men with the copper skin.*

*The softest of clickclicks. The signal.*

*Suddenly Bidiggi was screeching with the others, parrot cries bucking in his throat as he raced forward with his spear. Pounding and pounding over late summer grass. The darkness hanging ragged. Then the shouting sticks began to bark and fire pocked swirling air in front of him. As he ran he glimpsed his brother, running beside him, drop suddenly. Bidiggi hesitated. There were other dark shapes on the dark grass. He bent over his brother, puzzled, and shook him.*

*Why wouldn't he move?*

*There was no spear.*

*He shook him again, urgently. Still his brother wouldn't move.*

*Then Bidiggi seized his brother's arms and hauled him up, trying to make him stand, trying to set his feet in motion. His brother crumpled like a broken tree.*

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*Bidiggi's mind whimpered. No spear. No death. He tried again while the sticks shouted all round him and his brother, still warm, dropped forward and fell flat on the ground. Once more he dragged him upright and, edging to the front of him, pushing and propping, saw the hole gaping in his brother's chest. Burra, he breathed. Burra. He tore up handfuls of grass and wadded it into the bleeding cavity, pushing and packing, his fingers dripping. "Walk!" he kept pleading and ordering in the language, "Walk, brother. Fight!"*

*He took his hands away from the cooling shoulders and his brother fell forward.*

*Terrified of this magic and the unending shouting of the sticks, he could see as the dark thinned that more and more of his tribe had fallen. He slid down into the grass and slithered back to the narrow gully from which they had all crept. He shook with fear and the grass around him shook too. He had seen his father fall, his brother and three of his uncles.*