

THE PANTHER WITHIN

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A **STUDY GUIDE** BY CASEY LANGSFORD



<http://www.metromagazine.com.au>

ISBN: 978-1-74295-972-6

<http://theeducationshop.com.au>



THE PANTHER WITHIN STUDY GUIDE

Filmmaker Edoardo Crismani and his mother Barbara embark on a search to unravel the mystery surrounding her father Joe Murray. Joe was an Aboriginal boxer and vaudevillian who was also known as ‘The Black Panther’ in the boxing ring. He never revealed where he came from and the family feel that now is the time to find out. Together, mother and son journey across the land to libraries, and meet with researchers and Aboriginal elders with the hope of shedding light on Joe’s life and discovering their connections. This is a personal story about courage and the talents of a famous lightweight boxer and vaudevillian who is unknown by history. It is also a story of the impact that race relations have upon a family through two generations.

» Curriculum Links

The documentary ‘The Panther Within’ can be linked with the curriculum in multiple ways across multiple year levels.

It clearly connects with the aims of the National Curriculum to address “two distinct needs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education:

- ◆ *that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are able to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each*

of the learning areas, can fully participate in the curriculum and can build their self-esteem that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is designed for all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures.



In particular the Key Ideas of “People” can be linked closely with ‘The Panther Within’:

- ◆ *The broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies encompass a diversity of nations across Australia.*
- ◆ *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ family and kinship structures are strong and sophisticated.*
- ◆ *The significant contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the present and past are acknowledged locally, nationally and globally”.*

The documentary can be linked with the History curriculum, which focuses on “Who we are”

- ◆ *Students explore their own identity, Australia’s heritage and cultural diversity, and Australia’s identity as a nation in the world. They examine the significance of traditions and shared values within society.*



attitudes and capabilities of those who will take responsibility for Australia's future'.

**** Viewer Note**** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are warned that the following program may contain images and voices of deceased persons.

Previewing Activities

Students can complete the following activities before they view the documentary 'The Panther Within':

'The Panther Within' also highlights to students the methods of enquiry used by historians to examine the past and retell this history. This element of the history curriculum is examined across multiple year levels and the documentary will show how incomplete historical research often is and the different types of sources available to historians.

'The Panther Within' could also be used as a text in English in order to support students' study of literature and literacy. The curriculum states that 'the study of English is central to the learning and development of all young Australians. It helps create confident communicators, imaginative thinkers and informed citizens. It is through the study of English that individuals learn to analyse, understand, communicate and build relationships with others and with the world around them. The study of English helps young people develop the knowledge and skills needed for education, training and the workplace. It helps them become ethical, thoughtful, informed and active members of society and plays an important part in developing the understanding,

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- What do you think the title refers to? What is the purpose of a title for a documentary? Does the title intrigue you as the audience or are you left with too many questions?
- Define the following words and then put them in a sentence to show your understanding of these words: identity, culture, Indigenous, courage, racism, connections.
- List what you know about Aboriginal history. Compile your knowledge as a class, and try to put it in a timeline. Add to this timeline as you learn more about Indigenous history throughout this Unit.
- What role does family play in your life? How important is family to you? Write a brief reflection on how family has played a role in your life, either in a positive or negative way.
- Do you know the heritage of your grandparents? As a class list all the different nationalities that make up your grandparents' identity. What does this reveal about your class?
- What are some ways we learn about the past? In particular, the history of our own families?





What are some challenges people might face in researching their family history? What might stop people from wanting to know about their family, and their history?

Viewing Activities

Students can complete the following activities as they view the documentary, 'The Panther Within':

- Who are the main characters shown in this documentary?
- What events encouraged Edoardo to begin learning about his family and their history?
- Fill in a table, like the one below, to record your knowledge and understanding of the documentary. For each character list as much information as you learn.

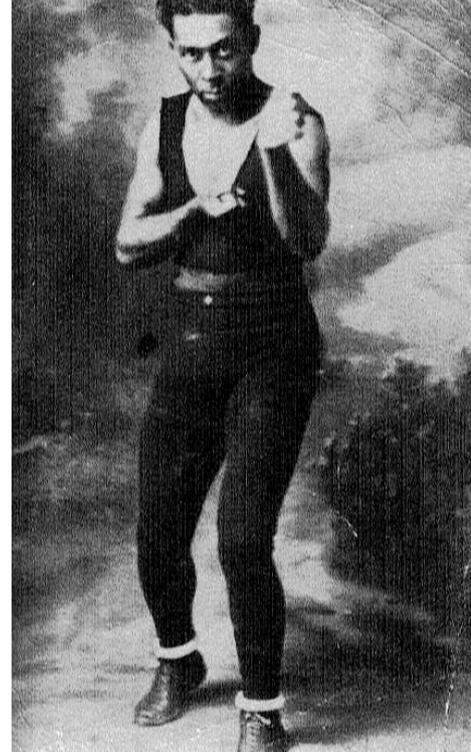
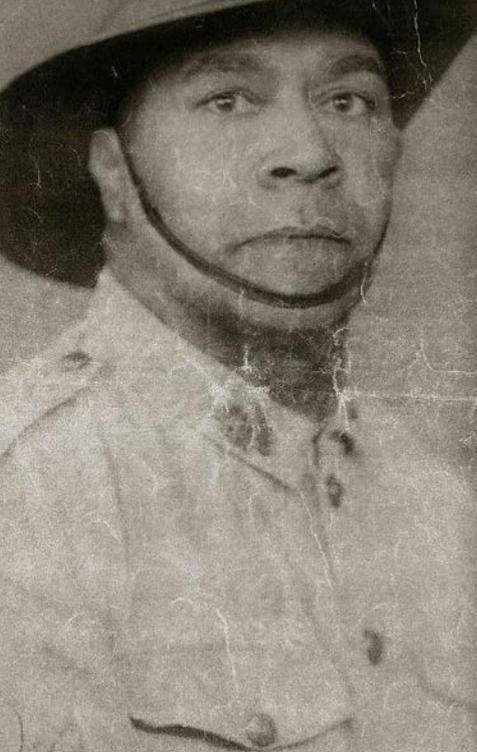
Edoardo	Barbara	Joe Murray
<i>Eg. Wants to know the history of his family, in particular his grandfather; Joe Murray.</i>	<i>Eg. Doesn't know all the details about her father's life, but wants to learn them for herself and her children.</i>	<i>Eg. Indigenous boxer. Travelled across Australia. Fought in WW2.</i>

Learning Activities on 'The Panther Within':

A journey of discovery as the filmmaker unravels the mystery surrounding his grand-pop, Aboriginal boxer and vaudevillian, known as the 'Black Panther'.

- Why do you think Joe Murray and his history is such a mystery? Do you think this elusiveness would be common among people with Aboriginal heritage? Justify your response.
- Do you think Joe Murray made a choice to not discuss his past and his history with his family? Why do you think he might not have wanted to talk about these things?
- What role does music play in the documentary, and in Edoardo's journey? How important is music to you? Pick 3-5 songs you would pick to feature in a documentary about your family, and write 100 words explaining each song choice.





- List the different locations that are visited in the documentary. What does this reveal about the life of Joe Murray? Locate all the different cities and towns on a map of Australia.
- What methods does Edoardo use to find out about the history of Joe Murray? List the methods and how successful they were in helping Edoardo in finding information. You might want to collate your notes in a table. For each source discuss whether they would be considered a primary or secondary resource, and if they are a reliable resource for Edoardo.
- How do you think Edoardo started trying to find information about Joe Murray? What steps would you take if you were looking into someone from the past?
- Not knowing about Joe Murray, Edoardo's grandfather and Barbara's father, has left them both with a feeling of loss and a lack of connection with their history. How has *not knowing* about their family's history shaped them?
- Joe is described by Barbara as being very strict when she, and her siblings, were growing up. What does the documentary suggest this is a reaction to?
- What is vaudeville? How did Joe Murray come to be a boxer? What is the history around the 'Boxing Tents'?
- How do we see faith playing a role in the documentary?
- Explain why the marriage between Joe and Elizabeth so shocking at the time.
- What examples of racism are shown in the documentary? Can you think of any current examples of racism in Australia, your community, or that you have witnessed?
- Describe how the racist language used towards Barbara was upsetting and offensive.
- Barbara describes words as powerful. Do you agree with this statement? Have you ever

What is vaudeville? How did Joe Murray come to be a boxer? What is the history around the 'Boxing Tents'?

- experienced a time when words were powerful, in either a positive or negative way?
- Discuss how attitudes towards Indigenous Australians have changed since Joe Murray's time.
- Why do you think Joe Murray was known as the Black Panther?
- What does the conversation with Les reveal about what the family did and didn't know about their own father?
- Explain the journey to Melbourne, and then to Ballarat. What is discovered during this trip?
- Do you have any questions after watching the documentary? Is there any more information you would like to know? Was there anything left out that you think needed to be included?
- Describe how important family is for Edoardo and Barbara. What does the scene in Shepparton with the Murray sisters reveal about both families?
- Why does Joe Murray write that he is a Canadian on his Army enlistment forms? What does this information tell us about Joe Murray but also Australian society at the time?
- What impact did World War Two have on Joe and his family? How might this have been reflected in the wider community? Have the attitudes towards veterans changed since Joe Murray's time, in particular Aboriginal people who served?
- How does Barbara's cancer, and remission, feature in the documentary? How did this change Edoardo's and Barbara's views on finding out about their family?
- How does the documentary end? Did you expect to find out more information about Joe Murray? How might this ending challenge audiences?
- What sacrifices do we make for our families? Do we see any examples of family sacrifices



Extension Activities

Students can complete the following work in preparation for an assessment task or as extension work:

- Examine how the documentary, 'The Panther Within' was constructed. What techniques did the director use to convey meaning? What do you think the key ideas of the documentary were? Who is the intended audience of this documentary? Do you think the director was successful in conveying these ideas to the intended audience?
- Research your own grandparents. Choose a grandparent and trace their history. You may need to do some research outside your own family, like visiting the local library or looking them up online. Present your research in a short (3-5 minute) video that highlights some important parts of their lives.
- What is, and who were, the Stolen Generation? Who were taken from their families? Why were they taken? What has been the impact on Aboriginal people, history and culture? Spend some

in the documentary? Have you ever made a sacrifice for your family, or can you think of an example that you have witnessed?

- How is the theme of 'journeys' explored through the documentary, 'The Panther Within'? Name the different stages of the journeys that the characters go on. What choices and decisions do Edoardo and Barbara have to make on their journey?
- Has Edoardo's family history, and not knowing all the details of his family history, influenced the choices and direction of Edoardo's life?
- Do you think your family history will influence your future? Whether it be the job you get, the place where you live, or your own family? Justify your response.



(By "Night Owl")

A good attendance greeted Les Carter and Joe Murray when they entered the ring for the main bout at the Stadium on Saturday night.

The weights were announced as Carter 145, Murray 140, but it looked as if Carter had far more the better of the weights. Both men came out willing at the start, and Carter came with a left jab straight in, ray backer the back of landed a body, ar hands to away and was fore od the r with his second r with sol Carter's hand and and made opened a through with right head and the name Carter, at got home body. N tactics in just as an using his two-handed Carter m occasional accidents making it his speed his one fighting in just wher ray wher and fell matter e then Mur nearly fo getting e wise, sol The sixth to date, both han saw Car he score Murray / opponen in at c attempt any had r from reed se kne s dur and. r nigh ng re b his them mor atr roi e t n. i su l r a j, if a d se. st with head. est ha and the... stepped into a t ing match. During one there. During the opening rounds he was last and clever, but panish.

BOXING!

AT _____
IN THE MARQUEE
ON _____

**MURRAY'S
BOXING ENTERTAINERS**

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ART of SELF DEFENCE**
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time researching this topic in pairs, present your research in a report form.

- Write a film review of this documentary for your school's newsletter. In your review remember to include a brief overview of the plot, what the director was attempting to achieve and your rating of the film.
- Spend some time researching Indigenous Australians and their role in the Army during World War 1 and World War 2. Use this website as a starting place: <https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/aborigines/indigenous/> In pairs create your own memorial to these Indigenous Australians who served in Australia's Defence Forces. Each pair will present their idea to the class.
- Write an expository essay based on one of the prompts listed below. Remember to follow the structure required in expository writing: a brief introduction, body paragraphs that explore your ideas, and a conclusion that summarises your points. Draw on ideas and evidence from 'The Panther Within'.

- ◆ *Everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging.*
- ◆ *Our identity is never perfect; we must accept the good as well as the bad.*
- ◆ *Everyone struggles with their identity.*
- ◆ *Discovering our identity is a challenging journey*

- Besides family, what else shapes our identity? Write a half page, or more, reflection on who you are and what influences your identity. Explore how your identity might have changed over time, and how you and others see you.

Everyone needs to feel a sense of belonging

Do you have any dreams for the future of your identity?

- Write a creative piece in which you explore the theme of journeys. Your creative piece could be a short story, poem or reflection. Ensure you complete a plan and a draft before you begin your final piece.
- Visit your local library and explore the resources they have on local history. If your local library does not have what you are looking for, explore the State Library of Victoria's website which you can use to explore different elements of family, Victorian or Australian history. <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/> Can you find any information about members of your family? Collate any information about any family members and present to the rest of the class.





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This study guide was produced by **ATOM**. (© ATOM 2016)
ISBN: 978-1-74295-972-6 editor@atom.org.au

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