

Chapter 1

Where is the lake?



"I don't get it," said Josh. "Where's the lake?"

Josh and his best friend, Leo, looked out at the desolate landscape. They had put their sleeping bags away with the rest of the class, and now they wanted to see the water. But all they could see was endless sand and scrub.

They could hear someone sighing behind them. Turning, they saw Lucy, one of the girls in their class.

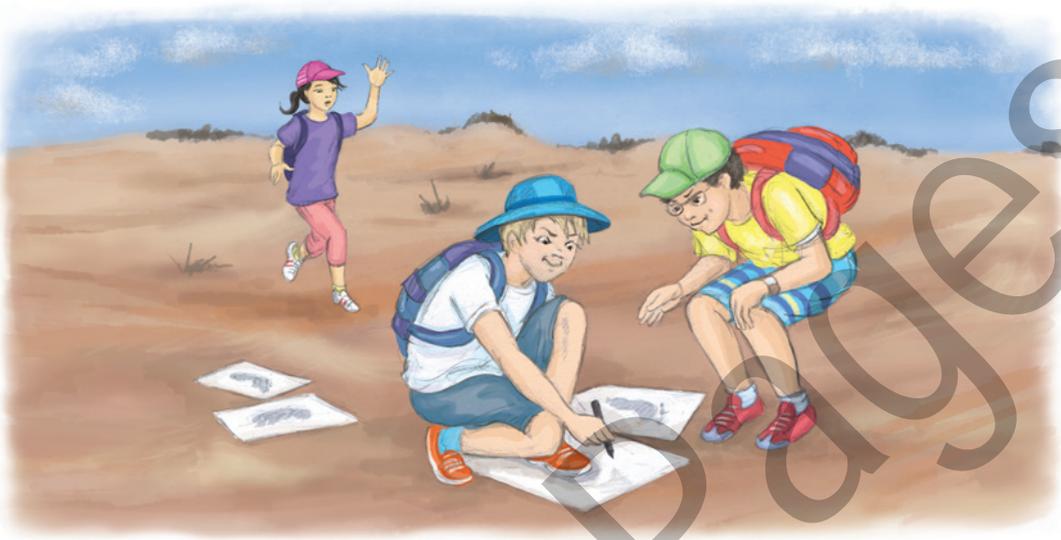
"There is *no* water," she said. "Not anymore. Don't you ever listen in class? Lake Mungo is all dried up."

Lucy and the boys went with the rest of the class to the Visitor Centre. Inside, Lucy moved from exhibit to exhibit, reading the signs and making notes on her tablet.

“This is pretty lame,” complained Josh, staring at the statue of what looked like a giant wombat. According to the sign, it was a prehistoric animal called a *Zygomaturus*. “Come on. Let’s get out of here.”

The boys walked out of the Visitor Centre and followed a path that led around to the back of the building. There, they saw an open area with a raised lookout at the end. A sign said “Meeting Place”.





“Look!” exclaimed Josh, pointing down.

There were footprints in concrete tiles, set into the ground. Leo stood on one of the tiles. The footprints were bigger than his feet.

Josh laughed, stomped onto a footprint and then jumped to the next. He reached into his backpack and pulled out a black marker.

“What do you think you’re doing?” demanded Lucy, running up to him.

“I’m going to put my name on it,” replied Josh.

“This is an important place,” said Lucy. “You can’t just graffiti it!”

As the rest of the class walked from the Visitor Centre towards them, Leo quickly hid the pen.

“Gather round,” said Ms Taylor, their teacher. “This is the Meeting Place. Take a look at the ground around you. See the footprints. They are reproductions of fossilised footprints that were discovered near here in 2003. The original footprints are more than 20 000 years old.”

Lucy held up her tablet and took a photo of the footprints.

“Can we see the real ones?” asked one of the girls.

“No,” said Ms Taylor. “They are fragile and have been covered over again.”

“That’s dumb,” muttered Josh. “Why find something and then cover it up again?”

“To preserve it for the future,” sighed Lucy.

