

Kulinmaya! Keep Listening, Everybody!

By Mumu Mike Williams



August 2019 ISBN 9781760524425
Hardcover, 224 pages
Recommended for 10-year-olds and older

Summary

Celebrating the powerful and distinctive art of senior Anangu artist Mumu Mike Williams, this book tells the story of Mr Williams' life and art, and the land rights movement in the APY lands of Central Australia.

Written in the first person, this is the story of Mumu Mike Williams' life, beliefs and artistic journey told in English and Pitjantjatjara. Combining contemporary and historical photographs with a range of Mr Williams' artworks, as well as accounts by some of the people involved in the land rights movement of the 1970s and 80s, and words by Hetti Perkins contextualising his work, *Kulinmaya! Keep Listening, Everybody!* allows readers of all ages to engage with the deeper meanings of Mr Williams' art and the long struggle for land rights in the APY lands.

Author's motivation

'I want my book to be in schools and read by politicians and young people everywhere, so that they can learn about Tjukurpa Law, and realise how crucially important Tjukurpa is to Anangu Aboriginal people. Our Tjukurpa Law is all-encompassing. It was always intended to be eternal, but we know it is at risk. This is why I am documenting it now. I want to raise people's consciousness. I want us to be acknowledged by the wider society and the government. I am hoping to start a movement of new awareness.'

— Mumu Mike Williams

Themes

- art
- survival
- remote communities
- Indigenous language and culture
- land rights
- Aboriginal life
- traditional custodians

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Contact Carolyn Walsh, Education Marketing Manager,
Ph: +02 8425 0150 Email: education@allenandunwin.com

Discussion questions

Pre-Reading

Choose one of the following topics to research in your school library:

- Anangu Aboriginal history (pre-and-post colonialism)
- APY Lands (physical/geographical features)
- Nuclear testing at Maralinga
- Significance of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act 1981

Once research is completed present your topic to the rest of the class.

Cover

Without reading anything about it, look at the cover of *Kulinmaya! Keep Listening, Everybody!* and answer the following questions:

- What effect is created by having only two colours on the cover?
- What language might use a word like Kulinmaya! in Australia?
- Why might there be two very different fonts used in the title *Kulinmaya! Keep Listening, Everybody!*
- What does the presence of exclamation marks suggest?
- Why might the boundaries of Australia be blurred in the image?
- What do you think the book will be about?

Gatefold

Open the book's cover and then the large folded page. After reading the copy on the left and carefully studying the image consider if your answers to the questions above were correct.

Comprehension questions

1. What is tawara camp? (p. 21)
2. What sort of things do young men learn there? (pp. 24-29)
3. What is Tjukurpa Law? (p. 27)
4. Why does Mr Williams think Tjukurpa Law must be kept for future generations? (p. 41)
5. What does *terra nullius* mean and why does Mr Williams disagree with the idea? (p. 32)
6. Why did Mr Williams first start to paint maps of Australia? (p. 51)
7. What is the significance of Sammy Dodd's kulata (spears) framing Mr Williams' works? (p. 52)
8. Why did Mr Williams start writing on his paintings? (p. 74)
9. What sort of things did he write about on the paintings? (pp. 74-79)
10. What is aalpiri? (p 80) Why does Mr Williams consider his paintings a new aalpiri? (p. 81)

Discussion

1. Many of Mr Williams' paintings feature ink and tea on paper. Why do you think he used tea on these paintings?

2. Turn to the double-page spread featuring a detail of *Iyukuta Tjukurpa* 2016 on (pp. 66-67). Although the South Australian government passed the *Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Land Rights Act* in 1981, it still controls aspects of APY Lands today. Name one thing where the government has the final say in what happens in APY Lands and why Mr Williams feels this control is a threat to Tjukurpa.
3. In your own words explain why Mr Williams chose to use mailbags as the canvas for many of his artworks. How do you feel when you see the images of his paintings on mailbags? What is the significance of leaving the words 'Theft or misuse of this bag is a criminal offence. Penalties apply' visible on the bags?
4. Much of the book is from Mr Williams' point-of-view but in the chapter titled 'Itjinpiri past and present' (pp. 138-187) the book switches to multiple views of the land rights movement during the 1970s and 1980s. Did this help you better understand the significance of this period in Australian history? Explain the effect of these multiple viewpoints on your reading of the chapter.
5. Hetti Kemerre Perkins writes, 'Our artists invite us, and all Australians, to understand the nature of the relationship between community, country and culture and the attendant rights and reciprocal responsibilities that are fundamentally different to just the right to exploit the land.' (p 192). Did Mr Williams' art help you to better understand that there is a difference between Indigenous and Western concepts of the Land? Explain how these differences clash over politically and economically sensitive issues like mining.
6. (a) Why do you think Mr Williams wanted this story to be told in both Pitjantjatjara and English? How did you respond to having the book in two languages?
(b) How would you describe the language used in the English translation? [*Hint: discuss whether the language is formal or conversational; first or third person; uses present or past tense.*] What effect does this language have on the way you read Mr Williams' story?

Visual Metaphor

Sammy Dodds' kulata (spears) feature prominently in the book but Mr Williams sometimes painted kulata on his works, too. In what way did Mr Williams see kulata as a powerful metaphor in his work? (pp. 123-124) Turn to the image of *Kulatangu*, 2016 on pp. 126-127 and discuss why you think the kulata passes over and under the dual maps of Australia.

Turn to the image of *Tarnanthi* on pp. 134-135 and discuss the imagery created by the 550 kulata here. Be careful to also notice the effect of the shadows on the surrounding walls.

Metaphor as a Literary Device

Explain why Mr Williams thought the story about the fire being brought back to Watarru was significant to his message about Tjukurpa.

Related texts/Further reading

Yalata, Oak Valley Communities with Christobel Mattingley: *Maralinga, the Anangu Story*. Allen & Unwin 2012. 72-page picture book.

An extraordinary illustrated history told from the Indigenous perspective and created through a series of workshops, extensive research and community consultation. Honour Book in the 2010 CBCA Awards.

Mattingley, Christobel: *Maralinga's Long Shadow*. Allen & Unwin 2016. 208-page paperback for teenagers and adults.

The powerful story of Yvonne Edwards, artist and community leader, who lived on or near the

Maralinga lands, and the cost of the fall-out for herself and her family from the nuclear tests in the 1950s.

Pascoe, Bruce: *Young Dark Emu*. Magabala Books 2019. 80-page picture book for younger readers, based on Pascoe's award-winning *Dark Emu*.

Asks young readers to consider a different version of Australia's history pre-European colonisation.

Papunya School: *Papunya School Book of Country and History*. Allen & Unwin 2003. 50-page picture book for all ages.

Multi-award-winning, unique and fascinating account of the history of Western Desert communities from an Indigenous perspective.

Malbunka, Mary: *When I was little, like you*. Allen & Unwin 2005. 32-page picture book for younger children.

With evocative words and stunning pictures, Mary Malbunka tells her rich story of growing up in the early days of the Papunya settlement in central Australia, going bush with her family and learning about culture and life. A picture book for all ages.

See also:

'Recommended Indigenous Australian children's books'

<https://www.readings.com.au/collection/recommended-indigenous-australian-childrens-books>

'Books about Australian Indigenous Peoples'

<http://www.gleebooks.com.au/education/australian-indigenous-peoples>

'Magabala Books: Australia's leading Indigenous publisher'

<https://www.magabala.com/>

The author

Mr Williams was born in 1952 in Inturtjanu on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands (APY Lands) of South Australia and became one of the most renowned political artists in the country.

He learnt to read and write in Pitjantjatjara and English at the Ernabella Mission School, before working as a stockman, carpenter and pastor. As a young man, he was active in the APY land rights movement that led to the signing of the Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act in 1981 and the return of land to Anangu. He remained politically active, advocating for his country and his people through his art and stories. Williams travelled the world for work, but always returned to his obligations as a senior man and traditional custodian.

As a renowned ngangkari (traditional healer), pastor of the Mimili Community church and political activist, Mr Williams proudly shared and protected the knowledge and duties given to him through his culture. In his art practice, he addressed issues including governance, sustainable land management, the protection of sacred heritage sites, and the rights of traditional owners.

Creating *Kulinmaya! Keep Listening, Everybody!* was Mr Williams' long-held dream as it would be a vessel to disseminate his message far and wide. The book and the artworks stand as his epic legacy, keeping his voice and ambitions alive beyond his passing in March 2019.