

This is such an important collection of writing that it should be on the shelf of every library. It puts aboriginal writing in an historical context with works from 1796 to present day. Biographical information is given for each writer and they range from activists to playwrights, novelists and poets. There are letters, excerpts from news articles, radio broadcasts, speeches, petitions, poems, prose, song lyrics and scripts. This is a treasure trove of writing that will challenge and enlighten. There has been a resurgence of aboriginal writing in recent times and this book goes a long way to celebrating and promoting the work of indigenous Australians.

The anthology begins with a simple letter from Bennelong to Mr Philips, Lord Sydney's steward. It clearly describes the control that whites had over aboriginals at that time. There are letters that depict mission life and the lack of freedom for those living in them. The amazing David Unaipon informs about aboriginal life in the 1900s. Several pages pay tribute to Oodgeroo Noonuccal and her writing over a period of several years. A number of scripts capture the voice and language of aborigines and aspects of culture that are not so well known. The reader learns how to cook mutton-birds and grass tree bread from Ida West. Excerpts from Sally Morgan's, *My Place*, shows the impact of growing up being denied your true heritage. A transcript of the *Burnum Burnum Declaration* is included where he takes possession of England on behalf of aboriginal people. Archie Roach's *Took the Children Away* hauntingly depicts the plight of the stolen generation and Kev Carmody's *From Little Things Big Things Grow* is a song of hope against adversity. The story of Molly and Gracie is told in an extract from Doris Pilkington's *Rabbit Proof Fence*. There are powerful speeches from Pat and Mick Dodson and Kenny Laughton give an insight into aboriginal soldiers who fought in Vietnam. A fascinating article by Noel Pearson gives an account of Paul Keating's legacy on aboriginal policy. Several short stories and extracts such as Tara June Winch's *Swallow the Air* depict loss of culture and the need to find meaning in modern Australian life. This is an outstanding book. There are endless possibilities for using this book with students. The insights into aboriginal culture, language, beliefs and spirit are beyond measure. This would make an excellent book to study at VCE level or a companion book for those students of history who want to look at primary sources to gain an historical and a contemporary insight into aboriginal life. I will certainly be promoting this book to both English and humanities teachers.

**Sharon Marchingo, Bendigo South West Secondary College, VIC**

The *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature* would be an excellent resource for any high school library. It is well organised and readable with each entry prefaced by a brief biographical essay about the author.

The editors of the anthology, Dr Anita Heiss and Peter Minter have gathered works produced in English by Australian Aboriginal authors in the last two centuries. The anthology chronologically presents the documents and introduces Aboriginal history through the content and diversity of the selected material. The editors introduce the anthology in a chapter called *Aboriginal Literature* where they state

“Our guiding principle has been to seek out work that is not only eminently representative of a significant event, author or genre but that is also clear and strong writing of the highest quality.”

The anthology commences with a letter written by Bennelong in 1796. Bennelong had been captured in 1789, introduced to English ways by Governor Phillip and taken to England for several years. His letter is the first known English text written by an Aboriginal. The other personal letters and letters sent to newspapers illustrate in their simplicity and lack of artifice the devastating affect colonisation had on the lives of individual aboriginals and whole communities.

As well as these letters the diversity of written material consists of

- petitions - for example the *Gurindji Petition to Lord Casey, Governor General* 1965 and the *Yirrkala Bark Petition* 1963. The *Gurindji Petition* was written by Vincent

Lingiari after the Wave Hill walk off. The *Yirrkala Bark Petition* was the first traditional document by an Aboriginal community to be recognised in the Australian Parliament (It protested the lease of land to a bauxite mining company).

- poetry written by well known poets such as Kevin Gilbert, Lionel Fogarty and Oodgerroo Noonuccal
- excerpts from longer works written by contemporary authors including Alexis Wright, Sally Morgan, Jared Thomas Tara and June Winch.
- speeches such as the speech by Kevin Gilbert at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra in 1992
- declarations for instance Burnum Burnum's Declaration of Aboriginal Possession of England in 1988 and
- the famous lyrics of artists Archie Roach, Kevin Carmody, Jimmy Chi (*Bran Nue Dae*) and Mandawuy Yunupingu (*Treaty*) which have raised the awareness of Aboriginal rights and social disadvantage.

In NSW this book would support the HSC courses in Aboriginal Studies (outcomes H1.1, H1.2, H2.3, H3.2, and H4.1) as well as aspects of History, Geography and Australian Literature units

The 2007 ACT curriculum framework, *Every chance to learn*, sets the foundation for a new approach to curriculum development in ACT schools. It provides public and non-government schools in the ACT with the curriculum framework on which to base their school curriculum plans from preschool to year 10. This anthology would be useful for high school History, English and Geography courses that address the Essential Learning Achievement (ELA) 21 *Understanding about Australia and Understanding Australians*. It would also support the Year 11 and 12 History courses *Terra Australis incognita 1.0* and *Contemporary Australia 1.0*

The book has an index, a glossary and a selected reading list.

An online Teaching Guide has been compiled by Anita Heiss, and is available from the book's website at <http://www.macquariepenanthology.com.au/abor-home.html>

The guide includes discussion questions designed for use in teaching from the *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature*. From this site there are links to websites with information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers, books and other arts and cultural activities.

The *Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature* (2008) is the first book published under the Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature Project. The venture began in 2003 with the objective of making a large range of important Australian writing more accessible and to encourage and support the teaching of Australian literature in schools and universities. The second book in the project - *The Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature* - will be published in 2009

More information about the Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature Project can be found at <http://www.macquariepenanthology.com.au/aboutproject.html>

**Rosalie Knox, Burgmann Anglican School, ACT**

Between the distant voice of Bennelong's letter to Lord Sydney in 1796 and the tranquil sense of place in Tara June Winch's final words, this collection of Aboriginal writing in English offers readers an invitation to explore our Australian world.

As a teacher of year 12, this anthology offers a group of whole and fragmented texts which are a rich source of material for the new Area of Study, 'Belonging'. It also demonstrates the diversity and clarity of Aboriginal voices in Australian literature as a resonant and enduring foundation for the formation of some of those ephemeral ideals embedded in a concept named 'Belonging'.

Arranged in a chronological order that seems designed to showcase the increasingly complex interplay between language and culture over the 200 years of English's dominance as the

language of Australia, the essays, letters, poems, articles and stories show the range and power of Aboriginal voices.

In terms of the concept of 'belonging', Charles Perkins' letter to the editor (1968) makes a telling point about the difference between nationality and race. An even more succinct demonstration is fictionalized in Larissa Behrendt's description of returning to Cooma with her father after a long absence.

This is a collection to wander through – it operates a little like a landscape, with details that become clearer as you look more closely. I can only read as an outsider, but some of the strength of the writing is that it brings into sharp focus details that may not ever be observed without a guide. Stephen Hagan's introduction to *The N Word* (2005) made a particular impression on me about the way we take names for granted – and how hard it is to change what is taken for granted.

This is an important addition to any school library and all English staffrooms.

**Jennifer Winch, Hornsby Girls High School, NSW**

This book has been a book of many firsts for me. It's the first anthology I've read; the first collection of Aboriginal writings I've encountered and the first time I've really had the opportunity to hear the Australian story from an indigenous perspective. As an immigrant myself, I arrived in Australia with little understanding of the impact that European settlers have had on this nation over their 200 year residence.

The writings in this book range from very early works such as Bennelong's letter of 1796, through to award winning author Tara June Winch's short story *Wantok* and includes poetry, drama, song and wonderfully descriptive prose.

The overwhelming sentiment seemed to be one of loss and dissatisfaction. There was a collective sense of injustice, despite much pleading and even intellectual reasoning. I couldn't say that it was a comfortable book to read and I certainly felt that the issues that indigenous people consider important, have long been overlooked or ignored. It should be noted though, that this collection was put together before the apology made by Kevin Rudd this year and it would be interesting to read a future collection of works, to see what impact it has on the indigenous voice.

This is a valuable resource for many aspects of our children's education. Psychology students might find it interesting to consider the effects of injustice upon a society. Teachers who deal with units that involve Australia's beginnings would find it interesting, and although the material is not necessarily accessible to primary students, it presents an aboriginal perspective, which a teacher might want to draw out for their class.

**Debbie Williams, Mountain District Christian School, VIC**

*The Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature* is part of a larger project undertaken by Macquarie University in Sydney: The Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature project.

This volume is a collection of writing by Australian Aboriginal authors, in English, up to 2006. The works are presented chronologically, by date of publication. Before each piece, or group of works by one person, there is a short biography of the author. The range of literature included is broad, from Bennelong's letter to Lord Sydney's steward in 1796, to the 1938 Aboriginal claim for citizenship rights, presented on the 150th anniversary of white settlement, and on to Noel Pearson's reflection on Paul Keating's 2002 Redfern speech.

There is a wide range of aboriginal writing in a variety of genres: poetry, play extracts, autobiographical writing and speeches. Kath Walker—who reverted to an aboriginal name Oodgeroo Noonuccal—is celebrated both in the writing of Lionel Fogarty: "We are coming, even going...we want racialism you got ostracism black ascendance...", and in her own works, a speech and a number of poems, including the popular and starkly challenging 1964 "We Are Going", which was my own first confrontation with the challenge to understand our aboriginal brothers and sisters:

"The bora ring is gone.

The corroboree is gone.

And we are going.”

This is a fascinating volume, which I found difficult to put down. The names are mostly familiar to those who've followed aboriginal affairs over a number of years, but the impact of different voices, with personal variations, on a theme of dispossession and the desire for recognition, is huge.

Students and teachers of Australian studies will find this an invaluable resource. As a collection of outstanding literary works it will also be well used. The index and glossary are great additional tools.

**Barbara Wilson, St George Christian School, Hurstville NSW**

This well researched and presented comprehensive anthology of Australian Aboriginal literature is presented as a supplement to a long-term editorial project due out at the end of next year of the same name.

As the entries are arranged chronologically, readers and researchers can trace the many changes in theme & style from the captive Bennelong's letter to his sponsor, Lord Sydney, in 1796, to an extract from a 2006 first novel by Tara June Winch *Swallow the Air*.

After the historic “Sorry” speech by newly-elected P.M. Kevin Rudd, the impact of this collection is magnified and the need for every primary, secondary, TAFE, University and public Library throughout Australasia to have a copy of this learned text has increased greatly.

As noted by other reviewers, the lack of transcriptions & translations of Aboriginal song cycles in this anthology is a mistake. Perhaps this will be rectified in the later associated publication by the learned editors.

All the entries here are in standard or colloquial versions of English. There are no examples of Aboriginal English presented here and as a result some writers of importance in the latter form are not included.

These are small criticisms in an overall excellent scholarly work which should be on all library shelves along with other landmark titles on Australian Aboriginality.

**Susan Hill, Winmalee High School, NSW**