

**Teachers Notes (Primary)**  
**by Nadia Wheatley**

**When I Was Little, Like You**

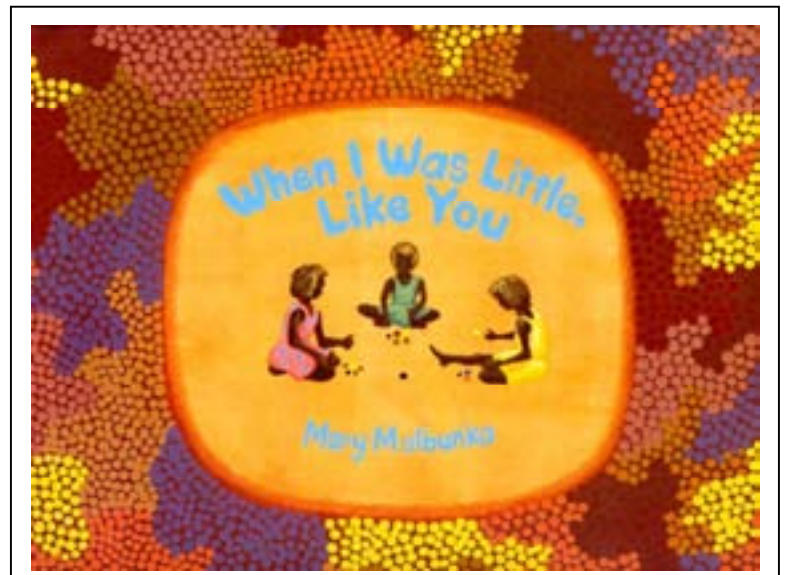
**Mary Malbunka**

ISBN 9781741142563 (pb)

Recommended for ages 9 - 13

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## INTRODUCTION

*When I was Little, Like You* is a true story about growing up in the Central Desert in the 1960s, told in words and pictures by a Luritja woman named Mary Malbunka.

It is suitable for use in schools from middle primary through to upper secondary. These notes concentrate on the primary levels, though some suggestions for secondary use are included. While the book would fit into specific Indigenous Studies units at all levels, it also offers multiple opportunities for exploring the following curriculum areas:

- English
- Languages Other Than English
- Art
- Studies of Society and Environment (Human Society and its Environment)
- Science

Before engaging in the activities for these curriculum areas, an in-depth reading of the book with the class should lay the foundation for subsequent successful activities. The book was marketed as 'a picture book for all ages': it may be useful, especially with older students, to investigate how picture books can be aimed at adult as well as children's markets. Point out that the book is multi-layered. On the one hand, it can be read as a picture story for children. On the other hand, the language, culture, experience and point of view offered to the reader locate the book in a special position within the major national issue of reconciliation. Nationally famous political and bureaucratic leaders, such as Jackie Huggins and Lowitja O'Donohue do not normally endorse picture storybooks.

Jackie Huggins AM, Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia is quoted on the cover: "This beautiful work is a gift to children, education and reconciliation". Dr Lowitja O'Donohue AC CBE, the inaugural Chairperson of ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission), was quoted in the press release announcing the book's publication:

*Mary Malbunka's story is simply bursting with details of her childhood in Papunya – the bush tucker and medicines, the animals, the sense of family and community, the Dreaming stories, the country itself . . . and the difficulties of fitting into the white man's world. I'm sure readers young and old will find the vibrant picture it paints to be irresistible. It is also an important story because it helps Aboriginal people reclaim our traditional culture.*

N.B. Some of the KLA-based activities in these notes assume students also have access to other picture books produced by Aboriginal people from the area where Mary Malbunka lives, or nearby areas. These books are listed in the Extended Reading List.

## READING THE BOOK IN DEPTH

It could take a week or two for a class at any level to read the words and pictures of Mary Malbunka's text.

### BEFORE READING

Show the cover to students and ask:

- What sort of story do you think this might be? (ie fiction? non-fiction? autobiography? history?)
- Where do you think the storyteller might come from? Why?

## **DURING READING**

Either read the whole book out loud to the students (showing pictures as you go) or, if you have multiple copies, ask students to read the book to each other in small groups.

In this initial stage, encourage students to 'read' the pictures as well as the words. Cover up the words for some of the pages (eg the double page spread about the girls raiding the vegetable garden, or the one about the family going to get sugar bag) and ask students to work out what is happening from the pictures alone. Now try this task with one of the pages showing traditional art.

At this stage, don't worry too much about the pronunciation of the Luritja words. Simply make sure that students understand the convention whereby the Luritja is in italics and the English translation follows.

## **AFTER READING**

When the whole class has read the book right through at least once, the class could make a big version of the MAP on the inside title page and put it up on a noticeboard for reference through the rest of the activities. Or students could make individual copies of this map. Make sure they know where this map fits in relation to a map of Australia as a whole.

Now discuss how each double-page spread in the book tells a separate little chapter or story. Workshop a checklist of these "chapters". Eg:

1. Where Mary was born and how her family came to Papunya
2. More about Mary's family; the sort of learning done pre-school
3. The sort of learning done at the big school; going to the movies
4. Playing and exploring in the community
5. Going on a day journey for sugarbag
6. Going on a weekend journey to Papunya Hill for honey ants
7. Going to Ikirriki; playing in the afternoons while adults hunt
8. At Ikirriki, learning about country and law
9. At Ikirriki, learning about tracking
10. At Ikirriki, learning about seasons, animals and habitats
11. The use of bush medicine
12. At Alkipi, learning to hunt and gather and cook
13. Conclusion: passing on learning through the generations

Divide the class into thirteen groups. Allocate a 'chapter' spread to each group for intensive reading of the words and pictures. Ask each group in order to present its spread to the class, telling Mary's story in their own words and pointing out special features from the pictures. Students could talk about experiences that they have in common with Mary (eg going to pre-school; playing with cousins and friends; making cubbies; cooking on outdoor fires; camping out; hiding; swimming; feeling scared; being bullied; feeling happy; feeling safe; loving a grandparent; going to movies...)

Now the class is ready to move on to KLA-based activities.

## ENGLISH

### GROUP DISCUSSION

- How would you describe Mary as a little girl?
- How would you describe Mary's life as a child?
- What sort of things did Mary learn at school? Did she enjoy school?
- What sort of things did Mary learn in the bush with her family and community? Did she enjoy this sort of learning?
- What sort of things do you learn at school?
- What sort of things do you learn from your family and community? Do you learn anything in the bush?
- What sort of learning do you like to do?
- What do you think are good ways to learn things?

### WRITTEN WORK: EXPLORING RECOUNT

Drawing on the work you have done in group discussion and in the group presentation of the book, write a short recount of the story that Mary Malbunka tells about her childhood and growing up.

(Teachers should make sure students understand that this requires them to turn the author's first person narrative into a third person recount. It should follow the order in which the author tells her story. Use the thirteen "chapter" topics as a guide.)

### WRITTEN WORK: EXPLORING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Using a first person narrative like that of Mary Malbunka, tell your own story about your family, your community, and your experience of school and play, holidays, journeys and growing up. (Your story might only be two or three pages.)

Make sure you include a map showing where you live (and maybe other maps for holiday trips). You can illustrate your story with drawings, photographs, or a mixture of both.

### COMPARING TEXT FORMS

Read the note about Mary Malbunka on the last page of *When I was Little, Like You*. How is this different from the way in which the author tells her own story? Do these two ways of telling the story serve a different purpose? Are they aimed at a different sort of audience? Are there differences in how these forms of text are illustrated?

Read the books in the Extended Reading list below. They are all produced by Aboriginal people from the area where Mary Malbunka lives, or the desert area to the south.

Compare these books with *When I was Little, Like You*.

(See special points of comparison with *Papunya School Book of Country and History* in the activities based on the KLA Studies of Society and Environment <Human Society and its Environment>)

Compare the different ways these books are written, and the different text forms. Work out which ones are:

- Information text
- Dreaming story
- Life story

- First person narrative
- Third person narrative

Do these text types sometimes overlap?

Now compare the different ways in which these books are illustrated. Work out which ones use:

- Photographs
- Drawings and paintings
- European art
- Traditional art
- A mixture of art forms

### Extended Reading List

**Papunya School, *Papunya School Book of Country and History*, Allen & Unwin, 2001.**

This 48-page colour picture book relates the history of contact between Anangu and Europeans in the Western Desert, before leading into the history of the Papunya settlement, where Mary Malbunka grew up. It was produced by staff and students at Papunya School, including Mary Malbunka. Passages in Luritja are included.

**Daphne Punytjina Brown, illustrated by Carolyn Windy, *Kupi-Kupi and the Girl*, Magabala Books, Broome, 2000.**

This 32-page colour picture book is a *Tjukurrpa Yara* or Dreaming Story. The author and illustrator are both Pitjantjatjara women from Areyonga, and the story is written in parallel texts of Pitjantjatjara and English.

**Jessie Lennon, *And I Always Been Moving*, published by J.L./M.M., Coober Pedy, 1995.**

This 56-page picture book is an autobiographical narrative related by Jessie Lennon, a Matutjara woman who was born at Wilguna in South Australia in the 1920s. She talks about growing up as a child and travelling around with her family. The text is written in Aboriginal English. Illustrations are painted by a number of artists.

**AND/OR Jessie Lennon, *I'm the One Who Knows this Country*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra 2000.**

This 150-page book is a longer version of the author's story, illustrated by archival photographs instead of drawings.

**Yvonne, Brenda and Tjitji Tjuta, *Going for Kalta*, Tjukurrpa Books, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 1997.**

This 32-page colour picture book tells the story of one day when two Pitjantjatjara women, Yvonne and Brenda, take a mob of kids out bush to get *kalta* (sleepy lizards). The pictures are all photographs. Pitjantjatjara words are included.

**Edna Tantjingu Williams and Eileen Wani Wingfield, illustrated by Kunyi June-Anne McInerny, *Down the Hole*, Tjukurrpa Books, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 2000.**

This 48-page colour picture book tells how Aboriginal children in the Coober Pedy area in the 1920s to 1930s hid in holes so that the government would not take them away from their families. Words from Yankunytjatjara, Kakatha and Matutjara are included.

## LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH (LOTE)

Even at Primary level, students can do some LOTE activities based on *When I Was Little, Like You*.

The language notes at the back of the book are not intended for young children. Teachers should read them and pass on information at an appropriate level. Secondary students could read the notes for themselves.

### OVERVIEW: INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES OF THE CENTRAL DESERT REGION

At all levels, students should be able to understand the language map in *When I Was Little, Like You*. Make a large version of this to put on the wall, leaving some extra space at the bottom (south). Or students could make their own maps.

Relate this map to the language maps you will find in some of the books on the Extended Reading List. (See *Papunya School Book of Country and History; Going for Kalta; Down the Hole*.)

Using *When I Was Little, Like You* and the books on the Extended Reading List, make a list of the names of as many Aboriginal languages of the Western Desert Region as you are able to find. Write the extra ones into your language map.

### PRONUNCIATION

Teachers should read the 'Note on Pronunciation' in *When I Was Little, Like You*, and then practise sounds with the students.

Write up a list of the special Luritja sounds and practise them.

Write a list of nouns and try to pronounce them. Start with *ngurra*, then move onto some plants and animals. (Write the English next to the Luritja.)

Make a game of this and encourage everyone to have a go. It doesn't matter if you make mistakes! Use the expression '*Palya!*' ('Good') to praise students when they get something right. Or you could say '*Palyalingku!*' (Very good!)

Use this activity as a way of exploring the sounds of English, and the eccentricities of English spelling. You could point out that Luritja is always spelled consistently. (Why do you think this is?)

Ask what languages students in the class speak at home. If there are students with non-English speaking backgrounds, ask if there are sounds in their languages that they don't make in English, and vice versa. You will probably find that some students with NESB backgrounds will find it easier to pronounce Luritja than English speakers do.

Once you have done some practice sessions, take turns reading out loud some of the Luritja passages from the book.

Discuss why young people usually pick up new language sounds more easily than adults do.

### WRITTEN WORK

As a class or individually, make a Luritja-English picture dictionary of all the plants and animals you can find in *When I Was Little, Like You*. You might do this as a book, or as a chart.

### EXPLORING SIGN LANGUAGE

Discuss why Anangu might have developed a silent form of language, using hand signs.

At Papunya School, students sometimes use hand signs to talk to each other in class. Would this be useful, or fun?

Research forms of sign language used by people with hearing difficulties.

## ART

As background to this curriculum area, teachers should read *Papunya School Book of Country and History*. The teachers' notes for this book, at [www.allenandunwin.com/teaching/trpapunya.asp](http://www.allenandunwin.com/teaching/trpapunya.asp), include a special unit about art, including an extended reading list.

### COMPARING STYLES

Introduce *Papunya School Book of Country and History* to your students. Focus on information about Albert Namatjira (p. 19) and then on the history of the development of Papunya style or Western Desert art (pp 32-33, 37). Also look at the many examples of traditional art in this book, and the examples of European style art.

Find the places in *When I Was Little, Like You* where Mary Malbunka uses traditional art. Why do you think she chooses to express some things in Western Desert style, and some things in European style? Are the different styles useful to convey different sorts of information?

### EXPLORING SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

Look at the diagrams of the symbols in the Language Notes for *When I Was Little, Like You*. How easy is it to 'read' Mary Malbunka's traditional paintings?

Look at paintings by other Western Desert artists, either in art galleries or in books. Do you see some of the same symbols recurring?

Discuss forms of symbolic language that you see around your city or town. (eg Road signs, logos, graffiti tags...)

**Please note: some Western Desert paintings recount sacred/secret information which belongs to the particular painter and his or her family. It is not appropriate to invite students to copy symbols for their own paintings.**

For practical work it is much better to ask students to make a picture using the symbols from the world they see around them.

## HUMAN SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

As background to this curriculum area, teachers should read *Papunya School Book of Country and History*, and also the teachers' notes for this book, at [www.allenandunwin.com/teaching/trpapunya.asp](http://www.allenandunwin.com/teaching/trpapunya.asp)

### EXPLORING HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Introduce *Papunya School Book of Country and History* to your students. Focus on the history of contact between Anangu and Europeans. Also look at the effect introduced animals had on the land.

Refer in particular to pp. 24-30. This describes the mission at Haasts Bluff, where Mary Malbunka was born, and the development of Papunya settlement, where Mary moved when she was a few years old.

Look at the map on p. 27, *Papunya School Book of Country and History*. Who drew this? Does it give you some useful background?

Compare the map on p. 28 *Papunya School Book of Country and History* with the map of Papunya in *When I Was Little, Like You*.

Compare the map on pp. 2-3 *Papunya School Book of Country and History* with the language map in *When I Was Little, Like You*.

Look at the pictures and information about Papunya School on p. 30 *Papunya School Book of Country and History*. Compare this with the information that Mary Malbunka gives you in words and pictures.

Read again the story that Mary Malbunka tells about going for honey ants near Papunya hill, and hiding from the station man. Why are the old lady and the children frightened? From the history you learn from *Papunya School Book of Country and History*, do you think there is a reason for them to be afraid?

## EXPLORING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

How does Mary Malbunka refer to her family, both by role and by name?

In what ways is her family like yours? Is it different in any ways?

What is Mary's community? What is your community? Draw a map of your community, incorporating words and descriptions into the landscape.

## SCIENCE

### STUDYING HABITATS

In Luritja the word '*ngurra*' means 'a home' and 'a homeland' for people, but it also is used for the habitat of an animal.

Discuss what a 'habitat' is.

What sort of country is your favourite habitat? (Desert? The city? The seaside? A place with a cool climate? A place with a wet climate?)

Make a list in Luritja and in English of all the animals that are mentioned in *When I Was Little, Like You*. (You may have done this for LOTE when you made a dictionary/wall chart.)

Read again the "chapter" of the book in which the *ulkaman* (old ladies) tell the children about the *ngurra* of various animals.

Do some research and see if you can find out the habitats of the other animals in Mary Malbunka's book. Find the tracks too.

Make an illustrated chart showing each animal, its track and its habitat.

Individually or as a class, make a list or illustrated chart of indigenous Australian animals, birds, reptiles and insects that live in the same *ngurra* as you.

Some animals may have lived in your habitat before 1788 but aren't there any more. Find out which ones they are and add them to your list, with a special mark to show they are no longer around.

Which of these animals have Aboriginal names? Do these words come from a local Aboriginal language or a language from elsewhere?

Make a list of introduced animals that live in the same *ngurra* as you. Do any of these animals bring about the destruction of the native animals?

Make a list of plants that are indigenous to your *ngurra*. Collect their leaves, seeds and flowers and use these to make a book or a chart. See if you can find out the local Aboriginal name for any of these plants. Find out the Latin name as well. (Note the distinction between 'native plants', which are native to anywhere in Australia, and 'indigenous plants', which are the ones that are indigenous to a particular area.)

See if you can acquire some indigenous plants, maybe from a community nursery. Plant them in the school garden.



Make a list of introduced plants that live in the same *ngurra* as you. Do any of these plants threaten the destruction of the indigenous plants?

## STUDYING MEDICINE AND HEALTH

What did the pre-school teachers give to Mary and the other children, to make them healthy?

What did *ulkaman* (old ladies) give to Mary and the other children, to make them healthy?

Make an illustrated chart of all the healthy foods that Mary and her family ate, and the medicines they used. Write the words in Luritja and English.

What sorts of things do you eat or use, to make you healthy?

Make a chart of the healthy food that you eat, and the medicine you use. Does your family only use medicine from the pharmacy, or do you use medicines from a health food shop, or other herbal medicine?

At secondary level, see if you can find out about the nature of the bush medicine plants that Mary Malbunka mentions. (Use the Latin name to investigate the species.) Do any of them have Vitamin C in them?

## ABOUT MARY MALBUNKA AND NADIA WHEATLEY

### MARY MALBUNKA

Mary Malbunka was born in 1959 in what was at that time the Lutheran mission settlement at Haasts Bluff (250 km west of Alice Springs). Her traditional language is Pintupi/Luritja. Her mother also spoke Warlpiri. At the age of five, Mary and her family were moved to the new government settlement at Papunya (some 30km north of Haasts Bluff), where she has spent most of her life. Mary Malbunka tells her own story of her childhood in *When I Was Little, Like You*.

Mary was a key member of the collaborative team of Anangu staff and students who worked with Nadia Wheatley and Ken Searle to produce *Papunya School Book of Country and History*, winner of the Eve Pownall Award for Information Books in the 2002 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards and joint overall winner of the 2002 *Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing*. Mary's work included the cover and a number of the internal illustrations, both in traditional and western illustration style. Mary was also involved in discussions about the content of the written text, and is a member of Papunya School Publishing Committee.

### NADIA WHEATLEY

Nadia Wheatley is an award-winning Australian author. Her published work includes picture books, novels for younger readers, young adult novels, short stories (for adults as well as for young adults), history and criticism. She has also written for television and the theatre. With her partner, Ken Searle, she worked as a consultant at Papunya School, developing curriculum materials for the school's innovative 'two-way' curriculum. This resulted in a unique collaboration with the entire Papunya school community and the multi-award winning *Papunya School Book of Country and History*.

Her books for children and teenagers include *Five Times Dizzy*, *My Place*, *The Greatest Treasure of Charlemagne the King*, *Highway*, *Luke's Way of Looking*, *Vigil*, and *A Banner Bold*. Nadia's recent book, *The Life and Myth of Charmian Clift* (HarperCollins 2001) was the winner of the Australian History Prize in the 2002 NSW Premier's History Awards.