

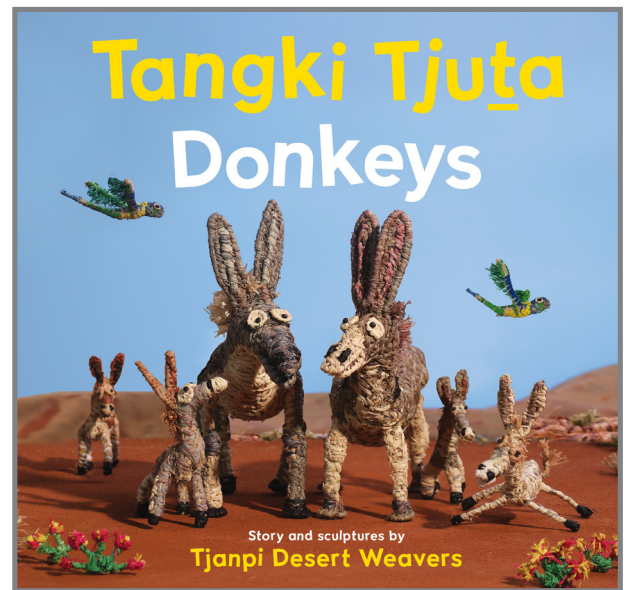
Tangki Tjuṭa—Donkeys

CREATORS

TJANPI DESERT WEAVERS

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SYNOPSIS

Long, long ago, we didn't have donkeys. We didn't have a lot of the things we have today. We didn't know donkeys existed.

Our people used to walk with their camels and donkeys from Areyonga to Ernabella. They brought their donkeys here, and left them.

Donkeys are malpa wiru, valuable friends and helpers in the families and desert community of Pukatja (Ernabella) in the APY Lands of northern South Australia. People set off on their donkeys for picnics and longer journeys, always returning home safely.

Told in Pitjantjatjara and English and featuring the whimsical, distinctive sculptures that have made Tjanpi Desert Weavers famous, this dual language Australian story offers warm and humorous insights from an Anṅangu perspective.

ABOUT TJANPI DESERT WEAVERS

Tjanpi Desert Weavers is the dynamic social enterprise of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC). NPYWC was formed in response to the land rights struggles of the late 1970s when women realised that they would have greater power, a stronger voice and be able to improve the life of women and children on their Lands if they united and collectively advocated for systemic change. Since that time, NPYWC has grown from an advocacy service into a major Indigenous directed and governed organisation delivering a wide range of health, social and cultural services across 26 desert communities on the tri-state border of SA, NT and WA.

Tjanpi ('desert grass' in the Western Desert language) began in 1995 as a series of basket-making workshops facilitated by NPYWC in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands of WA. Women wanted meaningful and culturally appropriate employment on their homelands to better provide for their families. Building on a long history of using natural fibres to make objects for ceremonial and daily use, women quickly took to coiled basketry and shared the new techniques with relatives and friends from neighbouring communities. It was not long before they began experimenting with producing sculptural forms. Today, over 400 women across three states are making spectacular contemporary fibre art from locally collected grasses, and working with fibre in this way has become a fundamental part of Central and Western Desert culture.

At its core, Tjanpi embodies the energies and rhythms of Country, culture and community. Women regularly come together to collect grass for their fibre art, taking the time to hunt, gather food, visit significant sites, perform inma (cultural song and dance) and teach their children about Country whilst creating an ever-evolving array of fibre artworks.

The shared stories, skills and experiences of this wide-reaching network of mothers, daughters, aunties, sisters and grandmothers form the bloodline of the desert-weaving phenomenon and fuel Tjanpi's rich history of collaborative practice.

Visit tjanpi.com.au.

STUDY NOTES

- Before opening *Tangki Tjuṭa*, hold the cover up and ask students what they know about donkeys. Ask everyone to look closely at the background image on the cover and ask if they know where donkeys are likely to be found in Australia. Point out the deep red of the earth, the clear blue skies, and flat, arid landscape. Look closely at the image of the donkeys and birds on the cover and ask if they look like real donkeys. Ask if they can guess what materials were used to make these animals. Explain to non-Pitjantjatjara speaking students that the words 'Tangki Tjuṭa' on the cover mean 'donkey' in a First Nations language called Pitjantjatjara, and that the following story will be told in two languages.
- Open the cover to the book's endpapers. Point out that the story and pictures that follow are by all the women pictured here. Explain that these women live in the community of Pukatja (Ernabella) in the APY Lands of northern South Australia. Look closely at the image of the landscape and talk about how these women collect grasses like the ones seen here to create the sculptures in the story.
- Complete the following comprehension questions after reading the book:
 - Have donkeys always lived in Ernabella?
 - What did the Anangu kids love about the donkeys?
 - Were the donkeys in the story just pets for the people?
 - Why did the donkeys always carry people back home safely?
 - Why did Older Brother need his donkey to carry him along nice and steadily?
 - Who else was riding the donkey with Older Brother?
 - What did his donkey do when Older Brother made it go faster?
 - Should Older Brother have made the donkey go faster?
 - What happened to Older Brother after his donkey charged under a tree?
 - Would you describe the donkey as being a 'good helper' to Older Brother? What did it do to help you answer this question?
 - How have things changed for donkeys these days? How have things not changed for donkeys these days?
- Look at the book's cover and examine the lettering used in both the Pitjantjatjara and English titles. Ask students if they can think of any way the letters here reflect the behaviour of the donkeys in the story.
- Listen to the story being read in Pitjantjatjara and English. Simply open the book to the page opposite the Title Page and find the QR code. Scan the code to listen to a reading in both languages. Non-Pitjantjatjara speakers can visit the Parks Australia website to find out interesting facts about the language, including why some words appear with a letter featuring a line under it, such as Tjuṭa. Find out how to say 'hello', 'goodbye', 'thank you' and 'finish'. [Hint: they are all the same word.]
- In a general discussion, ask students if they can guess how many languages are in the world. (The answer is approximately 6,500, or for an exact figure, see <https://www.ethnologue.com/guides/how-many-languages>). Make a list of all the languages spoken by students in the class.
- Research donkeys in Australia and find out:
 - Where donkeys originated
 - When and why they were introduced to Australia
 - What they were used for
 - What other animals have been introduced to Australia.
- Find out more about the desert community of Pukatja (Ernabella) including:
 - Location
 - Size of population

- History
- Earthquakes
- Language(s) spoken.
- Google Tjanpi Desert Weavers to find out more about these artists and their creations. Make a list of the different forms of artworks they create and ask students which piece they like best and why they chose that piece.
- Donkeys were a form of transport a long time ago but have been replaced by cars today. Ask students to interview an older member of their family or a family friend to find out four things that have changed a lot since that person was a child.