

For 60,000 Years

AUTHOR

MARLEE SILVA

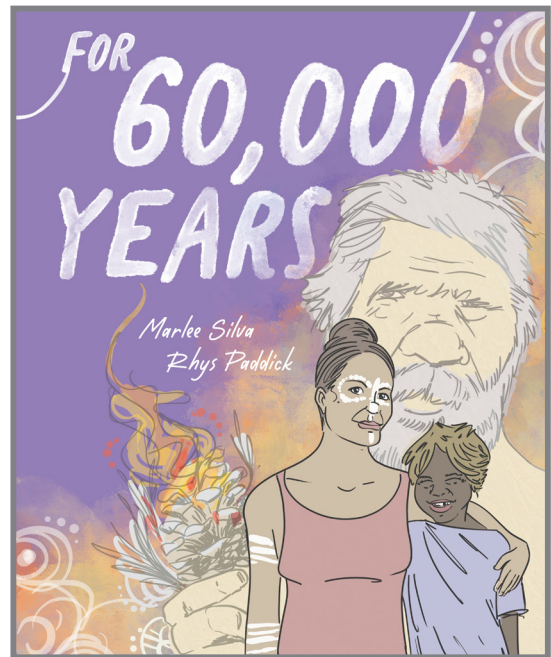
ILLUSTRATOR

RHYS PADDICK

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

For 60,000 years, as sure as the sun rises and rests, our people have thrived and survived. Originally penned as a poetic response to January 26th, this is an empowering story of truth, strength and community, told by Gamilaroi and Dunghutti woman Marlee Silva and illustrated by Yamatji man Rhys Paddick.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marlee Silva is from the Gamilaroi and Dunghutti tribes of NSW. She is a skilled speaker, author, activist, podcaster and presenter. After publishing her first book *My Tidda, My Sister: Stories of Strength and Resilience from Australia's First Women* in 2020, Marlee expanded her media reach with appearances on NITV's January 26th Sunrise Ceremony, ABC's Q+A, as well as appearing on Today Extra. She now features with NRL on Nine.

Marlee uses her storytelling skills to inspire and create change, and advocate for the causes she is most passionate about. She has a focus on First Nations people and community, women in sport and social issues. She also has become one of the country's leading voices on women's sport, particularly Rugby League.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Yamatji man, Rhys Paddick, is a storyteller, artist and expert in cultural desensitisation—how to explore and connect with Aboriginal peoples and cultures with courage, excitement and joy, as opposed to facilitating cultural change from the all too common place of shame, guilt and fear.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - Where and when do you think that this story might be set? Why do you think this?
 - Who do you think could be the main character/s of this story?
 - What do you predict is likely to happen in this story? Why do you think this?
 - How would you describe the style of the cover artwork?
 - What can you see happening in the cover artwork?
 - What do the cover illustrations tell you about the characters in the story?
 - What can you learn about the author and illustrator from the back cover of the book?
 - Does reading the back cover give you any information that you hadn't gathered from the front cover artwork and

title? Why/why not, what is it, and in what ways?

- As a class, discuss the line in the story that states 'Ghosts sailed in.' Some things you might like to include in your discussion could be:
 - Who were the ghosts this line refers to?
 - From whose point of view is this being written? How can we tell this?
 - Why are the incoming sailors described as ghosts?
 - Look carefully at the illustration on this page—do the sailors look like ghosts to you? Why do you think the artist chose to depict them like this?
 - How accurate do you think the artist's representation of the sailors is, in terms of the perception of the sailors by the local people?
- Why did the European arrivals move the local people off their homes? As a class, discuss how it would feel if strangers arrived, renamed your home and forced you to move.
- How and in what ways did the new arrivals make the Indigenous people ill? As a class, discuss the effect of a new disease on a population that has never experienced it before.
- What were the different policies and practices of the colonial government, that resulted in the loss of language, song and story for Indigenous Australians? How common were these practices in other countries that were subject to British colonial invasion and rule?
- In small groups, research the history of your local area. Some things to include in your research might be:
 - Who are the traditional owners of the land where you live?
 - Where specifically in your area did the traditional owners live, hunt, and gather food?
 - Where are some of the sacred and/or ceremonial places in your local area?
 - What foods did the traditional owners eat? How did they hunt or gather them, and did their traditional diet affect how they lived on the land, and in what ways?
 - When did European Settlers first arrive in your local area?
- Invite an elder or other member of your local Indigenous community to come to your school and share with your class what local history looks like from their perspective.
- Why did the Australian Government steal the children of Indigenous Australians? What reasons did they state, and what reasons did they not state?
 - What happened to the children who were stolen from their parents?
 - How, and in what ways, has the existence of the Stolen Generation contributed to systemic and ongoing disadvantage amongst Indigenous Australians?
- Why is it so important that we all learn to see things from other peoples' and other cultures' points of view? How do you think the history of Australia over the last 250 years might be different had the British Empire in the 1700s fostered a culture of inclusiveness and understanding, and had it valued the perspective and opinions of Indigenous people worldwide?
- Do you think this book is a hopeful and positive story, or is it sad and heartbreaking? Which parts of it make you feel the most positive, and which make you feel the saddest?
- After reading the book, as a class, discuss how you felt at different points throughout your reading of this story.
 - Create an artwork that reflects your emotional response to this book.
- Can you identify some of the specific individuals referred to towards the end of the book? As a class, discuss who some of these famous and extremely successful individuals might be.
- In pairs or small groups, research a famous or successful living Indigenous Australian, and write a brief biography of them and their achievements. Share your work with the class, and display everyone's completed projects on a Wall of Honour.
- What do you think the symbolism of the illustration at the end of the book, which shows a tiny shoot growing from a tree stump, might be? What is your emotional response to this imagery?
- Using the artwork in the book as inspiration, create an artwork of your own showing a place local to you which holds special meaning to you, your family or your friends.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE