

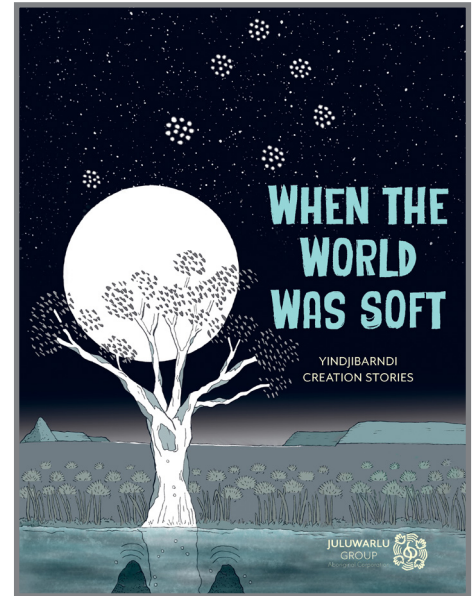
# When the World Was Soft: Yindjibarndi Creation Stories

AUTHORS

**JULUWARLU GROUP ABORIGINAL CORPORATION**

ILLUSTRATOR

**ALEX MANKIEWICZ**



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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Mid to Upper Primary

## SYNOPSIS

Yindjibarndi believe all creation is written in our landscape and was sung long ago, filling our Ngurra (Country) with sacred meanings and deep religious significance. At the dawn of time, Ngurra Nyujunggamu, the world was soft as clay and the sky was very low. Our Creator, Minkala, sang the songs from which all life and Ngurra evolved. These are some of our stories.

*Our grandmothers and grandfathers sing our songs and tell our stories every day, just like our old people long ago sang songs and told stories to their children. And now we are sharing them with you.*

Dynamically illustrated by Alex Mankiewicz with striking artwork by members of the Juluwarlu Art Group, *When the World Was Soft* is a powerful gift of culture for young and old.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation is based in Roebourne and Ngurrawaana Community, in WA's Pilbara region. Its purpose is to collect and promote knowledge of Yindjibarndi culture—our Ngurra, plants and animals; our language, genealogy, mythology, social history and biography—to sustain our Yindjibarndi identity, giving self-esteem, respect, and other values we consider vital to our lives, our well-being, and our culture's future. We do this for our children and our future generations so that they too, are inspired to contribute to our Australian national community. Juluwarlu's cultural recording and archiving project was started by Lorraine Coppin in the Ngurrawaana Community on the Yindjibarndi tablelands in 1998 with Elder Woodley King and his grandson, Michael Woodley, and was incorporated in 2000.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Alex Mankiewicz is an illustrator and artist who specialises in graphic journalism. Based in Kyoto and Byron Bay, Alex has lived and worked in France, the UK and USA, and has been shortlisted twice in the Comic Arts Awards of Australia, and recognised by Australian & New Zealand Illustration Awards and American Illustration. Alex was commissioned by Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation to create a graphic novel interpretation of the Yindjibarndi cultural stories that appear in this book. Time spent on Country with Elders and other custodians, while with an unrelated film crew in 2021, made the renderings of the images and stories possible—both visually and in connection to spirit of place.

**STUDY NOTES**

It is strongly recommended that before work on *When the World was Soft* begins teachers and librarians read ACARA'S Guiding principles for promoting and implementing the Australian Curriculum cross-curriculum priority.

- Before reading, discuss the title, cover and blurb of the book. Ask questions, such as:
  - What do you think a creation story is?
  - Do you know another name for Aboriginal creation stories?
  - Why do you think different cultures might have different creation stories?
  - How do creation stories help people understand where they come from and how the world was made?
  - The blurb mentions 'Our grandmothers and grandfathers sing our song . . . , just like our old people long ago sang songs and told stories to their children.' Why do you think it might be important for older people to pass on information to younger generations?
  - What role can stories and songs play in passing on information from one generation to the next?
- Locate on a map of Australia where Yindjibarndi live.
  - What major river runs through their Country?
  - Research the impact of mining in the Pilbara.
- In graphic novels, the combination of text and image forms a powerful storytelling duo, where words and pictures work together to convey a richer and more immersive narrative than either could achieve on its own. Look at the image on p 19 and discuss how the images here work with the text and enhance it. What are the images telling us that the words do not?
- Creation stories teach us how we should behave and live together. They show us the rules and laws that help us get along with others and take care of the world. Choose one story from *When the World Was Soft* and, in your own words, describe the rule or law that is being taught.
- Read 'Nyinkara the Stoneman' and see if you can find examples of the following graphic novel elements:
  - Sound Effects—onomatopoeic words written in stylised fonts to represent sounds.
  - Motion Lines—drawn around characters or objects to indicate movement or action.
  - Splash Pages—full illustrations used for significant moments in the story.
  - Foreground and Background—elements in the foreground are closer to the viewer, while the background represents the distant environment, creating a sense of depth.
  - Colour Palette—colours are chosen to evoke a particular mood or atmosphere.
- Do you think that ancient stories are more or less exciting when told using modern graphic novel elements? Why/Why not?
- Read 'Jiruna Yuya Pelican and Quail' and transform it into a written story. Follow the language style of the graphic story's text and expand the text to include elements of the story that were conveyed by the graphics: mood/atmosphere, details of setting, description of characters—not just how they look, but how they feel, act and react, what they are thinking, etc.
- Look closely at the painting 'Yarndanyirra Mayalari (Pleiades)' at the beginning of the story entitled 'Bunggaliyarra Fallen'. Read the story and discuss how the colours and elements in the painting are reflected in the chapter's illustrations.
- Do you think it was a good idea to start each story with an Aboriginal painting? Why/Why not? What makes Aboriginal art in Australia special, and what are some common features you noticed in the paintings that appear in *When the World Was Soft*?