

Worksheet 2 - Reading Comprehension

My Life Story by William (Nyaparu) Gardiner

These stories come from the book Ngajumili Muwarr Wanikinyarni Partanyja Wirtujatinyankanu Mirtanyajartinyi: My Life Story. It was written and illustrated by William (Nyaparu) Gardiner, who has since passed away. He wrote it in Nyangumarta, his own language and then translated it into English. Some words are also written in Aboriginal English.

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1. SCHOOL KURL

The school Mr Gardiner went to was probably Port Hedland Primary School during the 1950s. Boodarie station is 30-40km south of Port Hedland, not too far from the mouth of the Turner River.

My mother and father kept me and my brothers and sisters in Hedland for a while. They put me in a whitefella school to learn how to read and write and we stayed there in school for a couple of years. We all moved east, to just outside of Hedland, to Tjalku Wara for a bit, staying with my uncle and my nephew who kept us there. My mother and father put me into school in Hedland to learn how to read and write and other sorts of things. The teacher showed us how to read, write and count. All us kids, we were learning to read and write so we would know how to read and write in English and the white man told us that he wanted to teach us while we were little so we would know things when we grew older. We know how to read in English, not just speak Nyangumarta. That's why I went to school, and I got better and better at reading and writing.

If we didn't do as we were told at school, the white man used to hit us. That's when all us kids ran away from school and we never went back. The white man used to get cheeky at us kids; he used to get angry and hit us. We ran away from school, didn't go back. All us kids went because we were frightened of that white man. We were walking between the Turner River and Boodarie when this other white man came along in his truck. He took us west to Yule River where we saw some other people there who were collecting buffel grass. We went to see them people and they asked us, "Where you mob come from?" "We come from Hedland. Today this white man brought us in his truck", we told those people. They believed us and they looked after us there while they collected buffel grass.

We stayed there with them and they took us back to Hedland on their next trip. At home, we got in trouble from our parents. They asked us why we ran away and told us, "don't ever go running away again because you don't know what could happen. We'll have to keep you kids here in the one place." We listened and paid attention to them because they were worried about us getting hurt or having an accident on the road. We continued to go to school and got better and better at reading and writing as we grew older.

2. THE BIG RAIN**WIRTU NGAPA**

While Mr Gardiner's group was out mining at Pilykunkura, there was some heavy rain. The rain filled up all the small creeks and inlets, which flooded the East Turner River and along with the strong winds, put the group out of action for a day or two.

This is another story from a long time ago, when I was a little boy. All of us mob stayed in Pilykunkura. We had this big rain falling down hard, hitting us mob, so we went into the cave because we were frightened. We stayed in the cave and it continued to rain until the river flooded. The water was so strong, it started to pull the trees and the spinifex down the river. We stayed there while it kept raining. When it started to get cold, some of the people went outside to look for some wood but the wood was all wet, there were only some rocks lying around the place. The rain kept hitting us, it was pouring down hard. The river was flooded and the trees and the spinifex in the river were washed away by the big flood. Them other mob went looking for some spinifex by the river but they couldn't find anything, there was only the sound of the wind blowing. The old people looked after us, doing corroborree, singing the rain song until daybreak. Then, at last, we went back to the big, flat camp area.

It was raining and the river was flooded. We stayed by the river for about a week, just living on meat. At last the river went down and we saw the truck coming with our food. They were looking for us. Up till then, while we'd been waiting, the old people had been looking after us. We were working, when this rain came suddenly sweeping through again, pouring down on us mob and some of our belongings. The rain made the spinifex soft, so the wind pulled it out and the flood washed it away. The other mob was standing nearby in the cave, watching the wind. Eventually, the water went down and some people went looking for meat while the others went to the flat ground. Us mob went to the river for a little while. It was just raining lightly. All of my grandmothers and grandfathers were teaching us kids how to hunt for food. "Here go this way - I'll show you mob how you stomp around this hole where the goanna gonna come out." We got the goanna but we didn't cook it straight away because we went to get some more food. Food like sweet potato, bush tomato and other bush tucker. We could smell the scent of the bush tomato on the easterly and westerly winds blowing our way.

And then the water was okay, the rain stopped and the flood went down.

3. MY FIRST JOB**NGAJUMILI WARRKAMU**

Mr Gardiner and his uncle were taken to work at Warrawagine Station. To do their job, rounding up horses on the station, they were given two horses each. When one horse was worn out and tired, it could be swapped with the other, which was fresh and rested, to carry on working.

My mother and father came and took me to this tin field in a mining area called Moolyella. We stayed there for a long time. Then, when I was old enough, I left my mother and father to go looking for work. I was in Hedland and this whitefella asked me if I wanted to work and I said, "yes" and he said, "Come with me, I'll take you mob working". So we went with him. The white man, Sandy Coffin, took me and my uncle, Ross Gardiner (he's passed away now), to work at this station called Warrawagine. Me and Sandy Coffin were looking after all the horses, getting them ready for the races.

Early one morning, the sun was just rising and me and Ross went to round up all the horses. We were told to round up all the horses in the Kakadu Paddock, so me and Ross went looking for all the horses and then searched the side of the river for the big black stallion. We were searching for the horses and eventually we found them in the flat, where the big stallion was keeping them all. I told Ross and we chased all the horses out of the flat, cut them off, forced them to run alongside the fence, jamming them right up against it, and then we led them back south. There were some people waiting for us near the windmill with some whitefellas who had motor cars to block the area off. Ross and I changed our horses and we sent the rest of the horses back into the yard and then branded all of them. The afternoon came, but the sun was still strong. We stayed there working, putting all the horses in the truck. By the time we finished it was night time and we camped there so we could look after all the horses.

The next morning we went to Marble Bar to take all the horses to race against each other. That other mob wanted to come but my boss told them to stay and finish their work and to come later. Me and Ross had to be in Marble Bar with the horses to get them ready for the races first thing in the morning. He took us to Marble Bar and we stayed there to watch the horse race. Then we went back to work.

4. COLLECTING BUFFEL GRASS**YANGARNAYI PARU**

Buffel Grass (Cenchrus ciliaris) a tropical pasture grass, native to Africa and India, cultivated and naturalised in northern Australia.

-The Macquarie Dictionary

When I was a bigger boy, I stayed with my mother and father. They both looked after me with some of the other people who were there. They all looked after us kids at De Grey River. We stayed there collecting buffel grass and we used to fill the bags up with it. All the women and kids collected buffel grass while the men went hunting for meat. Because we had no food, we were waiting for the truck to come with all kinds of different food for us mob. We stayed like that for a long time. We were only living on meat, that's all, no other food.

5. MY UNCLE AND FATHER BUILDING ROADS**NGAJUMILI KAKAJILUPA JAPARTULU RUTU YARNIMARNAKINYAPULU**

Camps, wells and bores were sometimes identified and named by number. "Forty Two" was the camp at Pirnpirn where Mr Gardiner's father and uncle were based to make the connecting roads between the various mines and mining camps.

This is another story. We stayed in Forty Two for a long time when we were kids. These two old fellas looked after us there while they were making the road for the motor cars and trucks. They were only using a pick and shovel to make it. Them two, Piparnpangu and Mintiki (my father and uncle), built the road from Forty Two to Pilykunkura and they made the road towards Mt Frisco. They looked after us for a long time while they were in that area. Those two brothers also collected rocks there and made the roads. Just the little connecting, shortcut roads, leading to the mines and camps. After they made the little roads, the bulldozer came through to make those roads bigger. Them two brothers were moving all the rocks themselves. They were living out there, making the roads because there weren't any good ones; they were making little roads for the motor cars and trucks. They made the road from Bore Hole and Pilykunkura to Mt Frisco and then back to Pilykunkura and Bore Hole. The road also went to Yandeyarra and through the river across the water. They stayed out there making the roads until they were finished. Other people saw the roads and today, these roads are still used. People travel up and down them with trucks and cars. They travel up and down the roads that my uncle and my father made a long time ago when we were kids and they were looking after us.

6. MUSTERING IN THE KIMBERLEYS

MAJURUMKARRA WARRKAMU YALINYJA

Liveringa, Noonkanbah, Looma, Wangkatjungka, Looma and Nerrima used to be sheep or cattle stations, while Bidyadanga was, for a while in the 50s and 60s, La Grange Mission. Most of these places today are Aboriginal communities.

Next, I went up north to stay in Looma. I stayed there for a long time, making houses for them. A long time before that, I had been working in this place called Camballin, feeding the cattle. From there I went south-east to this other place called Kalyeeda, where I worked for six months, helping muster all the cattle. We stayed there working, tagging their ears and then putting them on the truck to send them to Broome. From there we went on a holiday for two weeks and when we came back from our holiday, we started working again fixing fences.

Then the Fitzroy River flooded. We got all our belongings from our camp and kept them with us all the time. We started to brand all the bullocks and when we finished our work over the other side, we returned to stay near the bullocks. We finished the mustering over on the east side and then we went to the Nerrima side mustering the cattle to bring them closer. Next, we went west mustering and we took the bullocks across the river, the Fitzroy River there. We stayed on the west side for a while and then kept going until we got to the river and stayed there.

I didn't know anything then about the country. The old people showed me around the countryside because I didn't know much about that area. They went fishing and caught catfish and other different kinds of fish in the billabong and then we all went back to camp. Then we went to Liveringa and we stayed there for a little while. Some white fellas took us to see the races and we returned to Liveringa from there.

7. WORKING AROUND THE KIMBERLEYS

WARRKAMUJARRIKINYARNI YALINYJA

I was up north and had been living there for a long time when I went back to stay in Liveringa. There, this whitefella told us mob that we have to go work in the north area (further north), near the water, in a place called Wulurungan. There we were looking after all the cattle and feeding them. We were fattening the cattle and when the cattle were fat enough, we would send them to the Broome Meat Works to get cut up. We stayed there working for a long time.

After that work finished, we went back to Liveringa. Again we stayed there for a long time and that's where I was when this white man asked me if I wanted to work. So a group of us went to work for this white man, whose name was Gordon Price, and he gave us food and everything. From there, he took us, me, Allan Horace and Lindsay Care to Wulurungun where we were all staying. Lindsay Care went back to Derby and stayed there for a long time, working. He was looking after all the cattle, fattening them and then putting them in the truck to send them to

7. WORKING AROUND THE KIMBERLEYS WARRKAMUJARRIKINYARNI YALINYJA**continued..**

the meat works. Some other mob, they were old people, also worked there in Wulurungun, in the corn and rice fields. This white American man was looking after us other mob still working there, taking care of all the cattle. They gave us food while we were staying there. They took us to the station where we looked after the cattle until they were fat and then we sent the cattle to the Broome and Derby meat works. After that, we went to Liveringa, where we worked in this place called Yarramang.

We then stayed in Kurungal, where us mob were fixing houses. Kakajurni ... Tim Larry ... tried to tell all the old people to move out of the houses so that we could fix the houses for them but they wouldn't move. So we were told to tell the old people to go. They moved out when we told them what was happening and that's when we started fixing the houses. We were working for the Shire Council at the time. After that, we went to Bidadanga and stayed there for a while with some other young fellas. Then we went to Wangkatjungka where we were building houses for the people there. After we finished building all the houses, I went back to Looma and stayed there.

I stayed in Looma working. I didn't know anybody there except for my uncle and I stayed with him, although there was some other mob staying there as well, old people who were also my family. From there we went to Nerrima where this white man gave us work mustering cattle on the station where we were staying. They kept us there for a while and then we went east to this place called Kalyeeda. We were mustering there as well and they gave us anything, all kinds of things like cooking gear and calico.

In Port Hedland we separated; Carol Henry's father went to Yandeyarra to see his kids and stay with them there and I went back north to Looma. I stayed there in Looma, where I found another job and a woman for myself. I stayed up north with her for a long time. From there, me and my wife went to Port Hedland, where I took her to see other family members and then we went back to Looma. We were working there and I never returned to Hedland during that time. When I did go back, I was already a man. I became a man up north. I went up there as a young fella, when I left my mother and father. I left to go looking for work on the station, went up to Looma and got married there.

We stayed in Looma for a long time and then we went east to Noonkanbah. Just for a day or so, just to visit some relatives of my wife's relatives and some of my old friends. We camped there for a night and then we went back to thank them and said we were going back to Looma. We went to say goodbye to the boss, he said that we were welcome to come and stay; he had a few houses that didn't have anyone in them: "You're welcome to stay here and live here for a bit". We went back to Looma and thought about it. We asked our children and they said it would be alright just for a change. So from there, we went back to Noonkanbah, where we stayed, me, my wife and our kids. We both kept our kids while we stayed there. We kept them for a long time in that place where we stayed.

7. WORKING AROUND THE KIMBERLEYS WARRKAMUJARRIKINYARNI YALINYJA

continued..

The people in that country looked after us while we were staying there. All these people, my wife and her sister and brother, her mother and father, uncle and aunty, and grandfather and grandmother were all living there and they looked after all of the family, all of us. They showed me around the country so that I wouldn't get lost, because I didn't know my way around. Today I know all of that hill country.

For a while, we were fixing the cattle yard at Clinton Yard, at the eastern part of Noonkanbah. From there I went west to this other place called Kurungal, where we fixed houses. We stayed there for a long time fixing the houses for those people living there. We fixed all the houses for them and afterwards, we went back to live in Looma. All my kids have spent time growing up in that area and they were there for a long time. We then went and stayed in Warralong for a while, where they gave me work. I worked in the school for them. After that, we went back up north to Looma

8. DIFFERENT JOBS IN DIFFERENT PLACES**WARINYJARRANGU WARRANYJA WARRKAMUJARRIKINYARNI**

The Lock Hospital was a separate hospital in Port Hedland for Aboriginal people.

I didn't feel like staying in Warralong, so from there, I returned to Tjalku Wara. I went for my mother and father and stayed there looking after them. During that time, a white man came and asked me and some others if we wanted to do some work taking houses apart. He said he would take us working. So we followed him to the place, he gave us some rations and we started taking the houses apart. We then took the houses to Tjalku Wara and left them there.

We were all staying with the white man while we were taking the old Lock Hospital apart. I told them that I had no money. We all went to move the old Lock Hospital to Three Mile after we took it all apart. We also took some to Tjalku Wara and left them there. After that, the white man separated us; some mob stayed in Three Mile, some stayed in Tjalku Wara and some went back to Yandeyarra. We were all pulling down the houses. All of us, me, Tirrirta, Patrick Henry and Allan Horace, stayed in Tjalku Wara. All the other old people went to see the other mob in Yandeyarra fixing the houses there. After we finished, the white man gave us our rations; bosses couldn't give us money at that time, so they gave us rations, all sorts of food. He then told us to look for a job with the shire council. Later on this white man, Dick Reibel, gave us work. He was working for the Shire Council for the Welfare mob, Native Welfare, and he found three of us work with the shire council.

My two kids, one of them was at the walking age and the other was crawling around, were kept in Tjalku Wara with their grandmother and grandfather. They looked after the kids in Tjalku Wara and the kids were alright there; they never cried or anything like that. There, this white man,

Brian Geytenbeek, stayed with us. He gave me some work writing in Nyangumarta for SIL and to write the Christian bible down in the Nyangumarta language. Me, Kevin Fred and Bruce Thomas, did this translating work in Tjalku Wara. We translated the bible, the book of Genesis from chapter 1 to 11. I was a Christian man at that time and also writing the people's stories in Nyangumarta.

We stayed in Tjalku Wara looking after all my old people for a long time. While we were there, this whitefella, Herb Young, asked me and my brother-in-law, Snowy Pukuti, if we wanted to go shearing sheep in Muccan. So we went to work in Muccan and we stayed there shearing all the sheep for a couple of months. On the last night, just as it was dark, Herb asked us if we wanted to camp in his house. We did and he told us that he would take us back to Hedland in the morning, after the all the shearing was finished up. He took us back to Hedland in his motor car. After that, me and Snowy, he's passed away now, worked at Shay Gap. We were working and living there for a long time in Shay Gap and then Herb told us we could have a holiday. Me and Snowy took a holiday and we went to Tjalku Wara for a while and then went back to work.