NYUNTU NINTI (WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW)

Bob Randall & Melanie Hogan

SYNOPSIS

Nyuntu Ninti takes readers through the harmonious and interconnected world of Indigenous living – their feelings, their memories and their relationship with all that is living. It offers a way of connecting to some of the Indigenous wisdom Bob Randall learnt from the old people who were still living close to country during his lifetime. Indigenous Australians are considered to have the oldest living culture on earth.

Nyuntu Ninti is based on the documentary, *Kanyini* (<u>www.kanyini.com</u>), which was voted 'Best documentary' at the London Australian Film Festival in 2007.

WRITING STYLE

The text for the picture book has been taken directly from the first half of the documentary script, and as such, is written in the words of Bob Randall himself. He gently tells his story, allowing the story and meaning to become clear, and also allows us to 'get to know' him, his people and his way of life. The style is simple, and the writing is heartfelt, soft yet powerful. The style of the book echoes the way 'Uncle' Bob speaks and reads more like dialogue than text.

It was felt that the first half of the script was more appropriate for the book's audience as the second half deals with the pain of the stolen generation and shows more graphic images. (The publishers are considering creating a book for older children based on the content of the remaining narrative of *Kanyini*.)

AUTHOR INSPIRATION

Nyuntu Ninti is based on the award-winning documentary *Kanyini* (also produced by Bob Randall and Melanie Hogan).

Kanyini was born out of Melanie's desire to understand and connect with Indigenous Australia, she explains:

In my homeland, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people still seem to be confused about each other and are finding it difficult to journey together. Knowing this, Bob and I wanted to create a film (*Kanyini*) that helps to bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous people closer together – not just in Australia, but all over the world.

As a young person, I feel very strongly that many of the values held by our Indigenous brothers and sisters could be of enormous benefit for society at large; particularly their care and respect for Mother Earth and all forms of life. In a world that is going a little too fast, Indigenous wisdom may hold some of the answers non-Indigenous people are looking for.

Hearing Uncle Bob tell his people's heartbreaking story with such honesty and love, gentleness and strength continues to amaze me. Uncle Bob always says the hardest

thing to change in the world is 'negative attitude'. If *Kanyini* and *Nyuntu Ninti* can help create positive attitudes, then we're on our way to healing some of the mistakes of the past. And that excites me.

I just want to say thank you to Uncle Bob for trusting me with his story. It's been an incredible journey – one that has only just begun.

AGE RANGE

Nyuntu Ninti is suitable for ages 5 years and over.

STUDY NOTES/ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

Suggested outcomes:

- Understanding how notions of belonging and place affect people's sense of identity
- Valuing the qualities of different ways of living and diverse cultures

Questions to ask students before reading the book:

- Have they have been to, or lived in, Central Australia?
- Have they visited Uluru?
- Describe what Uluru and the surrounding countryside is like.
- Do you know any Aboriginal Australians?

Classroom discussions and activities can be generated from the variety of themes that are included in the book:

Connections to the land

- How are Indigenous people connected to the land?
- How are white people connected to the land?
- What can we learn from how Australia's oldest inhabitants interact with nature and Mother Earth?
- Use the words of the song at the end of the book, 'Where we came from', to answer some of these questions.
- How has the way that Indigenous people live changed? Why has brought about this change?
- How does Bob Randall explain his people's connection with the land?
- Look at the black-and-white images in the book. What do they show us about how Aboriginal Australians lived with nature?
- Explain what Bob Randall means when he says 'Our life was really disciplined'. Discuss how students' lives are disciplined? How are their lives different?

New words and phrases to learn and discuss:

Nyuntu Ninti – what you should know Indigenous – native to land, belonging naturally Reconciliation – making friends after separation Pitjantjatjara – people living in the area of Kata-Tjuta.

Anangu – Western Desert language for person from that area. Hunter-gatherers – describes people who live by hunting animals, fishing and gathering plants for food.

The author: Bob Randall

Share the information below about 'Uncle' Bob Randall.

Discuss:

Why do you think Uncle Bob has written this book?

What is he trying to do by telling us about Aboriginal Australian's connection to the land? Uncle Bob is famous for his song, *My Brown Skin Baby (they took him away)*. You might like to discuss the words of this song (available on the internet) with older children. Talk about the 'Stolen Generation' and what this means.

Uncle Bob played an important role in Sorry Day. What does it mean to say 'sorry'? What did it mean on Sorry Day?

Bob Randall

Born in 1934 in the Central Desert region of the Northern Territory, Bob Randall is a member of the Yankunytjatjara people, and one of the traditional owners of Uluru. His mother was a housemaid at a cattle station owned by his Scotsman father, Bill Liddle. Under government policy of the time, Bob was taken away from his mother at an early age and sent to live in Arnhem Land, far from his traditional home and land. He has lived in Darwin and Adelaide and worked with Aboriginal people for most of his life.

In the 1970s he gained recognition for his songwriting when his song, *My Brown Skin Baby* (*They Took Him Away*) was part of a documentary of the same name which won a major prize at the Cannes Film festival and focused national and international attention on the issue of family separation and 'The Stolen Generation'.

His work with Aboriginal communities has taken many forms. He's been Director of the Northern Australian Legal Aid Service and established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander centres at a number of universities. He continues to present cultural awareness programs in schools and workplaces. In 1999 Bob Randall was named 'Indigenous Person of the Year'.

Uluru

Uluru is the largest sandstone monolith in the world and a designated world heritage site. It is in the centre of Australia and is a major tourist destination. People go to see the natural beauty, including the sunrises and sunsets, and to learn something about the significance of the rock and the surrounding Kata-Tjuta National Park to the traditional owners, the Anangu people. They now manage the area and the park facilities with Parks Australia. White people used to call it Ayers Rock, but in 1985 the land was returned to the traditional owners and it is now known by its ancient name Uluru.

Discuss:

• Why is Uluru important to Australian Aboriginals?

• Why was the name of Uluru changed from Ayers Rock?

Art

- Talk about how Australian Aboriginals' connection to the land inspires their art.
- Create your own dot paintings.

For teachers

Kanyini is a sacred principle of unconditional love and responsibility to all things. It is a principle that underpins Aboriginal life, linking four main areas of responsibility:

- Tjukurrpa (philosophy, law and religion)
- Ngura (home and country)
- Waltyja (family and kinship)
- Kurunpa (spirit, soul and psyche).

As humans we have to connect to and be responsible for each one of these areas.