

In My Own Words



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A **STUDY GUIDE** BY JENNIFER CONNOLLY



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Brewarrina Teaching Team
(L-R) Mary Waites, Chala
Leblanch, Janelle Frail

All photos by
Justine Kerrigan
unless otherwise
mentioned

By May 2016 a film crew and I are standing in an empty classroom in the small NSW town of Brewarrina thrilled to be shooting in a place that rarely gets a gig on Australian screens, but anxious to see if any of the 30 or so Aboriginal adults who have signed up for the basic literacy course are actually going to show.

Brewarrina is 10 hours drive from Sydney and is like so many small, rural North West NSW towns. It has a majority Aboriginal population. There are limited employment opportunities and plenty of 'social issues', and programs to fix these issues regularly come and go.

But the Cuban 'Yes I Can' method that the Literacy for Life Foundation uses to teach basic literacy insists that the local community take responsibility for running and teaching the program, and it's this, in tandem with the students learning journey, that we are here to film.²

ERICA GLYNN

Synopsis

Raw, heartfelt, sometimes painstaking but often funny, *In My Own Words* follows the journey of adult Aboriginal students and their teachers as they discover the transformative power of reading and writing for the first time in their lives.¹

Director's Statement

For years, I have rolled along accepting the fact that many of my Aboriginal family, friends and colleagues struggle with reading and writing or simply can't read and write at all.

But about two years ago, armed with a niggling sense that something was wrong, I began to look more closely at the issue of Indigenous adult illiteracy.

Almost immediately, the research confirmed my hunch - illiteracy amongst our adult population was a huge issue. In fact, it revealed that between 45-65% of Aboriginal adults were functionally illiterate - a shocking and sobering statistic that compelled me to move on the subject fast.



Crew in action. Camera Michael
Steele, Sound David Tranter,
Student Clarence Gibbs, Teacher/
Facilitator Janelle Frail

Curriculum and Educational Suitability Links

In My Own Words is suitable for Secondary students in Years 10 – 12. The film would also have application as part of tertiary education courses. Teachers are advised that there is some low-level coarse language and drug references in the film.

General understandings addressed in the film:

- The importance of education
- The issues faced by people living in remote communities
- The social, emotional and financial impact of low literacy
- The positive impact that literacy intervention programs can have on communities

Summary of links to the National Curriculum:

- Media Years 10-12
- English Years 10-12
- Humanities/History Years 10-12
- Civics and Citizenship Year 10

Curriculum Links³

See Table below.



ENGLISH

Year 10

Responding to literature

Analyse and explain how **text** structures, language and **visual features** of texts and the **context** in which texts are experienced may influence **audience** response (ACELT1641)

Language for interaction

Understand how language use can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people (ACELA1564)

Understand that people's evaluations of texts are influenced by their value systems, the context and the purpose and **mode** of communication (ACELA1565)

Expressing and developing ideas

Evaluate the impact on audiences of different choices in the representation of still and moving images (ACELA1572)

Interpreting, analysing and evaluating

Use comprehension strategies to compare and contrast information within and between texts, identifying and analysing embedded perspectives, and evaluating supporting evidence (ACELY1754)

YEARS
11-12:
Links to
English in
Units 1-4

HISTORY

Year 10

Depth Study – Rights and freedoms (1945-present)

Background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for rights and freedoms before 1965, including the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations (ACDSEH104 - Scootle)

The significance of the following for the civil rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: 1962 right to vote federally; 1967 Referendum; Reconciliation; Mabo decision; Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology (ACDSEH106 - Scootle)

Methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and the role of ONE individual or group in the struggle (ACDSEH134 - Scootle)

The continuing nature of efforts to secure civil rights and freedoms in Australia and throughout the world, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) (ACDSEH143 - Scootle)

YEARS
11-12:
Links to
Unit 2
Modern
History

CIVICS AND CITIZENSHIP

Civics and Citizenship Knowledge and Understanding

How Australia's international legal obligations shape Australian law and government policies, including in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACHCK093 - Scootle)

The challenges to and ways of sustaining a resilient democracy and cohesive society (ACHCK094 - Scootle)

YEARS
11-12:
Links to
senior
Media
curriculum
in
different
regions

MEDIA ARTS

Year 10

Analyse a range of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing **viewpoints** and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks, including media artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and international media artworks (ACAMAR079)

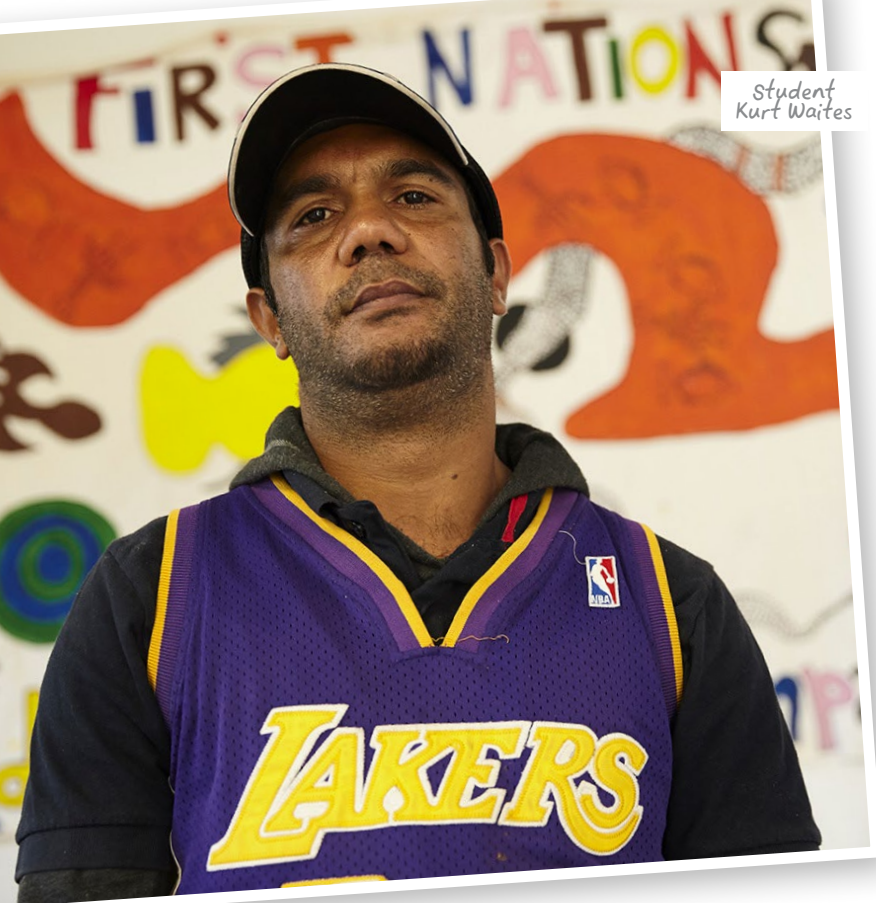
Produce and distribute media artworks for a range of community and institutional contexts and consider social, ethical and regulatory issues (ACAMAM077)

GENERAL CAPABILITIES:

- Critical and creative thinking - Personal and social capability - Intercultural understanding - Ethical understanding

Cross Curriculum Priorities:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures.



Student
Kurt Waites

teach basic literacy skills. Watch the short film found at the link below and answer the questions that follow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwtoX-MeNZE>

- a) Who is credited with coming up with the idea for the 'Yes I Can' Literacy Program?
- b) What form does the program take?
- c) How successful has the program been?
- d) Describe Bob Boughton's involvement with the literacy campaign in East Timor.
- e) Bob Boughton describes literacy as a class issue, what does he mean by this?
- f) In the clip, literacy is defined as 'not just what you can read but what you can understand'. Discuss the meaning of this statement.

Before Viewing

1. Use the following questions to guide a group discussion prior to viewing *In My Own Words*:
 - a) What is literacy and what does it mean to be literate?
 - b) Brainstorm issues that could arise as a result of not being able to read and/or write.
 - c) How many people in the group speak another language? What are the challenges of learning to speak and write in another language?
 - d) What are the potential effects of living in a low socio economic, remote community?
 - e) What barriers could prevent adults from learning to read and write?

2. The 'Yes I Can' Program is used in the film to

Right:
Co-ordinator
Mary Waites
Photo: Erica
Glynn.

Bottom right:
Co-ordinator/
Teacher Mary
Waites Student
Connie Sullivan.

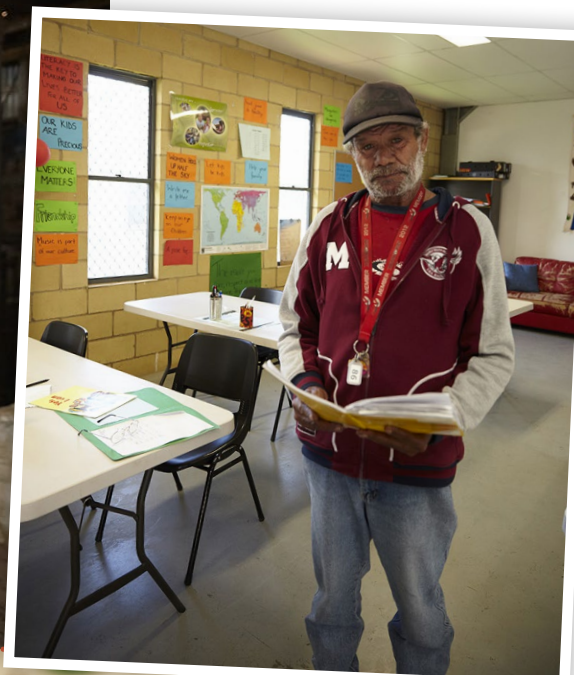
Bottom left:
Brewarrina
Campaign
Co-ordinator
Mary Waites





Student Clarence Gibbs Weilmoringle Shearing Sheds

Below from top: Student Clarence Gibbs; Student Janine Murphy



While Viewing

1. Note taking on the film

Use Table 1 on the following page to take notes while viewing the film. You do not need to fill in each column for each fact presented.

The notes taken on this sheet could be used in a variety of ways. Facts can be shared and discussed or the questions could be set for homework or as an extension activity. Responses could be discussed in class to determine individual opinions and used as reference when completing post viewing activities.

2. Questions relating to the film

- Early in the film, the lack of employment opportunities in rural communities is discussed. Why are there issues with employment in this area?
- What everyday issues does Clarence face as a result of his limited literacy?
- Outline Mary's educational background. Why does she believe the 'Yes I Can' Program is so important?
- Compare and contrast the classroom environment on the first and second day and suggest reasons for the differences.
- On a blank piece of paper complete your own 'River of Literacy' that tracks your learning from Year 1 to now. On your river, make a note of what assisted and blocked your learning at different ages.

- Why does Narelle want to learn to read? What are her goals?
- What approach do the group take when people do not come to class?
- List some of the positive aspects of living in a rural community that Mary identifies.
- It is revealed that many people in Brewarrina have never voted. Why might this be? What impact could this have?
- The end of the film is very emotional. What changes occurred as a result of the 'Yes I Can' program?
- Write a 300-400 word reflection on the film. In your reflection you could discuss:
 - What feelings or emotions did the film arouse in you? Why? Give some examples from the film of particularly emotional moments.
 - Do you identify with any particular person or group in the film? Why?
 - Will this film influence how you treat people? Explain how.

Table
1

Facts. Direct quotes/statistics
etc from the film

Your questions in response
to facts and information
presented in the film

Personal responses to the
film. These can be statements
or questions



Crew & participants (L-R) David Tranter, Erica Glynn (back), Mary Waites, Bonnie Faulkner (back), Janelle Frail, Justine Kerrigan, Chala Leblanch, Clarence Gibbs, Simon Morris

After Viewing

1. An extended written analysis and written response to an issue

The reading component of this task will require you to compare various media texts relating to the issue of Indigenous education in Australian. Compare the articles by analysing the effectiveness of the texts, and express your own opinion on the subject by developing a contention and giving supporting reasons.

The written component of the assessment task will require that you write an opinion piece of 600-800 words in length that argues a particular point of view on the topic.

To do this task you will need to:

- Read visual and written texts about the issue
- Explain how the text expresses a point of view about the issue
- Identify the persuasive devices that the author has used
- Plan how you will sequence and structure a persuasive essay
- Review your own and a peers work to improve your editing skills in the areas of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

A) GLOSSARY

To assist your understanding of the texts use the dictionary websites to find the meaning of the words in the table below.

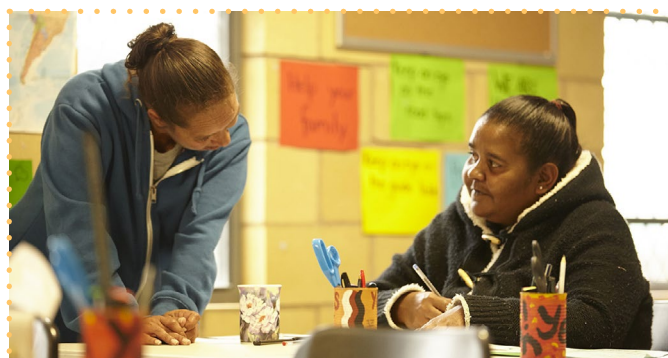
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org>
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>
<http://www.webster-dictionary.org>
<https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au>

Complete the table on this page.

Dictionary Definition

Panacea	
Scrutinises	
Sector	
Context	
Sanctioned	
Adequacy	
Minority	
Remedial	
Retention	

Below from top: Student Janelle Williams, Teacher/Facilitator Janelle Frail; Student Clarence Gibbs, Janelle Frail





Student Clarence Gibbs,
Weilmoringle Primary School

Below L-R: Student Narelle Reynolds; Student
Noelene Murphy Photo: Erica Glynn



Above: Student
Norman Bloomfield,
Teacher/Facilitator
Janelle Frail. Left:
Student Narelle
Reynolds



B) GROUP TEXT ANALYSIS

Get into groups of 3 or 4

Copy and paste the following article into a Word document

"Minding the Indigenous Education Gap" by Clare Martin
<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/education/2015/02/28/minding-the-indigenous-education-gap/14250420001542>

Work as a group to annotate the text to show your understanding of:

- audience, language, tone, context, structure and purpose

The images are also an important component of the article. You should comment on these in your annotations.



Brewarrina Campaign
Co-ordinator - Mary Waites

C) AUDIO VISUAL- TEXT ANALYSIS

"Indigenous Children should go to boarding schools" Langton
<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2013/s3699062.htm>

- Type of Text: (Examples of text types include editorial, feature article, TV documentary etc.)
- Source and Date: (Source means where the text is located eg *The Age*)
- What is the issue the text is exploring?
- What is purpose of the text?
- What are the points of view/contentions presented?
- What are the arguments that are made to support the points of view?
- What facts are mentioned to support the point of view?
- What opinions are expressed? (Provide specific examples from the text)
- What kind of language and tone is used in the text?
- How does the video present a point of view?
- Does the text achieve its purpose?



Above left:
Student
Clarence Gibbs

Above right: LFLF
Cuban Advisor
Chala Leblanch

Right: LFLF
Brewarrina
Campaign
Co-ordinator
Mary Waites



E) READING - TEXT ANALYSIS

"Stop focussing on 'the problem' in Indigenous education, and start looking at learning opportunities" by Elizabeth McKinley

<http://theconversation.com/stop-focusing-on-the-problem-in-indigenous-education-and-start-looking-at-learning-opportunities-71994>

- Type of Text: (Examples of text types include editorial, feature article, TV documentary etc)
- Source and Date: (Source means where the text is located eg *The Age*)
- The Issue
 - What is the point of view/contention?
 - What are the arguments that are made to support the point of view?
 - What facts are mentioned to support the point of view?
 - What opinions are expressed? (Provide specific examples from the text)
 - What kind of language and tone is used in the text?
 - How does the writer present a point of view?
 - Does the text achieve its purpose?

D) READING - TEXT ANALYSIS

"To lift literacy levels among Indigenous children, their parents' literacy skills must be improved first" by Bob Boughton and Jack Beetson.

<http://theconversation.com/to-lift-literacy-levels-among-indigenous-children-their-parents-literacy-skills-must-be-improved-first-78827>

- Type of Text: (Examples of text types include – editorial, feature article, TV documentary etc.)
- Source and Date: (Source means where the text is located eg *The Age*)
- The Issue:
 - What is the point of view/contention?
 - What are the arguments that are made to support the point of view?
 - What facts are mentioned to support the point of view?
 - What opinions are expressed? (Provide specific examples from the text)
 - What kind of language and tone is used in the text?
 - How does the writer present a point of view?
 - Does the text achieve its purpose?



A Student

Student Narelle Reynolds,
Teacher/Coordinator Mary Waites



G) PERSUASIVE ESSAY

Education is the greatest single weapon to overcome disadvantage and the impact of this denial of education affects me and other Indigenous people to this day. — Yvonne Butler, Aboriginal woman⁴

Source: <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education#ixzz4mnIIMIQi>

Use evidence from *In My Own Words*, the articles above and your own research to write a persuasive essay that responds to this statement. The essay should be 800-1000 words.

2. Media presentation

Use ICT to create a 2-minute visual account of the themes and issues explored in *In My Own Words*. Use voice over, images and appropriate music to show your understanding of the piece.

3. Exploring media codes and conventions

Students view the film and then respond to the following questions:

- Identify the codes and conventions used in the film.
- How does the use of codes and conventions evoke a personal response?
- How does the use of codes and conventions sensitively explore the stories of the “Yes I Can” participants and teachers?
- What are the key messages conveyed in the documentary?

F) WRITTEN REVIEW (600-800 WORDS)

Complete a written review (600-800 words) of two of the texts above.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Select two of the above texts. Compare and contrast these texts by discussing:

- The purpose, any inferred purpose and the intended audience of the two texts
- The type of text each represents
- The central issues of the two texts
- The points of view that are expressed in the two texts
- The arguments the authors have used to persuade their audience
- The kinds of evidence used to support their arguments
- The language and tone of the texts

Express an opinion on the effectiveness of the texts in terms of providing a convincing argument.

Express your own opinion on the issue and give supporting reasons.



Clarence Gibbs,
John Barker



Above: Film Crew at work. DOPs Simon Morris & Justine Kerrigan, Sound David Tranter, Subjects, Clarence Gibbs, John Barker. Photo: Erica Glynn

Right: Student Clarence Gibbs

Right bottom: Student Janelle Williams





Above:
Co-ordinator/
Teacher Mary
Waites, Student
Connie Sullivan

Below top: L-R
Students Kurt
Waites, Douglas
"Koori" Sullivan

Below bottom:
Student
Clarence
Gibbs, Teacher/
Facilitator
Janelle Frail

4. Short film promoting the 'Yes i can' program

Work in groups of three or four to create an informative, documentary style film to persuade a community/local council to deliver the 'Yes I Can' program.

Research and consider:

What is the community/local council are you targeting? Why are you targeting this community?

Who is your target audience and how will you clearly convey your message?

How will you succinctly explain the 'Yes I can' program?

5. Letter writing project

One of the most moving moments in *In My Own Words* is when Clarence writes a letter to a former partner and then receives a reply that he is able to read himself. Letter writing has almost become a lost art in the technological age we live in, but the experience of writing and making connections with people in different communities is incredibly valuable.

Taking inspiration from the project detailed in the article below, work as a group to find a community in a different part of Australia you can exchange letters with.

<http://teachforaustralia.org/2016/12/20/pen-pals-project-inspire-students-write/>

6. History depth study on rights and freedoms (1945 – present)

View *In My Own Words* as part of a depth study on Indigenous Right and Freedoms.

TASK:

Write a 600-800 word essay that demonstrates your understanding of the following key events:

- The background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for rights and freedoms before 1967, including the 1938 Day of Mourning and the Stolen Generations
- The significance of the following: 1962 right to vote federally; 1967 Referendum; Reconciliation; Mabo decision; Bringing Them Home Report (the Stolen Generations), the Apology
- Methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and the role of ONE individual or group in the struggle
- The continuing nature of efforts to secure civil rights and freedoms in Australia and throughout the world, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)⁵

When writing your essay ensure that you refer to primary and secondary sources and that you use historical terms and references.



LFLF Students & Teachers. L-R: Douglas 'Koori' Sullivan, Chala Leblanch, Back Clarence Gibbs, Kurt Waites, Anthony, Norman Bloomfield Front Mary Waites, Janine Murphy, Narelle Reynolds, Connie Sullivan, Noelene Murphy, Janelle Frail, Norman Coffee



Additional resources

<https://www.lflf.org.au/>

<https://ala.asn.au/cuban-literacy-program-comes-to-indigenous-australians/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DkmunaBibTA>

http://caepr.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/Publications/topical/Kral_Literacy_0609.pdf

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/explainer/hidden-costs-low-literacy-australia>

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/tvepisode/reading-between-lines>

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education/barriers-to-aboriginal-education/>

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education/>

Endnotes

1 Blackfella films "In My Own Words, Press Kit" 2017 P2

2 Ibid, P3

3 "Australian Curriculum." *Home - The Australian Curriculum V8.3*. N.p., n.d. Web. <<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/>> accessed 14 July 2017.

4 Spirits, Jens Korff Creative. "Aboriginal Education in Australia." Creative Spirits. N.p., n.d. Web <<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education/#axzz4mnlNuLGB>> accessed 14 July 2017.

5 "Australian Curriculum" op.cit



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