

## THE LAST OF THE NOMADS

WJ PEASLEY

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Warri and Yatungka were believed to be the last of the Mandildjara tribe of desert nomads to live permanently in the traditional way. Their deaths in the late 1970s marked the end of a tribal lifestyle that stretched back more than 30,000 years. *The Last of the Nomads* tells of an extraordinary journey in search of Warri and Yatungka.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WJ Peasley was born in the central west of New South Wales and spent his boyhood on his father's farm. While working as a flying doctor in Western Australia he developed a strong interest in Indigenous history. He passed away on 2 January 2020.

### QUESTIONS

1. **'Mudjon of the Mandildjara is one of the elders engaged in the task of bringing his people back to their traditional beliefs and away from the world of white man, a world which many of the desert people cannot fully comprehend ...'** (p. 34) What do we learn of the culture of the Mandildjara people, and their connection to land? In what ways has this community resisted the imposition of white culture?
2. **'One presumed that the owner of the *pitji* was a woman, for it was a woman's work to collect the seed'** (p. 73). What are some of the practices and tools used by the Mandildjara people? Is labour in their community a gendered activity?
3. How does the book depict Yatungka and Warri? Does their behaviour conform to the traditional gender roles of the Mandildjara?
4. What is the purpose of the Mandildjara kinship law? How have Warri and Yatungka breached it?
5. How does Mudjon read and relate to the land? How does this assist in his search for Warri and Yatungka?
6. The Western Gibson Desert functions as another character in this text. How does this depiction help the reader to understand the importance of country to the Mandildjara people?
7. **'... in response to ... whether it may be "secret business" he replied, "Might be", and did not wish to talk about the matter any further'** (p. 111). In what way does Mudjon work to protect his culture?
8. What insight does Peasley gain from the process of 'rescuing' the 'last of the nomads' from the desert?
9. How does Peasley depict the relationship between time and place? What role does memory play in this book?
10. What physical and emotional challenges do each of the participants face in their journey into and out of the desert?
11. **'Perhaps we will never know whether they were happy at Wiluna. We do know, however, that they lived more than a year longer than if they had remained at Ngarinbarri'** (p. 164). Do you think that Peasley and his companions were right to bring Warri and Yatungka to Wiluna?
12. How does their story relate to the much bigger story of the impact of white colonisation on First Nations peoples?

