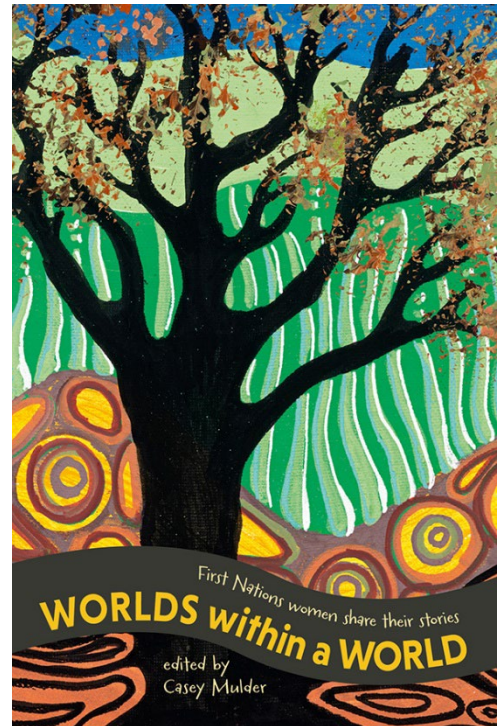


## WORLDS WITHIN A WORLD

CAROL FOLEY, DEBORAH GREEN, BARB HOSTALEK, LOIS MAY & VALERIE SWIFT  
EDITED BY CASEY MULDER  
ISBN (PB): 9781760995010 / eISBN 9781760995027  
YEAR LEVEL: 9–12

### ABOUT THE BOOK

This powerful collection, edited by Casey Mulder (Ballardong Noongar), brings together the voices of five First Nations women as they share their life stories: Carol Foley (Ballardong Noongar), Deb Green (Yamatji), Barb Hostalek (Yawaru Gija / Territorian, Czech and Greek), Lois May (Ballardong Noongar) and Val Swift (Menang Gnudju). Their stories highlight the enduring legacy of the world's oldest living culture, showing how education and connection can transform lives. The honest and wise reflections of these remarkable women provide insight into what it meant to grow up as a First Nations woman in the second half of the twentieth century. These are powerful stories from descendants of the world's oldest living culture.



### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Yirga Carol (Coral) Anne Blurton (Foley)** was born in Carnarvon, Western Australia. She is a proud Yamatji Noongar woman living on Noongar Boodja in Perth. At an early age, she became ill and was placed under the care of the State. Her life's journey has involved growing up in a non-Aboriginal family and later reconnecting with her Aboriginal family through Welfare and various life experiences.

**Deborah Green** is a Yamatji nyarlu who comes from both the Wajarri and Badimia language groups. Deborah has spent most of her life between the two Western Australian towns of Morawa, where she was proudly born, and Geraldton, where she raised her three sons. Deborah's writing skills were a gift given to her from her ancestors, her old people, to help her do her bit to fight for her people and anyone else affected by the ongoing injustices of colonialism.

**Barb Hostalek** is Aboriginal Australian, born and raised up on Larrakia Country, living and creating on moorditj Noongar Country of the south-west of Western Australia. Barb is a playwright who has worked with Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company. Her mainstage premieres include *Cracked* (2015), *Banned* (2016), *Thirst* (2019), *Perpetuity* (2020) and *Beyond* (2021).

**Lois May** is the fourth eldest of eight children. Her mother's families are Yarran, Bolten, Bennell and Garlett; her father's are Humphrey, Winmar and Turvey. Lois is a mother of four children and grandmother of nine, with four great-grandchildren. She has worked in many non-government organisations, sharing and integrating cultural safety strategies to encourage self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in the workplace, and raise awareness for all Australians.

**Valerie Swift**, a proud Minang Elder, was born at the Gnowangerup Mission Hospital in 1953 on the traditional lands of the Goreng people. A member of the Gray-Knapp family, with extensive family connections across Western Australia and Traditional connections to the Ngadjju peoples, Valerie was a co-director of the Djaalinj

Waakinj Centre for Ear and Hearing Health Centre and an Aboriginal cultural advisor for The Kids Research Institute Australia's Wesfarmers Centre of Vaccines & Infectious Diseases in Perth.

Editor **Casey Mulder** is a Ballardong Noongar educator, writer and editor from Quairading, WA. She is Director of First Nations Writing and Programs at the Centre for Stories, and also editor of the anthology *Rivers Flow: Reflections on the Songs of Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter* (Fremantle Press, 2025).

## THEMES

- First Nations cultures and histories
- Connection to Country
- Relationships
- Education
- Overcoming adversity
- Racism
- Strength and resilience
- Grief, loss and change
- Belonging and identity

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Year 9 English, Humanities and Social Sciences (History), The Arts

Year 10 English, Humanities and Social Sciences (History), The Arts

Year 11 English, Modern History

Year 12 English, Modern History

Cross-curriculum priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

## USEFUL WEBSITES

- *Worlds Within a World*: [fremantlepress.com.au/books/worlds-within-a-world/](https://fremantlepress.com.au/books/worlds-within-a-world/)
- Missions Connect: Stolen Generations Immersive Hub: [missionsconnect.net/author/stolen-generations-immersive-hub/](https://missionsconnect.net/author/stolen-generations-immersive-hub/)
- Yokai: [yokai.com.au/](https://yokai.com.au/)
- Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre: [murdoch.edu.au/explore/support-services/kulbardi-aboriginal-centre](https://murdoch.edu.au/explore/support-services/kulbardi-aboriginal-centre)
- State Records Office of Western Australia: [wa.gov.au/organisation/state-records-office-of-western-australia](https://wa.gov.au/organisation/state-records-office-of-western-australia)
- State Library of Western Australia – Storylines: [slwa.wa.gov.au/collections/aboriginal-collections/storylines](https://slwa.wa.gov.au/collections/aboriginal-collections/storylines)
- South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council: [noongar.org.au/useful-links](https://noongar.org.au/useful-links)
- Community Arts Network (CAN): [can.org.au/news/turquoise-shallows-to-granite-peaks-painting-a-map-of-menang-country](https://can.org.au/news/turquoise-shallows-to-granite-peaks-painting-a-map-of-menang-country)
- Bilya Koort Boodja: [bilyakoortboodja.com/](https://bilyakoortboodja.com/)
- Larrakia Cultural Centre: [larrakiaculturalcentre.com.au/](https://larrakiaculturalcentre.com.au/)
- BBC News – Australia: [bbc.com/news/av/world-australia-60412651](https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-australia-60412651)
- Barbara Hostalek (author website): <https://www.barbarahostalek.com/>
- Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company: [yirrayaakin.com.au/](https://yirrayaakin.com.au/)

## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### Discussion questions

1. Why is this memoir collection called *Worlds Within a World*?
2. How do you think the title relates to the epigraph at the start of the book from Luisa Mitchell's poem 'old-growth forest'?
3. What year (approximately) was each of the contributors born, and what similarities and differences are there in their life experiences?
4. How might the points of commonality reflect a broader social and political framework in Australia in the second half of the twentieth century?
5. What effects of the Stolen Generations are evident in each story?
6. What piece, or which recollection, resonated with you the most, and why?
7. On p.5, editor Casey Mulder speaks of 'storytelling and yarning as a practice'. What do you think she means by this?
8. Choose two of the authors and compare their childhood experiences. Consider where their sense of identity came from and some of the specific challenges they faced.
9. What are the circumstances of their growing up (socio-economic, geographic, the era in which they were born) that might have created these differences?
10. What kinds of things do the subjects have to overcome, and how do they do so?
11. Carol Foley's story:
  - a. What are the 'worlds within a world' that Carol lives in?
  - b. What is the impact of her reconnecting with her father's family?
  - c. How do you think Carol's mother might have experienced her daughter's foster care?
12. Val Swift's story:
  - a. What do you see as the chief riches and deprivations of Val's childhood? How are your reflections impacted by your own childhood and the worldview of your family of origin?
  - b. What observations does Val Swift make about racism?
  - c. Why is her story called 'Wirniny Baal'?
13. Lois May's story:
  - a. What does Lois May mean when she says that even if school is just down the road, an Aboriginal child 'might as well have walked one hundred miles' (p. 91)?
  - b. In what ways does her own life reflect this metaphor?
  - c. In her story, why do you think that Lois has included the poem 'Bungulla, Bungulla, how I long for these days' (p. 95)?
14. Deborah Green's story:
  - a. Deborah has written her piece from her mother's perspective rather than her own. Why do you think she has chosen to do this?
  - b. What was the impact of Native Welfare on the life of Deborah's mother, and how did it shape what happened to her across decades?
  - c. What does Deborah have to say about resilience and the survival of her people in the modern era at the story's conclusion (p.189)?
15. Barb Hostalek's story:
  - a. What does the structure of Barb's piece tell us about the person who wrote it?
  - b. For this author, what is the value of education – and what are the many ways that she defines a 'teacher'?
  - c. Why might Barb have included fragments of playscript within her story? What difference did this make to your reading experience?

## The Arts

1. Interview an older person (written):
  - a. Devise some questions for an older person in your life.
  - b. Share these questions ahead of your interview with your subject.
  - c. Interview your subject. You may wish to record their interview for ease of reference.
  - d. Discuss with your subject if they would like to add anything they feel is missing.
  - e. Construct a narrative from their responses. Is it chronological? Thematic? Does it switch between past and present?
  - f. Write up your presentation. Are there images you would like to include in this? Add captions to your images.
  - g. Share it with your subject and other interested people.
2. Interview an older person (oral/video recording):
  - a. Devise some questions for an older person in your life.
  - b. Share these questions ahead of your interview with your subject.
  - c. Interview your subject via video or using the voice memo function of a mobile phone.
  - d. Edit your work.
  - e. Share it with your subject and other interested people.
3. Reflections on interview:
  - a. What did you learn from conducting your interview?
  - b. What would you do differently next time?
  - c. What did your subject gain from your interview?
  - d. What would they do differently next time?

## Creative writing

1. Using Deborah Green's memoir of her mother as a prompt, write a memoir piece in the first person based on one of your parents or an older family member.
2. Considering Barb's journey, which educator from your own life comes to mind? What impact did they have on your journey? Write 300 words about this person, including a short playscript modelled on Barb's style of memoir writing.
3. Brainstorm the key events and experiences you would include in your own short memoir. If you were to write your own memoir piece, whose style would you emulate from this collection and why? What would two key themes of your own story be?

## HASS

1. Identify key historical events, referenced in this collection of life stories, particularly in relation to Western Australian government policies and their impacts on Aboriginal people. Construct a timeline of these key events, from 1829 through to the present day. You may like to allocate ranges of years to groups and then collate this timeline as a class resource.



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