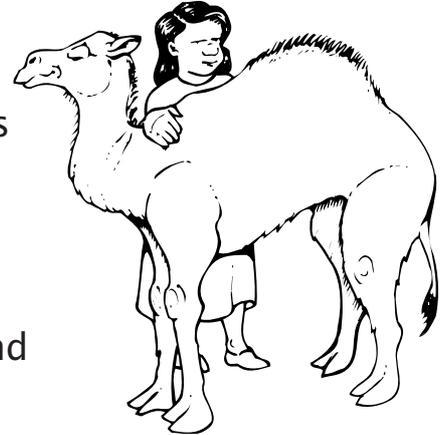


# Pearl Whitby

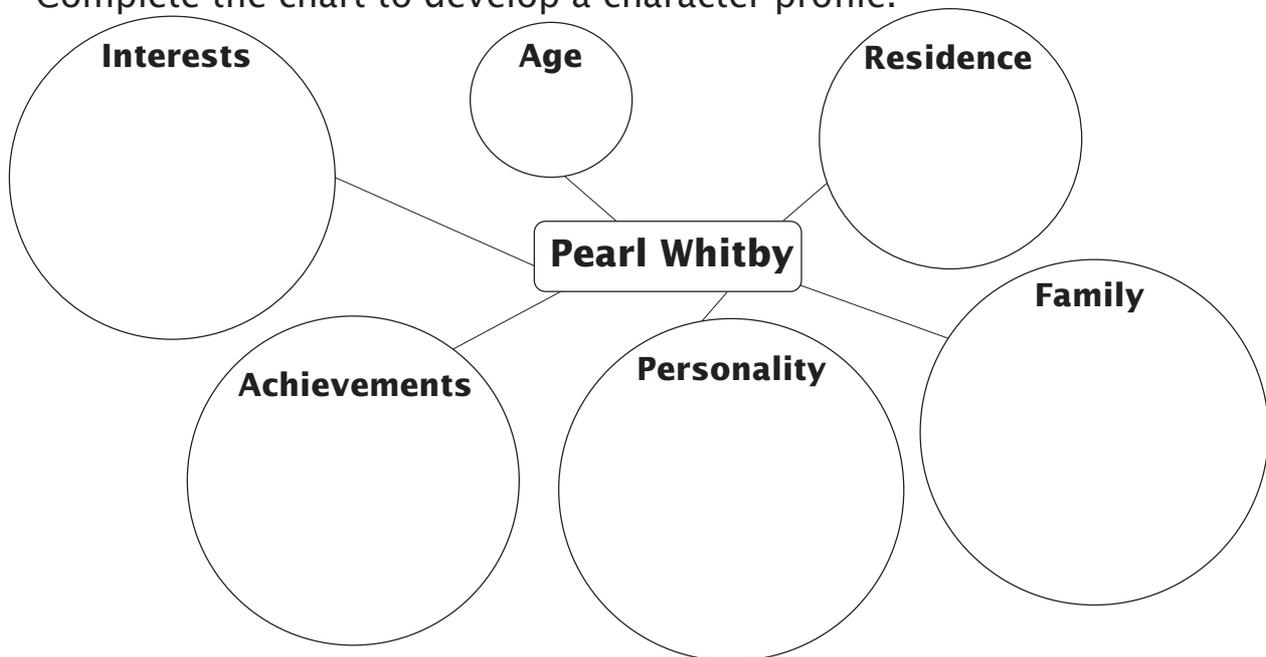
Pearl Whitby was one of the two remaining speakers of the Nhandu language. She was born in 1919 in the Murchison Region of Western Australia. Pearl was one of the 16 children belonging to Ernest and Ada Drage. She married Gerald Whitby in 1946 and they had nine children.

While growing up, Pearl didn't have computers and dolls to play with. Instead she went on nature walks and found bush plants and interesting animals to observe. Pearl worked outdoors doing fencing and shooting. She drove a camel team and could even make her own bullets. Her mother made all the family's clothes. They grew their own vegetables and made their own bread and butter.



Pearl lived in Geraldton in Western Australia and enjoyed the company of her children and grandchildren. Pearl's language was dying out, and even though there are no full speakers alive today, a Nhandu alphabet poster has been created by the Bundiyarra-Irra Wangga Language Centre in Geraldton.

1. Complete the chart to develop a character profile.



2. Imagine you can go back in time. Compile a list of questions that you could use in an interview with Pearl.

- (i) \_\_\_\_\_
- (ii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) \_\_\_\_\_
- (iv) \_\_\_\_\_

# KATH WALKER (1920 – 1993)

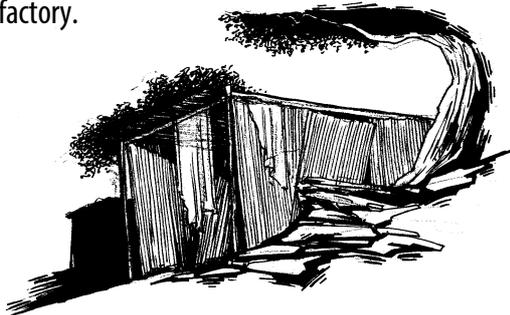
Walker was an Aboriginal poet whose traditional name was Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Apart from the famous Australian poet, C. J. Dennis, she has been the best-selling poet in Australia's publishing history.

She grew up in a family of seven children as a member of the Noonuccal people on Stradbroke Island in Moreton Bay, Queensland. In a 1970 speech she described her home on the island as a kind of gunyah made of 'discarded hessian, canvas and corrugated iron'. Her father earned a low wage working for the Queensland government and, like other Aboriginal Australians, the family was given food rations. Her family also lived the traditional life by hunting for their own food—fish, birds, turtles, goannas, shellfish etc.

Walker was an intelligent girl and often found schoolwork rather boring, so she sometimes went walking in the bush when she should have been at school. Her teacher punished her for being left-handed and not switching her pencil to her right hand. This change of grip was the usual custom in those days. It was this continuing conflict with her teacher which taught the young Walker to stand up for herself and developed the rebellious spirit she displayed in her adult life.



At 13, she went to work as a poorly paid domestic servant for a European family and began to educate herself by reading widely in the home library of her employers. A few years later she decided to become a nurse, but was rejected because she was Aboriginal. During World War II she was a telephonist in the Australian Women's Army Service, and after marrying a wharfie called Bruce Walker in 1942 they had two sons. It wasn't a happy marriage for Kath said, 'My first love is for mankind'. After the war she took a training course to become a stenographer under a Government scheme to help service personnel to settle back into a normal civilian life. This training helped her to gain employment in the sales department of a bacon factory.



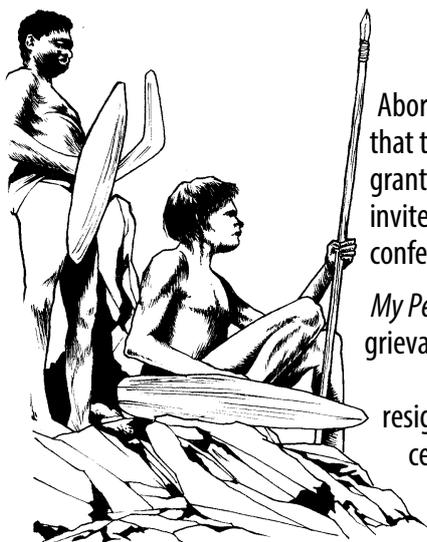
Encouraged by famous Australian poet, Judith Wright, Walker became the first Aboriginal poet to be published, when her book of poems titled *We are going* appeared in 1964. Other poems followed and Kath won several awards, including the coveted Mary Gilmore Medal and a Fellowship of Australian Writers award. In 1970 she was awarded an MBE and in 1983 she became a member of the Aboriginal Arts Board of Australia. All of us can admire this outstanding Australian who was so proud of her people.

Use the notes above to answer these questions.

1. When did Oodgeroo change her name to Kath Walker?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is a 'gunyah'? (Dictionary needed)  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which two cloths are mentioned in the notes?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What caused friction with her teacher?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Where did Kath begin to educate herself?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Which profession did Kath want to join?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Where would a 'wharfie' work?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What does a stenographer do? (Dictionary)  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Who encouraged Kath to write and publish her poems?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What do you admire about Oodgeroo Noonuccal?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# KATH WALKER AND HER PEOPLE

Kath Walker spent many years of her adult life giving speeches or writing poems about the social injustices suffered by Aboriginal Australians throughout Australia. The titles of some of her poems revealed the bitterness she felt about the treatment of her people and their abject poverty in such a wealthy country. Her poem *Intolerance* criticised racially abusive Europeans because Aboriginal children came home in tears 'hurt and bewildered by their jeers'. Another poem titled *The Dispossessed* told her people that Europeans had 'claimed your hunting grounds and you could not remain'. Then the poem *Time Is Running Out* warned the Europeans that the Dreamtime people were now gathering 'to defend their timeless land'. In her early years, fighting for rights for her people, Kath joined the Communist Party, the only political party sympathetic to Aboriginals in those times. Later, in the 1960s, she served on many committees, including the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, and the Queensland Aboriginal Advancement League. In 1962, her *Aboriginal Charter of Rights* with lines like 'We need help not exploitation, We want freedom, not frustration', became the battle cry of the reform movement and was soon set to music by folk singer Gary Shearston.



In 1970, she complained that the 1967 referendum granting citizenship rights to Aboriginals gave Australia a better image overseas but had done little for her people since that time. In 1978 and 1979, having been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship and a Myer travel grant, she travelled around America giving lectures about Aboriginal issues. She was also invited to lecture at most Australian universities and attended many international conferences.

*My People*, a collection of Kath's poems and details of some of her speeches about Aboriginal grievances, was published in 1970 by Jacaranda Press, an Australian publishing company. She was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire that same year but resigned from her membership in 1987 as a protest against the planned 1988 bicentenary celebrations. These celebrations, of course, would commemorate the arrival of Europeans on the land she loved. She felt they would not help to halt the gradual disintegration of her people's culture and traditions.

Use all the notes on Kath Walker to solve the puzzle.

## Across

1. Verse
8. Resentment
9. Kath \_\_\_\_\_ a hard life as a child.
11. Talks given to instruct.
12. Kath's people would \_\_\_\_\_ in traditional ways.
13. The \_\_\_\_\_ Council
15. Political group
18. Showed
20. Kath fought \_\_\_\_\_ long for her people.
22. Signs of sorrow.
24. Liberty

## Down

2. The Aboriginals \_\_\_\_\_ a lot to Oodgeroo.
3. Numerous
4. Miserable
5. Kath \_\_\_\_\_ traditional food at times.
6. They live on islands
7. Rich
10. Slow, by degrees
12. Assist
14. Mocking comments
16. Kath went on \_\_\_\_\_ around America.
17. Afterwards
19. Completed
21. Before long
23. A battle \_\_\_\_\_ is a rallying call.

