Acknowledgements

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Institute for Aboriginal Development Publications
PO Box 2531
Alice Springs NT 0871
Australia
Phone (089) 52 2688
Fax (089) 53 1884
Apmwe-kenhe Arne

The Snake's Tree

Written by Margaret Heffernan
Illustrated by Shawn Dobson

Margaret Heffernan e ayeye atantheke
Shawn Dobson e arkenye mpwareke
"Ayekaye! Ayekaye!"
arlkeke apmwe.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the snake.
“Snake, what happened to you?” asked the bird.

“I don’t know, someone broke my home down”, said the snake.
“Don’t worry too much”, said the bird.

“I’ll find you another tree”, said the echidna.
“Arne nhenharle artaye?” thipele apayutnheke.

“Arrangkwe, arne nhenharle arlpentye anthurrarle”, apmwe angkeke.

“What about this tree?” asked the bird.

“No, this one is too tall”, said the snake.
“What about this tree?” asked the bird.

“No, this one is too thin”, said the snake.
“What about this tree?” asked the echidna.

“No, this one is too small”, said the snake.
“Arne nhenharle artaye?” inarlengele apayutnheke.

“Arrangkwe, arne nhenharle akngerre anthurrarle”, apmwe angkeke.

“What about this tree?” asked the echidna.

“No, this one is too big”, said the snake.
“What about this tree?” asked the echidna.

“Yes, this tree is really good”, said the snake.
Arrernte People and Languages

Arrernte people identify themselves very strongly through their language, which is related to family, country and dreamings. Even small differences between dialects are often felt to be very important, because they distinguish families and countries.

The Arandic languages include Alyawarr, Anmatyerr, Kaytetye and Arrernte (including Eastern, Southern, Western and Lower Arrernte). They make up a net where each one is slightly different from its neighbours and, generally, the further apart their countries are the more different the dialects are. Most adults know a few dialects because people move around and intermarry.

There are about four to five thousand speakers of Arrernte in Central Australia. It is spoken in many different communities (see map below). The language is fairly healthy, in that young children are growing up speaking it. Arrernte language is used in many areas of everyday life, including schools.

![Map of Central Australian Languages](image)

**From the map 'Current Distribution of Central Australian Languages' (Hobson, IAD 1990)**

Sounds and Spelling

Arrernte has a full, rich grammar and a large vocabulary of words, just as all languages do, but its grammar is very different to English. It also categorises words into groups in different ways to English.

The writing systems used for the Arandic languages may look strange at first, but they reflect the way that the sounds work. The sound system is complicated and quite different to other Central Australian languages or English, therefore the spelling system is different too.

There are sounds in Arrernte which English does not have. For example, the letter $h$ is used in Arrernte for a sound that is something like an English $w$ but without the lips being rounded. This sound is not the same as an English $h$.

Another notable feature of the Arrernte sound and spelling systems, is the pronunciation of the vowels. They are heavily influenced by the consonants around them.
Arrernte Alphabet:

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<tr>
<th>p</th>
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Vowel sounds:
- e — as in oo in wood after w;
  — as in ee in feet before y;
  — as in pert, but shorter.
  (if not influenced by consonants around it)
  The final e on words is often not pronounced in speech.
- a — as in about, at the beginning of a word;
  — as in father in the middle of the word.
- u — as in oo in oompah at the beginning of a word;
  — as in or in fork in the middle of a word.
- i — as in i in hit at the beginning of a word;
  — as in ee in eel,
  — or e in bed, depending on the consonants following it.

Consonant sounds:
- p, t, k, m, n, l, and r are similar to the sounds in English. In Arrernte there is no difference between the sounds of p and b, and between k and g.
- ng — as in ng in sing. In Arrernte it can be at the beginning of a word.
- ty — as in ch in church.
- ny — as in nio in onion.
- ly — as in lio in million.
- th, nh, lh — these sounds are very difficult for English speakers. They are made with the tongue sticking out slightly between the teeth.
- rt, rm, rl — called retroflexes, these sounds are made by curling the tip of the tongue back to the ridge behind your teeth.
- rr — trilled or flapped r.
- h — similar to English w.
- pm, tn, thn, rtn, kng, tny — nasals — these sounds are made by releasing air through the nose a bit like a half-formed sneeze.
More Books in Arrernte

For more information on the Arrernte language:

**A Learner’s Guide to Eastern Arrernte**
Prepared by Jenny Green, 1984
Available from Institute for Aboriginal Development
PO Box 2531, Alice Springs, N.T. 0871.
ISBN 0 949659 36 3 $24.95

Also available from Yipirinya School and IAD Publications:

**Yeye Apme Kwerlaye-iperre (The Rainbow Serpent).**
Story told by Kwementyaye; transcribed and illustrated by Jennifer Inkamala
ISBN 1 875292 01 2 $8.50

**Ampe Urreye Artnerrentye Akweke Akerte (The Crawling Baby Boy)**
Story by Margaret Heffernan, illustrated by Thomas Stephens
ISBN 0 9592214 9 2 $12.00
Yipirinya School Council was established in 1978 to cater for the needs of children from the town camps of Alice Springs. The school operates a bilingual and bicultural program in four Aboriginal languages and English.

Margaret Heffernan wrote this story as part of the Central Arrernte program at Yipirinya School. Margaret is an active member of the community and one of the founding members of the School Council.

Shawn Dobson illustrated the story while working as the artist in residence at Yipirinya School. Shawn is also an Arrernte person from Alice Springs.