

Lamont Books Standing Order

February 2014

Teacher Notes and Activities

My Two Blankets

By Irena Kobald & Illustrated by Freya Blackwood

ISBN 9781921714764

\$24.95

**Picture Book of
the Month**

As time goes on, Cartwheel begins to weave a 'new' blanket, one of friendship and a renewed sense of belonging. It is different from the old blanket, but it is eventually just as warm and familiar.



Teacher notes have been taken from those prepared by the publishers, Hardie Grant Egmont.

Themes:

- Friendship
- Belonging
- Cultural change

Discussion Points and Activities:

Ask the children to investigate their life and discover if they know anyone who is new to an environment. It may be a friend or a relative who has recently arrived in Australia, or perhaps started a new job or even a classmate who has just moved schools. Ask them:

- How they first felt when they arrived in the foreign environment.
- What did they miss most? What was really strange? Were there different ways of doing things in this new environment?
- If they were arriving from another country, how did English sound to them?
- If relevant, how did they feel when they had to be around where everyone speaking a different language?
- When they couldn't understand what was being said on TV/Radio?
- When they couldn't understand ads or billboards?
- When they were given or offered strange food which looked or tasted weird or maybe even awful?
- Did they have a special food which made them feel 'at home'?
- How did they feel when people laughed at them when they made mistakes?
- What did they do if they felt homesick, but knew that they had to stay?
- How did they make their first friends?

The illustrator shows Cartwheel learning new words with use of pictures. Ask the class to describe what they did on the weekend using only pictures. They should think about every word they would use to describe their experience and create a picture to illustrate what they want to say. They should then present their picture sentences to the class to see if their peers can understand what they are saying. After they have presented their sentences, ask the students to explain why they chose certain pictures to represent particular words.

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Fire

By Jackie French & Bruce Whatley

ISBN 9781742838175

\$24.99

One small spark brought fire awake, Winding like a small black snake, Fire flickered, fire crept, Flames snickered, bushfire leapt...

Inspired by the bushfires that have affected many Australians, *Fire* is a moving and sensitive story of a natural disaster as seen through the eyes of a cockatoo. The fire mercilessly engulfs homes and land, leaving a devastating path of destruction.



Themes:

- Fire
- Australian Spirit
- Hope

Discussion Points:

- Fire can cause great loss and destruction to not only people, but to homes and animals too. How did you feel reading and looking at the illustrations in this story?
- The story takes us on a journey. How has Bruce Whatley used colour and illustrations to symbolise the different effects of fire, before and after the event?
- We see at the end of the story that the plants and trees have started to re-grow. How does nature rejuvenate itself after such devastation?
- What short and long term challenges face a community that has been affected by fire?
- How can other communities help those that have been affected? Why does it often take a disaster like this to bring people together?
- In what other circumstances might we see people helping out each other?
- Fire fighters risk their lives to save other people and their property. How would you describe what they do?
- Why do so many bushfires occur in Australia? What other countries also experience bushfires?

Activities:

- Arrange for someone from the local fire department to come to your school and discuss all aspects of all fires, including practical ways that we can be prepared.
- As a class, brainstorm all the things that can be done around your home and in the community to help stop a bushfire from starting.

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What's Your Story?

By Rose Giannone and Artwork by Bern Emmerichs

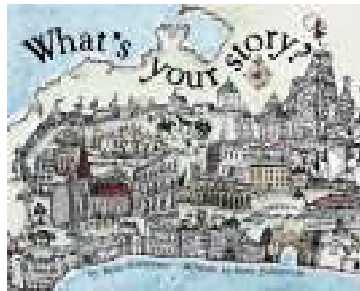
ISBN 9780980671155

\$27.95

"Do you have a story?"

Everyone has a story to tell.

Australia has a long history with many, many stories."



Teacher notes taken from those prepared by the publishers, Berbay Publishing.

Themes:

- Australian History – First European settlement
- Indigenous culture
- Identity
- Friendship
- Cultures
- Nature
- Animals
- Difference

Discussion Points and Activities:

The author asks us on the first page: "Do you have a story?" All Australians who are not Aboriginal have origins overseas. Create a class project for the children to learn about and discuss their family's stories.

- Write a story or draw a picture about your family story and where your family come from.
- How did your family arrive in Australia and how long ago?
- Why did they come to Australia?
- What was their country of origin like back then?
- What was Australia like when they arrived, and what were their first impressions?

Australia has many interesting and unique plants and animals. Ask the class to name some of each.

• Looking at the list, ask the class what they would think of the animal if they were seeing it for the first time? What would the children think of a kangaroo if they were seeing it for the first time? What about an emu, koala or frilled neck lizard?

• The Europeans introduced animals that Aboriginal people had never seen before. Milba thought a man on a horse was a single creature. Now discuss what the children would think if they saw such creatures for the first time. What would they think of a sheep, a horse or a pig?

Ask the children to find the illustration with the *Friendship* boat, and ask them to describe some of the animals and things they brought to Australia?

Aboriginal people have the oldest continuous culture in the world. They communicate many of their stories across the generations through art, like the cave paintings Milba showed Leonard. Show some examples of Aboriginal art. Ask the class to attempt a drawing or painting in the style of Aboriginal art.

Have the children make emu and dog masks: like the emu and dog races that the Europeans held, organize a class relay race, where one half of the class wear emu masks and the other half wear dog masks. Which animal is faster?

We are all enriched by other people's experiences. Ask the children to name something that another classmate had introduced them to for the first time, or something they had taught them.

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Midnight

By Mark Greenwood & Illustrated by Frané Lessac

ISBN 9781921977718

\$27.95

A foal is born at midnight, on the homestead side of the river. Coal black. Star ablaze. Moonlight in her eyes.

On 31 October, 1917, the 4th and 12th Regiments of the Australian Light Horse took part in one of the last great cavalry charges in history. Among the first to leap the enemy trenches was Lieutenant Guy Haydon riding his beloved mare, Midnight. This is their story.



Teacher notes taken from those prepared by the publisher, Walker Books. A full version is available at www.walkerbooks.com.au.

Themes:

- Heroes
- ANZAC'S
- Animals in War
- Bravery
- Courage
- Mateship

Discussion Points and Activities:

Before Reading

- Look closely at the front cover of the book. As a class, discuss your expectations of the book. What do you think the story will be about? Where and when might it be set? What genre do you think it will be (e.g. fantasy, suspense, comedy, true story)? Provide reasons for your responses.

After Reading

- Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the name "Midnight" to describe what Guy's beloved mare was like.
- Research Guy Haydon's Unit, the 12th Light Horse Regiment, B Squadron. When did they arrive at Gallipoli? When did they leave?
- Research other horse and rider stories from the light horse. What happened to the horses? Did they ever return to Australia?
- Where is Beersheba, and what is it officially known as today?
- Imagine you are a rider in the desert column, slowly snaking across the wilderness towards the enemy garrison at the foot of the Judean hills. Describe your thoughts and feelings.
- In the story, Greenwood writes that Guy "shares a secret between horse and rider." What do you think that secret might be?
- What is the significance of Guy sharing his water with Midnight? What does it show about the relationship between Guy and his horse?
- Have a class discussion about the battle of Gallipoli. As a class, draw a mind map about what students already know about the battle. What date did the Anzacs land on Gallipoli? How does Australia and New Zealand commemorate this historic battle?
- What defines a "hero"? Is it bravery, or is it a combination of other qualities such as kindness, nobility, or intelligence?
- Have the class create a mural and create different panels telling Midnight's story.

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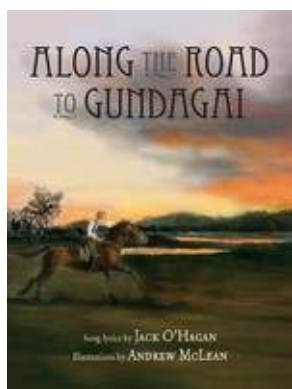
Along The Road to Gundagai

Song lyrics by Jack O'Hagan & Illustrations by Andrew McLean

ISBN 9781862919792

\$24.99

There's a track winding back, to an old-fashioned shack, along the road to Gundagai... The words are familiar, but the story they tell may not be. Andrew McLean's illustrations bring to life the story of the men who went to the Great War, many of them never to return home.



Themes:

- World War I
- Courageous soldiers
- Remembering home

Discussion Points and Activities:

- Have you ever heard of or been to Gundagai? Do you know where it is? Get a map of Australia and pin point it.
- What is the closest capital city to it?
- If you have heard of it, how are you familiar with it?
- Have the words for this book just been written or have they come from somewhere else? Explain.
- Is it unusual for a picture book to be presented as this one is - where the words are actually a song? Can you think of any other books like this?
- This song tells the story of a soldier during the war. What were the things that he thought about and missed the most?
- Study the illustrations carefully. What do you notice about the page layout of each? Why are they different and what does this represent?
- Imagine you are soldier during the War. Write a letter back home describing your experiences and what you miss about home. You may even like to make it into a song or a poem.
- Research this song and other songs/poems that have been written about the town of Gundagai? Why was it such a popular place to write about?
- Draw your own framed picture of your favourite thing about your home. It might be something in your home town, in your house or your favourite people.
- Using watercolours, re-create one of the landscape scenes of the scenery around Gundagai.

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Jack's Bugle

By Krista Bell & Illustrated by Belinda Elliott

ISBN 9781922081292

\$25.95

When Aidan Jackson, known as "Jack", leaves his parents' farm to fight overseas in World War I, he is excited by the promise of travel, adventure and new friends. Although Jack's bugle is brought home from the war by his best friend, it lies idle for years and years. Will the bugle ever be played again? JACK'S BUGLE is a celebration of the music, optimism, mateship and the ultimate peace, that were part of "the war to end all wars".



Teacher notes have been taken from those prepared by the publisher, Windy Hollow Books.

Themes:

- War
- Mateship

Discussion Points and Activities:

Before Reading

- What does the cover suggest to you about the subject matter and historical setting of this book?

After Reading

- What are some of the main themes that come through in this book?
- What did you already know about the First World War?
- Has this changed any of your assumptions?
- Which themes in the book are related to the war and which are universal?
- Imagine you are Spencer Harrington as an old man. How might you retell your experiences of the war?
- Consider this description from the book of the battlefield ...
Confusion.
Noise, bullets,
Sand, rocks, smoke,
Death. Confusion. . .
- How else might you describe the confusion of the battlefield?
- Using the word confusion and the simple structure of single words that Krista has used here, write your own description of confusion in another setting - e.g. on a sports field or lost in a shopping centre.
- The illustrator has used watercolour. Can you experiment with watercolour using only a few colours, to create a sense of place and time?
- On the last page the illustrator has drawn an interpretation of the types of recruitment posters that appeared during the First World War encouraging young men to enlist. Do some research into other recruitment posters of the time and then come up with one of your own.
- What mediums are used to encourage people to enlist these days?
- Find out a little more about the history of the bugle in war.

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Miaka

By Anne-Louise Channon & Beatriz Martin Vidal

ISBN 9781922081315

\$25.95

Anya lives a happy, carefree life in Russia with her mother, father and beloved pet bird, Miaka. But when hard times come and her father's crop fails she must leave the farm to go and live with the baker and his wife in the local village. Life at the bakery is harsh but as long as she can earn enough to feed Miaka, Anya endures it. Then, one night, she overhears the baker make a terrible bargain that will devastate her life...



Teacher notes have been taken from those prepared by the publisher, Windy Hollow Books.

Before Reading

- What do you imagine this book may be about?
- What does the look of the cover suggest to you about the style of story that Miaka may be?

After reading

- Miaka draws on the traditional story telling style of the fairy tales. Can you think of any fairy tales that are like Miaka?
- What are some of the features of fairy tales? Does Miaka have these?
- Fairy tales are often a reflection of the society and time when they were written. Miaka is a story written in the 21st century but sounds like a story written long before. When do you think the story is set? If it is a modern setting what do you think it is reflecting in Russian society, and the modern world in general?
- Fairy tales were often seen as moral stories to teach people lessons. What might be a lesson that you could learn from the story of Miaka?
- What do you think Miaka symbolises for Anya? Often birds in fairy tales can represent freedom, salvation and peace. Is this true for Miaka?
- Do you think Anya is a strong or weak female character? What is her role and how is she treated? What does Anya's final act say about her as a character?
- What role do the baker and his wife have to play in the readers understanding of right and wrong, or fairness and kindness?

Illustrations & Writing

- The author does not state what type of bird Miaka is but the illustrator has drawn Miaka as an owl. Why do you think she chose an owl?
- Look at the colour palette that the illustrator has used. Why do you think she has used so few colours?
- How does the tone of the colours change throughout the book and how does this affect your reading of the story?
- What is the emotional effect of the use of gold?
- What might a modern version of Miaka set in Australia be like? Using the same themes as those in Miaka compose a contemporary fairy tale.
- Our interpretation of events is clouded by our emotions and values. Even though the story of Miaka is written in the third person, it uses Anya's point of view to interpret events. For example, the baker and his wife come across as mean and greedy. Perhaps this is just how Anya sees them because they represent to her a separation from her parents. How might the story be different if it was told from the point of view of the baker and his wife? Could they be seen as kind and charitable?

My Two Blankets might be my favorite picture book of the year. In this heart-warming tale, Irena Kobald has taken the tried and true story of a new kid on the block and created a fresh and original multicultural story of Cartwheel who moves from Sudan to Australia. In addition, the combination of warm watercolors and oils provides an inviting atmosphere. Besides being a simply beautiful story, My Two Blankets also lends itself to educational opportunities. Teachers might talk about the use of metaphor.