

LITERATURE TEACHING NOTES
SCHOOL SCARECROW
COMPETITION

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FOUNDATION TO GRADE 6

COMPETITION OVERVIEW

The theme of School Scarecrow 2024 is Banjo Paterson, in celebration of the 160th anniversary of his birth. Students can decide whether to portray the man himself or his most iconic characters, such as the swagman from Waltzing Matilda. It is encouraged that students delve into Paterson's poetry, and envision these archetypal characters which are evocative of traditional Australian rural life.

Paterson's depictions of epic adventures in the rugged Australian landscape convey the experiences of early Australians and demonstrate the hardship of the bush. His poetic works create cultural icons and celebrate Australian folklore, like Waltzing Matilda, which is often regarded as the unofficial national anthem. Within his famous bush ballads and stories, he was able to compose eternal characters that were fearless, hard-working, and resilient; the key attributes of the Australian spirit.

IMPORTANT DATES

Ekka Dates: Saturday 10 August - Sunday 18 August 2024

Competition Open: Tuesday 21 November, 2023

Entries Close: Friday 19 July, 2024

Judging Commences: Friday 9 August, 2024

Presentation: Saturday 10 August, 2024

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Competition Enquiries

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Read the Waltzing Matilda Book with Your Class:

If you have access to the Waltzing Matilda book by Banjo Paterson & Freya Blackwood, please use it as the source of information for these literature teaching notes.

***Book Synopsis***

This ballad of the sheep-stealing swagman is known the world over. Here, with 'Banjo' Paterson's original lyrics and Freya Blackwood's stunning ochre-toned paintings, we are treated not just to the swagman's story, but to the story of the shearer's strikes of the time. The ballad also explores the squatter's family, and the dangers of outback travel in the nineteenth century.

Watch the Waltzing Matilda Sing Along:

If you don't have access to the Waltzing Matilda book by Banjo Paterson & Freya Blackwood, please follow the link below and watch the sing along with your class:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6xas7B9I_s

Key Themes

Australian bush, agricultural practices, Australian characters, poetry, Australian history, sheep.

About the Author of the Poem

Banjo Paterson was an Australian writer and a poet, most famous for writing 'Waltzing Matilda' and 'The Man From Snowy River'. It could be said that his writing, based on his own experiences of the Australian bush life, has shaped Australia's identity. Watch the ABC Education BTN: Who Was Banjo Paterson video:

<https://www.abc.net.au/education/btn-who-was-banjo-paterson/13763494>

About the Illustrator of the Book

Freya Blackwood is a multi-award-winning illustrator and writer who lives in NSW Australia. Her picture books are beloved for her warm and perceptive drawings. Since publishing her first picture book in 2003, Freya has worked with writers such as Libby Gleeson, Margaret Wild, Jan Ormerod, Nick Bland and Danny Parker.



TEACHING NOTES & CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES*Before Reading / Listening*

Before your class reads through the story or listens to the sing along, begin a class discussion about the cover of the book or the words throughout the poem. You might like to discuss:

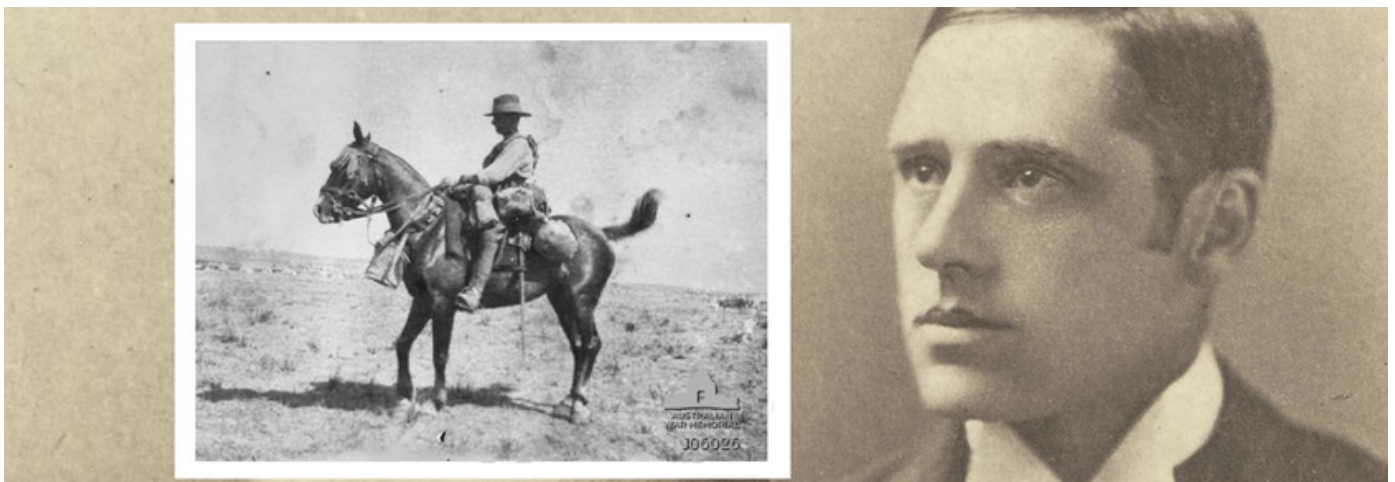
- Book:
 - What do you notice on the cover?
 - What do you think might happen in this story?
 - What do you think about the swagman and the other characters you see, what are they?
- Sing Along:
 - What do you think this type of poem is?
 - What do you think the theme of this poem is about?
 - What do you think about the swagman and the other characters mentioned, what are they?

After Reading / Listening

1. What is a swagman? Have you heard of this before?
2. What is a billabong? Can you list some of the characteristics of a billabong?
3. Throughout the poem we encounter a lot of Australian vocabulary you might not have heard before.

What do you think these words mean?

- Swagman → a labourer who travelled by foot from farm to farm carrying his belongings in a swag.
- *Billabong → a pond or pool of water left behind when a river alters course or after floodwaters recede.
- Coolibah → a species of tree, also known as Eucalyptus coolabah, found in eastern inland Australia.
- Billy → a metal container used for boiling water, making tea or cooking over a fire.
- Jumbuck → a male sheep.
- Tucker Bag → a provision bag, especially one carried by a swagman.
- Thoroughbred → a breed of horse derived from English mares and Arab Stallions, known for their speed.



*According to the [Indigenous Knowledge Institute](#), billabong is a term that derives from the language of the Wiradjuri people in south western NSW.



Class Activities

1. Banjo Paterson is one of Australia's most renowned writers and poets. Born Andrew Barton Paterson, Banjo was born 160 years ago, in 1864, at Narrambla near Orange, New South Wales. He grew up enjoying life in the Australian bush and he started writing poetry as a university student and adopted the pen name 'The Banjo' after a beloved horse. Famously known for his authentic Australian ballads, in particular Waltzing Matilda, Banjo has helped to establish Australian legends and an appreciation for the outback.

- Research and discuss as a class what characteristics are typical of a ballad in poetry. What makes ballads different from other poems?
 - <https://poetry.harvard.edu/glossary-poetic-genres>

2. In our story, the swagman sits by a billabong singing and waiting for his billy to boil. Set a research task for small groups to learn more about the billabong as a habitat.

- What Australian animals can be found in and around a billabong?
- What type of Australian flora and fauna exists in and around a billabong?
- Why was it a good idea for the swagman to stop and rest by the billabong?
- Can you find out more about why a billabong is an important part of Australian outback life?

3. Now that you know more about the story, the characteristics of a ballad, the characters in the poem, and Australian habitats, have a go at writing an Australian bush ballad around the story of Waltzing Matilda. You could write the whole ballad as a class, or you can set tasks for small groups or individuals to write a ballad. Your ballad could be about:

- What the jumbuck was doing before he came to the billabong for a drink.
- What the animals around the billabong noticed or were doing when the swagman came along.
- What the swagman was doing before he got to the billabong.

3. In our story we meet the character of the swagman. Now that you know more about what a swagman is, as a class or in small groups, write a biography about the swagman based on your own research. Learn about their contribution to agriculture in Australia and use this learning to develop your biography, you can include things like:

- The swagman's job
- Where the swagman is located in Australia
- What the swagman's favourite tucker is



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