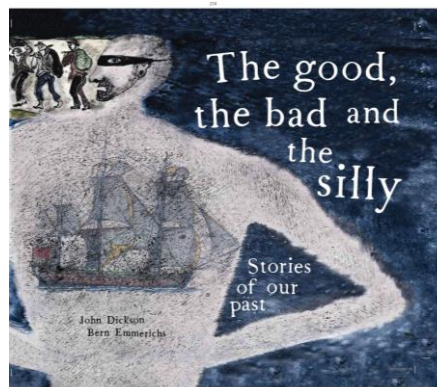


Teacher notes for *The Good, the Bad and the Silly*



SYNOPSIS

The Good, the Bad and the Silly is a collection of 15 stories from Australia's history that offer glimpses into our troubled but extraordinary foundation and development as a nation. There are stories about child labour, Sydney's first hospital, Burke and Wills, a murderous camel, Aboriginal activism and the war on emus. This book is an addition to a successful and innovative series whose aim is to ignite curiosity about our past, and includes the following titles: *M is for Mutiny*; *The Startling Story of Lachlan Macquarie*; *William Bligh: a stormy story of tempestuous times* and *The Unlikely Story of Bennelong and Phillip*.

THEMES

- Australian history
- Convicts
- Aboriginal history and culture
- Social justice
- Australia's engagement with China
- Animals
- Extinction

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

- Literacy
- Critical and creative thinking
- Ethical understanding

AUTHOR

John Dickson is a writer and illustrator by trade, a poet and painter by inclination and the lead singer of the Rolling Stones in his own mind.

ILLUSTRATOR

Bern Emmerichs is a highly celebrated artist in Australia. Her works are in the Australian National Gallery, the National Gallery of Victoria and many important collections in Australia and around the world.

The selection of artwork in this book have been created using large hand-painted porcelain tiles which have then been photographed and overlaid with the author's text.

Bern Emmerichs is renowned for her work, which explores historical narratives of Australia's First Settlement.

STUDY NOTES

1. Comprehension questions after reading the stories:
 - Which story is depicted on the book's cover?
 - Which story is depicted on the book's title page?
 - The first words in the book are 'Embark here'. What does this mean? Why did the author use the word 'embark'?
 - What sense do you get of life in England at the time the First Fleet left for New South Wales?
 - Convicts in early Sydney used to believe they could escape by walking to China. What happened as a result of this belief? How long did this belief stay in the colony?
 - What happened when John Hunter sent a platypus pelt back to England?
 - Why did Mary Wade come to Australia? How many children did she have?
 - What did Harry the camel do that led to his destruction?
 - What caused the extinction of dwarf emus?
 - Why was Sydney's first hospital called the Rum Hospital, and nicknamed the 'Sydney slaughterhouse'? Does any of this building still exist? What is its function now?
 - In this story, the author seems to criticise the explorer Robert Burke for something. What?
 - How did Chinese people get around the 1855 Victorian law banning them from entry?
 - Why did the government use old ships to imprison people?
 - How well did Australia's first cricket team perform in England? What happened when they returned home?
 - What happened to Sydney's Garden Palace Exhibition Building?
 - What message did Anthony Martin Fernando take with him to Europe?
 - Historically, who has been excluded from voting in Australian elections?

2. Questions about the visual content:
 - Look at the illustrations. How were they created? Are they realistic? What do you like about them? What interests does the illustrator have?
 - Would you have picked the same illustration for the cover, or a different one?
 - Look at the endpapers. What is the illustrator saying here?
 - What about the first illustration, next to 'Embark here'? What does it depict?
 - Study each illustration to see what meanings and hidden meanings you can find.

4. General discussion questions:
 - Which are your favourite stories in this book? Why?
 - Did you already know any of the stories? Which one/s?
 - The title of this book is *The Good, the Bad and the Silly*. Do you think the title suits the book? Why or why not? What else could this book have been called?

- Do you know stories about our history that aren't in this book? What stories of Australia's past would you include in a book?
- Who is currently excluded from voting in Australian elections? (Hint: children under the age of 18.) Do you think that's fair? Why or why not?
- What affect did these stories have on you? Did they make you happy, sad, angry, grateful, resentful, guilty, ashamed, proud, or all of the above? How has this book changed your opinion of Australia? Are you curious to learn more about these stories, or to find other stories?

5. Language

- What is the tone of the text? Is it serious? Or funny? Can you find examples of both? What is the overall tone of the book? Playful or scholarly? Does the tone suit the stories?
- Can you find examples of alliteration in the text or story titles? What is the purpose of the alliteration?
- Can you find examples of puns? What is their purpose?
- Can you find examples of where the author has used direct quotes from historical sources? What affect do these direct quotes have on you? Do they make the stories more believable or more alive to you? Or are they distracting, confusing or some other thing?