

# TEACHERS' NOTES

## *Where's Jessie?* by Janeen Brian and illustrated by Anne Spudvilas

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### **Janeen Brian**

Award-winning children's author Janeen Brian has a teaching background but has been writing fulltime for 30 years. She has over 90 books published in the educational and trade markets. More than 200 poems have appeared in anthologies and magazines nationally and internationally. Her work is translated and distributed worldwide.

She has received Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Awards for 11 of her books, and Honour Awards for *Pilawuk: When I Was Young*, *Hoosh! Camels in Australia*, *Where Does Thursday Go?* and *I'm a Dirty Dinosaur*.

Besides writing, Janeen enjoys reading, creating mosaics from recycled materials, gardening and keeping fit.

Learn more about Janeen at [www.janeenbrian.com](http://www.janeenbrian.com).

### **Anne Spudvilas**

Anne is an award-winning illustrator of children's books who also works as a printmaker and painter and has been a courtroom artist for the Melbourne media.

Her first picture book *The Race* was awarded the Crichton Award for Illustration and was a Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Honour Book. In 2000, she won CBCA Picture Book of the Year with *Jenny Angel*, which was also shortlisted for the NSW Premiers Award. In 2008, *The Peasant Prince* won the NSW Premier's Award (Patricia Wrightson Prize), the Australian Book Industry Award for Younger Readers and the Queensland Premier's Award.

Anne's portraits have been shown in the Archibald and Doug Moran Prizes and she has completed public commissions for the City of Melbourne and the Victorian State Government. Her work is in collections in Australia, USA, Europe and Asia.

Learn more about Anne at [www.annespudvilas.com](http://www.annespudvilas.com).

## Activities for Preschoolers

### What's This Book About?

- Look at the cover.
  - What do you think the story is about?
  - Why is there a teddy bear on a camel?
  - Where do you think the story is set?
  - The book is called *Where's Jessie?* Who do you think Jessie is?
- The first picture shows Jessie sitting on a box? What do you think is going to happen?
- Do you think this story is going to be set in the olden days or in modern days? Why?

### Camels and Cameleers

- What are the differences between one-humped camels and two-humped camels and the different environments in which they live?
- The men leading the camels (cameleers) made campfires at night. Why do you think they made these campfires?

### Art and Craft

- Find pictures of Australian deserts. Paint or draw a desert.
- Using a cardboard box, make a travel box for a favourite toy.
- Download the camel picture from [supercoloring.com/pages/camel-8-2](https://www.supercoloring.com/pages/camel-8-2). Colour in the camel and draw the setting.

OR

Draw three pictures:

- 1 Yourself riding the camel (self-to-text connection)
- 2 A story, movie or other text with a similar theme (text-to-text connection, drawing commonalities for the child)
- 3 An aspect of the desert environment—a mountain range, sandy dunes, waterhole (text-to-world connection)

## Imagination and Role Play

- Pretend you are a camel plodding through the desert. Make the sound from the story. *Budoomph! Budoomph! Budoomph!* Choose a different creature, such as a snake. Now move like the creature and make up a word that sounds like the movement. *Ssssss!*
- Read the story aloud. Join in with the repetition of *Budoomph!*
- Act out desert situations like a sandstorm or a flash flood.
- Have you ever had a campfire? What sorts of things would you do when you're sitting around a campfire? Make a pretend fire with sticks and red cellophane. Make up a campfire story to tell a friend. How do you keep safe around campfires?
- Have a Teddy Bears' picnic.

## Senses

- Teddy bears are usually made of fabric or material. Make a collection of objects found in the desert: sand, pebbles, sticks, leaves, feathers, etc. Make a touch-sense display. Write down words about the *feel* of each one.
- Flash floods are dangerous because of the speed and amount of water rush. Pour water into a shallow tub. Place several leaves on top. Students blow into the water using straws, creating bubbles and movement. Compare what happens to the leaves now.

## Singing

- Sing *Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear, Turn around* and do the actions.  
Listen to [nurseryrhymes.org/teddy-bear-teddy-bear.html](http://nurseryrhymes.org/teddy-bear-teddy-bear.html).

*Teddy bear, teddy bear,*

*Turn around!*

*Teddy bear, teddy bear,*

*Touch the ground!*

*Teddy bear, teddy bear,*

*Jump up high!*

*Teddy bear, teddy bear,*

*Touch the sky!*

*Teddy bear, teddy bear,*

*Bend down low!*

*Teddy bear, teddy bear,*

*Touch your toes!*

*Teddy bear, teddy bear,*

*Turn out the light!*

*Teddy bear, teddy bear,*

*Say good night!*

- Create a song based on Bertie's journey. Here's an example:

*C-c-camel, riding through the desert.*

*B-b-Bertie feeling lost and sad.*

*J-J-Jessie waiting for her little friend.*

*Now they're together—and they're both very glad!*

## Feelings

### Finish the sentences:

When I am lonely, I feel ...

When I am lost, I feel ...

When I am with my friend, I feel ...

When I am safe, I feel ...

When someone is kind to me, I feel ...

When I am in a strange place, I feel ...

## Activities for Lower Primary Students

### Geography and Environment

The story is set in the outback desert country of Australia. Apart from Antarctica, Australia is the driest country in the world.

- Go to this site to discover how much of Australia is desert:  
[upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/Australia-climate-map\\_MJC01.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/Australia-climate-map_MJC01.png)
- Are all the desert regions in Australia the same? Do they have the same vegetation and wildlife? Explore this website to find out:  
[abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/1301.0Feature%20Article42006?opendocument](http://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/1301.0Feature%20Article42006?opendocument)
- Heavy rain in the desert can cause a flash flood. What is a flash flood? What damage might it do to the surrounding environment? Find out more by looking at this website:  
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-04-10/hopping-mad-residents-hit-by-outback-flooding-at-coober-pedy/5379926?site=alicesprings>
- What are sandstorms? How can they change the shape of the environment?

- Native animals adapt to their environments. Find an illustration of a native animal in the book. Find out how it has adapted to living in the desert and any other interesting information about it. Present your discoveries to the class.
- The camel is a strong survivor in a desert environment, but it is not a native animal of Australia. Camels, however, were a vital form of transport in the early days of Australia. Cameleers led their camels along routes to outback homesteads, properties and settlements. Find out more by reading:  
*The Cameleers of the Outback* at the back of *Where's Jessie?*  
or  
*Hoosh! Camels in Australia* (available from [Janeen@janeenbrian.com](mailto:Janeen@janeenbrian.com))

## History

### Cameleers

- Cameleers who led their string of camels throughout the deserts of Australia were commonly named Afghans. Why do you think they were called that? Discover more by reading:  
*The Cameleers of the Outback* at the back of *Where's Jessie?*  
*Hoosh! Camels in Australia* (available from [Janeen@janeenbrian.com](mailto:Janeen@janeenbrian.com))  
or by visiting this National Library of Australia website:  
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/result?q=+Afghan+cameleers+Australia>.
- If you were an Afghan cameleer in the early days of Australia, what type of clothes would you wear? Where would you sleep? What would you eat? What might you miss from your homeland? What might you think about as you travelled along?  
  
Answer the above questions by looking at the illustrations or by doing some research.

### European Settlers

- Why did European people travel to the inland in the early days? What kind of jobs did they do? What did the women do? What did the children do? Compare people's lives in a town or city to lives in the outback.
- For a long time, the vast inland of Australia had little communication with the main towns on the coast. See early photographs of the first Telegraph Station in Alice Springs at:  
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/result?q=Alice+springs+original+Telegraph+Station>  
Find out more about the Telegraph Station at:  
[alicespringstelegraphstation.com.au](http://alicespringstelegraphstation.com.au)

### Aboriginal People

- There were hundreds of Aboriginal language groups living in Australia. The Aboriginal boy in the story might have come from a group from Central Australia, close to Alice Springs. Look at the map to find out which groups are in that region:  
[abc.net.au/indigenous/map/](http://abc.net.au/indigenous/map/)
- The Aboriginal boy returned the teddy bear to Jessie. Do you think Aboriginal children in those days would have played with teddy bears? Why? Why not? Aboriginal children often played with toys made to represent adult weapons or tools for hunting or gathering. What sorts of weapons do you think they were? What other toys might Aboriginal children have played with? What games might they have created?

### Teddy Bears

- Teddy bears have their own history. Find out more from this website:  
[factmonster.com/ipka/A0872806.html](http://factmonster.com/ipka/A0872806.html)
- What other toys did European children have in the early days? Do you have a favourite toy? Compare it with toys from the early days. Imagine a toy that you think children might play with in the future. Draw it.

### Life in the Desert

- Compare the style of Jessie's house and the more portable, temporary shelter used by the Afghan cameleers and Aboriginal groups. What materials were used for each style of housing?
- Jessie's house has a verandah to help keep it cool on hot days. How else do you think early settlers kept cool?
- Water tanks and windmills played an important role in obtaining water in the desert. Where else might water have come from?
- How has clothing changed from early days to modern day? Discuss what dictates the kind of clothing we wear. Fashion? Season? Climate? Availability? Culture?
- What goods do you think a family heading to live in the outback might need to pack? Make a list of what you would take. Remember it might take months to get more supplies.
- How would Jessie have received her education? Much later (1946) children in remote areas would learn through School of the Air. Research School of the Air on:  
[australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/school-of-the-air](http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/school-of-the-air)  
Compare that to Jessie's education and then to your school today.

## English: Language of the Story

### Perspective

- The story is told through Bertie's eyes (from his perspective). Retell parts of the story from:
  - Jessie's point of view
  - a cameleer's point of view
  - the Aboriginal boy's point of view

### Ellipses (...)

- In this picture book, the author has used an ellipsis (...) at the end of a sentence on one page or at the beginning of a sentence on another page. Can you find examples? Why do you think she did this?

### Senses

- Read this sentence from the book:

*That night, stars glistened like icicles and Bertie shivered with cold. The next morning, he awoke to strange smells and smoke spiralling into the frosty air.*

What senses were mentioned and how do they convey Bertie's feelings?
- Instead of stating that *a sandstorm* was approaching, the author helps the reader imagine it by using sensory details that have more impact:

*a gritty red cloud whooshed closer and closer. It screamed and whistled and stung.*

Describe a waterfall, lightning or marshmallow without using the actual word.

### Language Techniques

- The author enjoys the sound and feeling of words. The repetition of the word *Budoomph!* gives a sense of the camels plodding along.

*Budoomph!* is a word that imitates its sound. This is an example of onomatopoeia. Can you find another example in the book? Or make a list of other words that imitate sounds.
- *Sky-bright* is a shortened version of saying 'the moon brightened the sky'. Words that connect two ideas in an original way, can give more impact. Can you create others?

### Comparison

- Bertie compares sights, sounds and feelings from his home with Jessie and the other environments in which he finds himself. Make a list of the differences between: schools (if you have changed schools); houses (if you have moved houses); holidays in two different places; one kind of transport and another.

## Feelings

- What examples in the story show the love and friendship that Jessie and Bertie have for each other? Write about ways you have shown or received love or friendship.
- In the story, both Jessie and Bertie feel a sense of loss and separation. Tell/write/draw about a time when you felt lonely or lost.

## Power of Three

- 'Power of three' is the method of using three items, activities or incidents that give a sense of rhythm, often projecting power to the final word. For example:  
*Bertie wriggled and twisted and squirmed.*  
Describe an action using three strong verbs.

## Illustration

- Anne Spudvilas said: 'I've tried to capture the feeling of the time in which the story is set, about 1910, by using a technique which has a monotone (shades of deep, warm brown) as the base artwork, which feels to me like the old photos of the time'.  
Make a collage using old sepia photographs. Or create a portrait/scene using only shades of brown paint and then using a range of colour. Which effect do you prefer? Why?
- Anne used a printmaking method called *monoprint* to do the basic image and then added to it using watercolour.  
Collect a series of everyday objects to use for printing, such as sponges, corks, lids, leaves, potato cut-outs. Create an outback scene or a scene from a different environment.
- Anne began by reading Janeen's text and setting it out on double-page spreads as a storyboard.  
What is a storyboard? Why is it useful?  
Design your own storyboard for a story you've written or heard. Think about close ups, distance illustrations and middle distance. Consider the drama or action of or importance of each section.
- For references, Anne used photographs and a real boy as the model for the boy in the story. For Bertie, she used 'a teddy which I made for my daughter about 30 years ago and was made from the pattern for the old teddies of early last century'.  
Using different media, make an image of a special or favourite object. Why was the object your favourite?

Disclaimer: Third party website addresses have been cited in these teachers' notes. As the National Library of Australia does not regularly check these sites, it is recommended that teachers check them before they are used in the classroom.