



RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower and upper primary

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** History, English, Literacy

THEMES

- Australian History
- Australian Writers
- Life in the city and in the country

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Meet Banjo Paterson

Written by Kristin Weidenbach

Illustrated by James Gulliver
Hancock

PLOT SUMMARY

Andrew Barton 'Banjo' Paterson spent his early years in country NSW. He was sent to finish his education in Sydney, where he eventually worked as a lawyer. Paterson missed the bush and, using the pseudonym 'the Banjo', began to write stories that brought the bush to the city. This is the story of how Banjo came to write his most famous poems and stories, including 'The Man from Snowy River' and 'Waltzing Matilda'.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kristin Weidenbach is a PhD immunologist who switched to a writing career after completing postdoctoral research at Stanford University in California. She is the author of several academic publications and writes popular non-fiction focused on Australian history. Her picture book *Tom the Outback Mailman*, illustrated by Timothy Ide, won the CBCA Eve Pownall Award for Information Book of the Year 2013. She is the author of the adult titles *Rock Star: the Story of Reg Sprigg* and the Australian bestseller *Mailman of the Birdsville Track: the Story of Tom Kruse*, which has sold over 100,000 copies since publication in 2003. Her other titles include *Blue Flames*, *Black Gold: the story of Santos* and *First Watch: 40 years of the Cruising Yacht Club of SA*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

James Gulliver Hancock is a Sydney-born illustrator who has created art for print, TV and the music industry. James has worked all over the world, and currently splits his time between Sydney and New York.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Can you tell us a little bit about your research for this project and the resources you used?

Reading and writing go hand in hand, so before I started writing *Meet Banjo Paterson* I read as much as I could about Banjo. I read several biographies of Banjo's life and I read lots of his poems and short stories so I could get a 'feel' for his style and what he liked to write about. Some of Banjo's most famous works, like 'Waltzing Matilda', have changed a bit over time, so it was important to make lots of notes and keep careful records about the bits of information I was including in my story.

After I'd finished most of the writing I even had the chance to go to Winton in Queensland and see some of the bush country that Banjo had visited, which was great.

Did your opinion of Banjo Paterson change or deepen as you wrote the book?

I developed a much better appreciation of Banjo Paterson during the course of writing the book. I learned that Banjo was a true storyteller. He loved

writing about the Australian outback most of all, but he wrote poems and stories about all kinds of things. When he was a soldier he wrote war essays, when he was a reporter he wrote sports articles for the newspaper, and in between he wrote poems and books about life in the country.

Why did you choose to tell this particular part of Banjo's story?

My research showed that Banjo had loved horses since he was a little boy. Banjo even named himself after a horse he used to ride. Horses were very much a part of daily life back in Banjo's day and they featured in many of Banjo's poems, so I wanted to emphasise them in my book too. I wanted to show how the country life Banjo had enjoyed as a child influenced his adult life and emerged in some of his most famous works, like 'The Man from Snowy River' and 'Clancy of the Overflow'.

What was the most challenging part of the project?

The most challenging part of the project was telling the story of the writing of 'Waltzing Matilda'. Banjo wrote the words as a poem and an acquaintance (Christina Macpherson) wrote the melody based on another tune she had heard. Several versions of the song with slightly different words and tunes were passed around by word of mouth in Queensland and New South Wales. The version that most people know today was made famous by a company using the song to advertise Billy Tea. Some of the dates and facts about the creation of 'Waltzing Matilda' are still disputed today, so it was hard to summarise it all in very few words.

What was the most rewarding part of the project?

The most rewarding part of the project was the chance for me to discover and enjoy Banjo's poetry. Banjo wrote some of Australia's most famous ballads, or story poems, and I enjoyed finding out how he came to create such iconic characters, like the swagman from 'Waltzing Matilda' and the man from Snowy River. I found it very interesting to learn some of the background information, such as how 'Waltzing Matilda' came to be written; that there were several people who claimed to be the inspiration for the 'real' man from Snowy River; and that there really was a drover named Clancy.

What do you think is Banjo's greatest legacy?

I think Banjo's greatest legacy is his positive view of life in the Australian outback. People liked hearing about the daring horse riders Banjo wrote about, the hard-working shearers and stockmen, and the



natural beauty of the countryside. Banjo loved the bush and cast it in a positive light, in contrast to his compatriot, the poet Henry Lawson, who took a more negative view and highlighted the struggle and difficulties of rural life. Banjo's poem 'In Defence of the Bush' famously compared and contrasted their differing views.

INTERVIEW WITH THE ILLUSTRATOR

As well as books, you do illustration for lots of different mediums. What are the main differences between illustrating picture books and your other illustration work?

I love to draw anything, so putting pencil to paper on any project is honestly a joy for me. Whether the starting point be a brief from a big company, or a story for a book, I start the same, with a regular pencil and sheets of A4 paper, just roughly doodling ideas on the page. Picture books usually take quite a bit longer than other projects, just because of all the relationships to the story, the author, the publisher, and trying to make the whole thing work together as well as within the page.

This is a historical book, based on real people and their stories. Did you have to do a lot of research to get the historical details right, such as how people looked and what they wore?

The publisher gave me some references for how Banjo looked, but I only had to get out my wallet to see the famous portrait on the \$10 note to get a vibe of his stately nose, etc. :-)

For visual research for the coaches and bicycles and buildings in the book, I used image searches on the internet. It's great because it pulls up lots of images on a theme, which you can then use to collage your own original version that looks correct in the context. It's fun doing period drawings like this, like playing dress-ups on the page, switching out hats, designing little collars for the ladies – you should try it!

What mediums did you use to create the art? Can you explain a little bit about your process?

I start with a regular pencil and A4 paper, sketching out ideas. For *Meet Banjo Paterson* I treated it like a storyboard, with little squares for each page of the book. It's hard to get started, but even just drawing stick figures and bad drawings of horses can form a backbone to where the drawings should go – once you have a few marks it's easier to build upon. From

here I usually do another sketch, based on the first one, and start to flesh out the details. I show this to the publisher and chat about how it's looking. If there are no changes, I do another sketch that has all the final detail in there. I then use this sketch to ink in the final lines using a variety of media like pen and ink (nice and splattery!), texta and felt-tip pen. I then scan these final black lines into the computer and use a pen and tablet to basically colour them in.

What was the most challenging part of the project?

Picture books are always a bit of a challenge, as you do so many drawings. *Meet Banjo Paterson* is relatively short but, even so, it takes a lot of focus. Once you get on a roll, though, and get towards the end, it's sad to find you've almost finished and will soon be leaving the world you created.

What was the most rewarding part of the project?

Doing the actual drawing is always a pleasure, it's why I do what I do. Knowing that lots of kids will be poring over the details is also lovely.

Did you know much about Banjo Paterson before the project? Did your opinion of him grow or change through the course of the project?

I only really knew a couple of lines from 'The Man From Snowy River'. It was great to learn about Banjo's fame and great influence. I also liked his struggle with the city and interest in representing things he loved for other people. I'm very interested in things like this with my own projects, especially ones like allthebuildingsinnewyork.com



PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What does the front cover of *Meet Banjo Paterson* tell you about the book?

- Who is the subject of the book?
- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?

2. Does the back cover give you more clues about the book?

- Does the blurb explain who Banjo Paterson is and what he is famous for?

3. What do you already know about Banjo Paterson or Australian writers from the 19th or early-20th century? Start a list and add to it as you read the book.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

English

Questions

1. Create a simple story map of the key elements in the narrative, e.g. the setting; characters; beginning, middle and end. See *Worksheet 1*.
2. The text in *Meet Banjo Paterson* is organised into simple sentences and short paragraphs. Does this style suit the story? Why? Discuss how the text works in conjunction with the illustrations and why it is effective to have only short paragraphs on each page.
3. The text includes quotes from four of Banjo's poems. How does the look of the book show you that these are quotes? Can you name all four poems, based on the quotes and the text around them?
4. There is a timeline at the back of the book with facts about Banjo's life and career. How is the language in this section different from the rest of the book?

Activities

1. Look up one of the four poems quoted in the book. Try reading it in your head and then reading it aloud. Does reading it aloud make the poem sound different? Is it easier to understand?
2. In 1892, Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson published a number of poems in the *Bulletin* magazine. In the poems, the two men

responded to one another's opinions about life in the bush versus the city. Look up the first two poems of the 'Bulletin debate' and read them. As an extension, you could write a list of pros and cons of bush life from the poems, and then add some of your own opinions. See *Worksheet 2*.

History

Questions

1. When Banjo was a boy in country NSW, he saw how important horses were to people's everyday lives. Do you think the same would be true in country towns today? Think about the advancement in technology and transport.
2. Banjo's poems were first published in newspapers. How else might the poems have been released then? If Banjo were alive and writing today, how do you think he would publish his poems? Do you think his writing would be as widely read that way?

Activity

1. Research the life of another Australia writer from the 19th or early-20th century, such as Henry Lawson, C. J. Denis, Dorothea Mackellar, Ethel Turner or Elyne Mitchell. Create your own 32-page picture book about your chosen subject, complete with illustrations. See *Worksheet 3*.

Visual Literacy

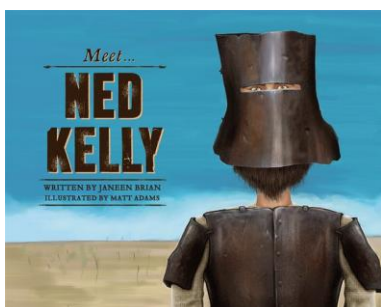
Questions

1. Illustrator James Gulliver Hancock has used a particular style of drawing in the book. What kind of style is it? Why do you think he chose this particular style for Banjo's story? See *Worksheet 4*.
2. Can you tell that the story is set in an older time just by looking at the illustrations? How has the illustrator created an impression of 1890s Australia?

Activity

1. Choose one spread from the book to analyse. Make two columns. In one column write down everything the text tells you about the story on that page. In the other column, write down everything the illustration tells you about the story on that page. Does the illustration tell you extra things that are not in the text? See *Worksheet 5*.

OTHER BOOKS IN THIS SERIES



Meet Ned Kelly
by Janeen Brian & Matt Adams

Ned Kelly was born in 1854 in Beveridge, Victoria. This is the story of how Ned Kelly became Australia's most famous bushranger.

Teachers' resources available.



Meet Mary MacKillop
by Sally Murphy & Sonia Martinez

Mary MacKillop is Australia's first saint. Mary believed all children, no matter how rich or poor, should have the chance to learn. This is the story of the first school Mary opened with her sisters in 1866 in Penola, South Australia.

Teachers' resources available.



Meet Captain Cook
by Rae Murdie & Chris Nixon

Captain James Cook was an English explorer and Navy captain. In 1770 Captain Cook and his crew on the HMB *Endeavour* were the first Europeans to discover the east coast of Australia.

Teachers' resources available.



Meet the Anzacs
by Claire Saxby & Max Berry

Anzac stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. It is the name given to the Australian and New Zealand troops who landed at Gallipoli in World War I. The Anzac name is now a symbol of bravery and mateship. This is the story of how the Anzac legend began.

Teachers' resources available.



Meet Douglas Mawson
by Mike Dumbleton & Snip Green

Douglas Mawson led the first Australian expedition to the Antarctic. This is the story of how Mawson survived the dangers and challenges of the frozen Continent.

Teachers' resources available.



Meet Nancy Bird Walton
by Grace Atwood & Harry Slaghekke

Nancy Bird Walton grew up during the golden age of aviation. When she was 18 Nancy studied under the famous aviator Charles Kingsford Smith. This is the story of how Nancy began her career as Australia's first female commercial pilot.

Teachers' resources available.





WORKSHEET 1: STORY MAP

Book title:

Author:

Illustrator:

Characters:

Setting:

Beginning
Middle
End

WORKSHEET 2: THE ‘*BULLETIN* DEBATE’

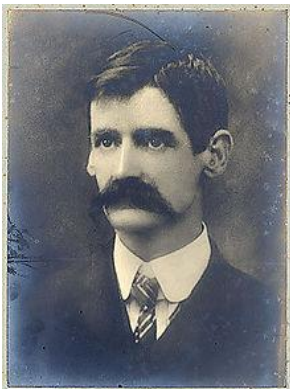
On 9 July 1892 **Henry Lawson** published ‘Borderland’ (now known as ‘**Up the Country**’) in the *Bulletin* magazine. **Banjo Paterson** responded with ‘**In Defence of the Bush**’. Read both poems and discuss the two poets’ point of view. You could write a list of pros and cons (positives and negatives) of bush life as described in the poems, or the same kind of list for city life.



WORKSHEET 3: RESEARCH PROJECT

Banjo Paterson is one of many writers who wrote poems, short stories and books about life in country Australia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. **Henry Lawson** wrote poems and short stories, but his view of life in the Australian bush was less idealistic than Banjo's. **C. J. Dennis** wrote stories and poems in the Australian vernacular (or everyday speech). **Dorothea Mackellar** wrote the patriotic poem *My Country*, in which she compares the landscape of England to Australia. **Elyne Mitchell** wrote the Silver Brumby series of children's books after having trouble finding books for her children that reflected life in Australia.

Choose an Australian writer to research. Think about what they have contributed to Australian culture and the way Australians view themselves and their country. Why did they want to become writers? What obstacles or encouragement did they experience? What did they achieve? Collect photos and facts, then write your own story about what makes your chosen Australian writer historically significant.



Henry Lawson



C. J. Dennis



Dorothea Mackellar



Elyne Mitchell



WORKSHEET 4: EVOLUTION OF A DRAWING

Here is a step-by-step look at the evolution of an illustration by James Gulliver Hancock in *Meet Banjo Paterson*.

At the very beginning the illustrator is given the story (the words the author has written). The illustrator will then read over the text and workshop their ideas, taking into consideration such things as the colour palette for the book, the style of illustration and any visual themes that will be used.

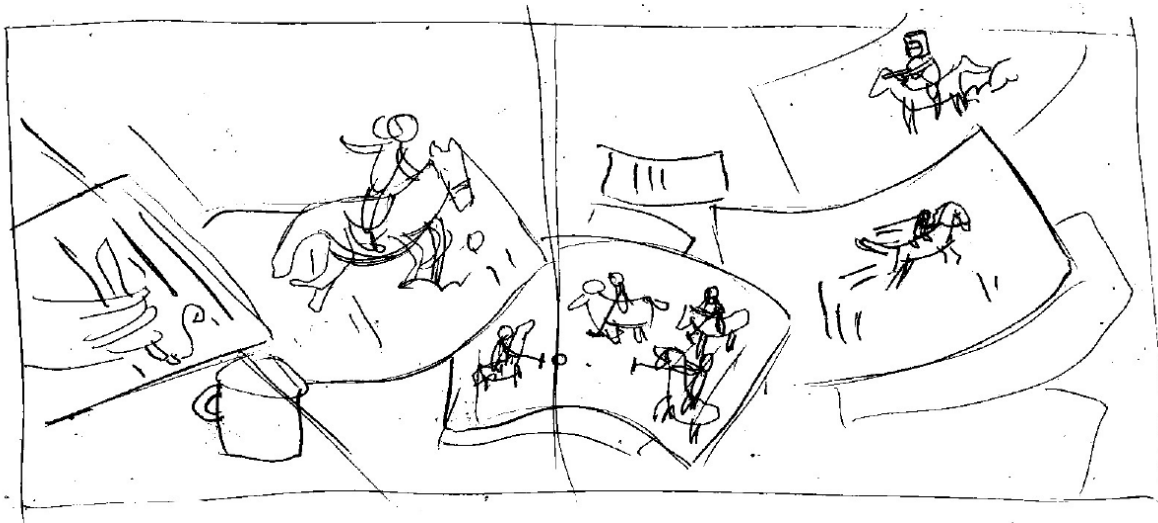
For the section that we will examine, the text read as follows:

Little by little, Banjo began to write about the outback life he yearned for. He wrote a poem about a drover called Clancy. When his poem was published, people said it was one of the best bush ballads they had ever heard.

Banjo wrote more poems about horses and horsemen and horse races. He wrote about polo matches and bushrangers and jockeys.

Questions

1. How would you have chosen to illustrate this page?
2. Why do you think James Gulliver Hancock chose this particular style of illustration?



This is an example of a first sketch. The illustrator, James Gulliver Hancock, has used a pencil and a sheet of A4 paper. At this stage in the process, the illustrator is considering how the illustration will *add* to the text (instead of just showing exactly what the text says). The illustrator also thinks about how the illustration should be laid out on the page in a way that makes sense to the reader. As you can see, the illustrator has roughly recreated the frame of an open book. This is done to help him determine how to lay out his drawing and where to accommodate the text.

Questions

1. Why has the illustrator included Banjo's hand? Is this important?
2. Why has the illustrator drawn horseriders galloping on sheets of paper? Is it real? Is it meant to be real?
3. Do you think his illustration adds to the text? How?



Once the sketch is approved, the illustrator develops the illustration. As you can see, the lines are now clean and details have been added, such as the ink bottle with the love heart.

Questions

1. What other details have been added?
2. Why do you think the illustrator hasn't added actual words on the sheets of paper?



The illustrator then progresses to colour, using the palette (range of colours) that was determined beforehand. In this sketch, the illustrator created 'pops' of colour (red, purple and green) which stand out from the more muted tones (white, beige, brown and grey) and attract the reader's eye.

Questions

1. How has the illustrator created a sense of movement? Is this important?
2. Do you think the colours look good together? Do they suit the overall palette of the book?
3. Are there any visual themes (objects, shapes, significant colours and so on) in this illustration that have been used elsewhere in the book?



Sometimes adjustments need to be made. For example, here, the text wasn't readable enough because it overlapped with the illustration.



The illustrator then adjusted the illustration to allow the text to sit entirely against a white background (to make it more readable). He did this by shortening the desk and adding a white sheet of paper in the bottom-right corner.

Questions

1. Do you think this is more readable than the previous version of the illustration?

WORKSHEET 5: VISUAL LITERACY

Choose one spread from the book to analyse. Make two columns. In one column write down everything the text tells you about the story on that page. In the other column, write down everything the illustration tells you about the story on that page. Does the illustration tell you extra things that are not in the text and vice versa?

What the illustration tells me

What the text tells me



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
<i>Meet Banjo Paterson</i>	Kristin Weidenbach	9780857980083	K-4	\$24.99		
<i>Meet Nancy Bird Walton</i>	Grace Atwood	9780857983879	K-4	\$24.99		
<i>Meet Ned Kelly</i>	Janeen Brian	9781742757186	K-4	\$19.99		
<i>Meet Mary MacKillop</i>	Sally Murphy	9781742757216	K-4	\$19.99		
<i>Meet Captain Cook</i>	Rae Murdie	9780857980175	K-4	\$19.99		
<i>Meet the Anzacs</i>	Claire Saxby	9780857981929	K-4	\$24.99		
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