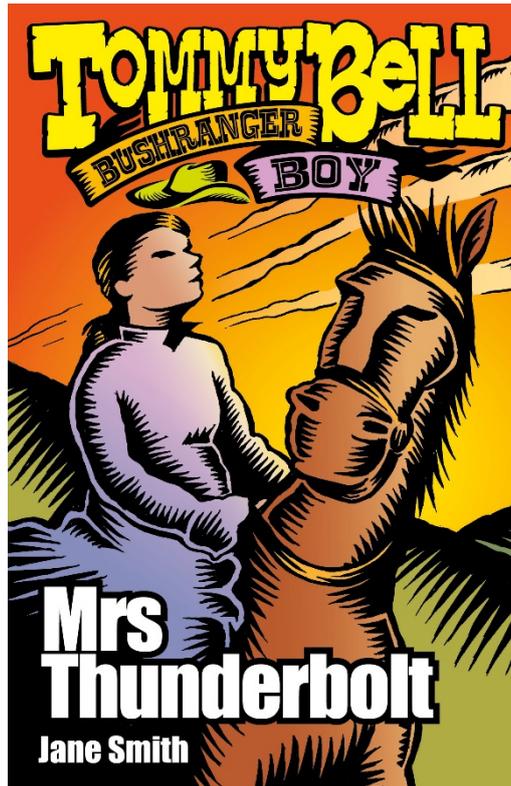


Tommy Bell Bushranger Boy Series

Book #6 – Mrs Thunderbolt

By

Jane Smith



Teachers' Notes by Jodi Lundie-Jenkins and Rebecca Crichton

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About the Book

Tommy Bell is thrilled to be spending a week at pony camp in the Outback with his beloved horse, Combo. But when his daydreaming causes him to become separated from the group, Tommy is lost and alone. Unable to find a way out of his predicament, he decides to use his magic cabbage-tree hat to escape to the past.

Tommy's time-travelling takes him back to the 1860s, where he meets Captain Thunderbolt's Aboriginal girlfriend, Mary Ann Bugg. Tommy finds Mary Ann strong, resourceful and kind. Tommy has encountered Captain Thunderbolt in an earlier adventure and remembers him as a charming rogue.

But friendship with a bushranger comes at a price. Again and again, the troopers, unable to catch Thunderbolt, arrest Mary Ann in his place. Unimpressed that Thunderbolt allows Mary Ann to be punished for his actions, Tommy questions the bushranger's morals and courage.

To add to Tommy's unease, Thunderbolt's crimes become increasingly reckless. Tommy wants to help Mary Ann and her children, but she is a proud and independent woman. When she is jailed, however, Tommy is her only hope.

The narrative travels forwards and backwards in time as Tommy has several encounters with Thunderbolt and Mary Ann. Tommy faces danger, dilemmas and emotional conflict as he befriends Mary Ann while questioning her support for a notorious criminal. This raises for young readers the long-time question about whether Australian bushrangers take their place in history as heroes, villains or victims of circumstance.

Mrs Thunderbolt is the sixth book in the 'Tommy Bell, Bushranger Boy' series and is an excellent resource as a stand-alone fiction novel for classroom units or to be enjoyed by readers as part of the ongoing series.

From the Author

I'm lucky that my favourite pastimes – reading and writing and learning about history – are also important parts of my job. I'm an author but I'm also a school librarian (which means I spend my days surrounded by books) and a school archivist – which means I also spend my days sorting, cataloguing and preserving old things, and finding out all the stories behind them. That's what history is, really: stories. Some of the stories we read are true and some are not, but all of them can be fascinating.

My interest in Australian history led me to write my true stories about the bushrangers in the *Australian Bushranger* series. In turn, these true stories led to the not-so-true stories about Tommy Bell, an ordinary boy who goes back in time to have extraordinary adventures with the colourful criminals of our past.

The *Tommy Bell, bushranger boy* series combines fact with fiction. The books contain true settings and events and some real people, but the main characters – Tommy and his friends – are characters that I made up. This is what we call *historical fiction*. I've tried to keep the history part as accurate as possible, and to help you to separate the fact from the fiction, I've included some historical notes at the end.

A final note: I owe my love of reading to many authors who wrote the wonderful books that brought me so much joy in my childhood. As a child I especially loved adventure stories, so it has been a thrill to have had the chance to write some adventure stories of my own. I've dedicated each book in my *Tommy Bell* series to characters in books that I enjoyed as a child. Can you work out who those characters are? Maybe your teacher or librarian or parents can help you to find the books they came from.

Emerging themes and issues

- Australian bushrangers – heroes or villains?
- Time travel
- The Gold Rush
- Friendships
- Moral dilemmas and the complexity of human behaviour
- Indigenous Australians - history
- Comparison of rural communities in the past and present
- The importance of local knowledge in a region's history
- Criminal behaviour
- The outback
- Survival
- Adventure
- Law and justice

Curriculum Links

Australian Curriculum English Year 3

Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others ([ACELT1596 - Scootle](#))

Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative ([ACELT1599 - Scootle](#))

Identify the point of view in a text and suggest alternative points of view ([ACELY1675 - Scootle](#))

Discuss the nature and effects of some language devices used to enhance meaning and shape the reader's reaction, including rhythm and onomatopoeia in poetry and prose ([ACELT1600 - Scootle](#))

Create imaginative texts based on characters, settings and events from students' own and other cultures using visual features, for example perspective, distance and angle ([ACELT1601 - Scootle](#))

Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features ([ACELY1680 - Scootle](#))

Australian Curriculum English Year 4

Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view ([ACELT1603](#))

Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing, and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension ([ACELT1605](#))

Recognise how quotation marks are used in texts to signal dialogue, titles and quoted (direct) speech ([ACELA1492](#))

Understand, interpret and experiment with a range of devices and deliberate word play in poetry and other literary texts, for example nonsense words, spoonerisms, neologisms and puns ([ACELT1606](#))

Create literary texts that explore students' own experiences and imagining ([ACELT1607](#))

Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning to expand content knowledge, integrating and linking ideas and analysing and evaluating texts ([ACELY1692](#))

Australian Curriculum English Year 5

Understand that patterns of language interaction vary across social contexts and types of texts and that they help to signal social roles and relationships ([ACELA1501](#))

Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts ([ACELT1608](#))

Understand how the grammatical category of possessives is signalled through apostrophes and how to use apostrophes with common and proper nouns ([ACELA1506](#))

Investigate how the organisation of texts into chapters, headings, subheadings, home pages and sub-pages for online texts and according to chronology or topic can be used to predict content and assist navigation ([ACELA1797](#))

Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses ([ACELT1610](#))

Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors ([ACELT1798](#))

Identify and explain characteristic text structures and language features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text ([ACELY1701](#)).

Use a range of software including word processing programs with fluency to construct, edit and publish written text, and select, edit and place visual, print and audio elements ([ACELY1707](#))

Australian Curriculum Year 6 English

Understand how authors often innovate on text structures and play with language features to achieve particular aesthetic, humorous and persuasive purposes and effects ([ACELA1518](#))

Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts ([ACELT1613](#))

Identify the relationship between words, sounds, imagery and language patterns in narratives and poetry such as ballads, limericks and free verse ([ACELT1617](#))

Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions ([ACELY1709](#))

Analyse how text structures and language features work together to meet the purpose of a text ([ACELY1711](#))

Select, navigate and read texts for a range of purposes, applying appropriate text processing strategies and interpreting structural features, for example table of contents, glossary, chapters, headings and subheadings([ACELY1712](#))

Suggested Pre-Reading Activities

- Discussion: If you could travel back in time and visit a certain place or event, where might you like to go? What might you choose to see or do? What might be the same? What might be different?
- View maps and photographs (from the past and present) of the settings.
- Identify the period of Australian history in which bushrangers were prevalent. Show or locate on a timeline. Discuss other events which were occurring in Australia's history at that time.
- Show students the cover of the novel and read the blurb to them. Ask them to write down their predictions of what might happen to Tommy throughout the story.

Suggested During Reading activities

- As students progress through the story, create a story map which outlines the generic features of the novel (introduction, conflict, resolution, further action, conclusion).
- As more about Captain Thunderbolt and Mrs Thunderbolt is revealed as the story unfolds, research online to see if any of the settings or events in the story happened in real life (refer to Jane Smith's 'Australian Bushrangers' series book, *Captain Thunderbolt*).
- Create a word wall, including unknown words and words relating to the era in which Captain Thunderbolt lived.
- Choose words from within the text to include in spelling lists.
- Begin a character web showing the characters linked to Captain Thunderbolt and his story. Add to it as characters are introduced throughout the story.
- Build a profile for each character throughout the book. Include descriptive words found in the text and personal inferences.

Suggested Post Reading Activities

- Write a letter to author and historian Jane Smith asking further questions about Captain Thunderbolt or Australian Bushrangers in general.
- Create and film a 'book talk' reviewing the book.
- Produce a new book cover and blurb for the story.
- Compile a book review, outlining details of the storyline, recommended readers, etc.
- Create an advertising poster which could be displayed in a bookstore which would persuade readers to purchase the book.
- Imagine you are Captain Thunderbolt or Tommy Bell. Write a series of diary entries based on events in the book.

Chapter Summaries and Comprehension Questions

Dedication

Discuss why this book may have been dedicated to these four characters. Write a letter to the author to find out the reason.

Chapter 1 – Pony Camp

Tommy is enjoying the chance to ride Combo for the whole week of pony camp when he becomes lost. What will he do?

1. Tommy became 'fast friends' with the others in the camp group. What does this mean?
2. Make a list of the things Tommy loved about being on camp. Share your list with a peer or your class. Are your lists the same? Can you add anything further to your list?
3. What time of the day was Tommy's favourite? Why? What is your favourite time of the day?
4. The author describes Tommy's horse Combo. Draw and colour an illustration of the horse. (You might like to use the illustration on page 7 to help you)
5. Who were Tommy's best friends?
6. The author uses the first few pages of the book to recap Tommy's adventures from the previous book. Who did Tommy meet in his travels back in time?
7. Tommy's last adventure took place back in 1870. Calculate how many years ago it would have been.
8. Tommy had a special hat. Research and draw what Tommy's hat would have been like.
9. Why was Martin the only one who knew the secret of the cabbage tree hat?
10. When Tommy realises he is lost, he decides to put on his hat. Why?
11. Start a Character Chart including:

Tommy Bell	Captain Thunderbolt	Mrs Thunderbolt	John Thompson	McIntosh	Thomas Hogan

Add to this chart as you learn more throughout the story (*this can be done individually, or as part of a class display)

Chapter 2 – Mrs Thunderbolt

Tommy goes back in time and meets Mary Ann Bugg and her two small children camping out in the bush. Mary Ann tells him that she is the girlfriend of Fred Ward. Tommy remembers that Fred Ward was a bushranger he met in his first time-travelling adventure. Mary Ann appears to be pregnant.

1. How had the landscape changed when Tommy went back in time?
2. Add the description of Mary to your character chart.
3. Fred Ward was also known by another name. What was it?
4. How did Tommy know who Fred was?
5. Add Fred Ward (Thunderbolt) to your Character Chart.
6. *Tommy's head was spinning; it was hard to imagine the bushranger as a family man.* Explain.

Chapter 3 – Caught!

The troopers arrive and arrest Mary Ann for possession of stolen goods. Worried about her safety, Tommy allows himself to be taken into custody with Mary Ann and her children. As they ride with the troopers, Mary Ann pretends to be in labour, prompting the police to leave her, Tommy and the children at Wilby Wilby station.

1. According to Mary Ann, where had Thunderbolt gone?
2. How long had he been away from his family?
3. Use a map to locate the Paterson River. Mark it on a map of your own
4. Why did Sergeant Cleary want to arrest Mary? Explain.
5. Explain how Mary decides to trick the policeman. Why does she do this?
6. Research Wilby Wilby Station to ascertain whether it still exists.

Chapter 4 – Wilby Wilby Station

Tommy spends a few comfortable but dull days in captivity at Wilby Wilby Station with Mary Ann and her children. Just as Mary Ann predicted he would, Captain Thunderbolt arrives with his gang to rescue them. The bushrangers steal all the gunpowder from the station and ride off, taking Mary Ann, her children and Tommy with them.

1. Research the 'Bush Telegraph'.
2. Add details to your Character Chart.
3. On page 33 the author gives a description of Thunderbolt's 'friends'. Read on and match these descriptions with the names included in Chapter 5, then add them to your Character Chart.
4. The people at Wilby Wilby Station sheltered Thunderbolt's family for two days before he and his gang arrived. Should the gang have robbed them? Why or why not? Give reasons to support your argument.
5. Tommy chooses to leave with the gang but wonders what he is getting himself into. What would you do if you were Tommy in this situation? Explain.

Chapter 5 – Bush Camp

Tommy camps out in the bush with Thunderbolt and his mates and family. Thunderbolt introduces Tommy to his friends: young John Thompson, Thomas ‘The Bull’ Hogan and McIntosh. When night falls, the gang surprise Tommy by going back to raid Wilby Wilby Station. Tommy settles uneasily in his uncomfortable camp bed, anxious about Thunderbolt’s crimes and worried for his safety. The men come back safely from the raid with their loot.

1. Add details of the gang members to your Character Chart.
2. Make a list of the reason Tommy was starting to feel homesick.
3. What would you miss if you were away from home? Share your ideas with a friend. Were your ideas similar or different? In what way?
4. Tommy chose to stay back in time. Why didn’t he go home? The author introduces us to one of Tommy’s friends – Francis. Make a T-Chart showing Francis’s strengths and weaknesses.
5. List the items Thunderbolt and his men take from the Station in their night raid.
6. ...*We have to get Mary Ann to Tamworth*. How far is it from Wilby Wilby Station to Tamworth? Use Google, Google Maps or an atlas to help you.

Chapter 6 – Mary Ann

With Mary Ann’s baby on the way, Thunderbolt decides they should take her to Tamworth for the birth. Tommy rides with them and Mary Ann tells him a little about her past. She had an Aboriginal mother and a white ex-convict father. She tells Tommy that she was educated at a school in Sydney and she has learnt the ways of both Indigenous and European people. When they reach Tamworth, Thunderbolt leaves Mary Ann there to have the baby, and invites Tommy to join him on further adventures. Acting against his conscience, Tommy agrees.

1. Tommy notices that Thunderbolt, Ellen and Marina could ride well, but had trouble with letters. Why is this so?
2. Explain why Mary Ann was good at ‘I spy’.
3. Was it common for people like Mary Ann to be educated? How do you know?
4. List the skills Mary Ann learned from both sides of her family. How did these make her a help to Thunderbolt?
5. Explain why Tommy felt that Mary Ann seemed lonely.
6. When Thunderbolt asked Tommy to go away with him, he knew that he shouldn’t go, and the thought made him feel sick. Think of a time when you have felt a bit like Tommy. Share your ideas with a friend.

Chapter 7 – Bail up!

Tommy is with Thunderbolt and his gang when the gang rob the mail coach and a buggy at gunpoint. Tommy is confused by and disgusted with Thunderbolt’s behaviour: the bushranger insists on being polite to ladies but threatens and steals from the men and fails to object when his men steal personal items from the mailman. Tommy senses that his horse, Combo, disapproves of the gang too, but he’s not ready to leave them yet.

1. Tommy felt sorry for the mailman. Explain.
2. Make a list of what the bushrangers found in the mail.
3. What was unusual about the wad of cash?
4. Why do you think Tommy stayed with the bushrangers when he was feeling so badly about the robbery?

Chapter 8 – Hanging out

Tommy continues to camp out with the gang, but he is conflicted: he enjoys their company, but he knows that their criminal activities are wrong. Thunderbolt is a good storyteller, but Tommy finds some of his tales and complaints hard to believe. He doesn't like to hear Thunderbolt boasting about his crimes. He also feels a little sorry for him when he realises that the bushranger can't even read. Things come to a head when the gang decide to rob Munro's Inn. Tommy is with the gang when they hold up the barman at gunpoint. It gets ugly when one of the gang tries to shoot a dog for sport.

1. Why do you think that the farmers keep helping Thunderbolt and his gang?
2. The same man drove the coach most days. Being a mailman would have been a hard job. What challenges would they face? List those outlined in the text and add some ideas of your own.
3. Thunderbolt and his companions have done some bad things. Explain why Tommy still likes them.
4. Add the details on page 65 to your Character Chart.
5. *I never steal from the poor; I only steal from the rich to give to the poor; I never hurt anyone...* Is this the truth? How do you know? Give examples from the text.
6. What is Cockatoo Island? Research its history and write down three interesting facts to share with your peers.
7. What are hawkers? Explain.
8. The author writes that Thunderbolt *was a tiny bit full of himself*. What does that mean? Explain.
9. Use Google, Google Maps or an atlas to find Boggy Creek. Add it to your map.
10. On pages 72 and 73 the author gives a description of the visit to Boggy Creek to help you visualise. How would you film this scene?

Chapter 9 - Troopers

The police have had news of the robbery and are coming after the gang. The gang move down the road to Walford's Inn, where they rob the owner and customers. The troopers arrive and a gun battle begins. The troopers surround young John Thompson. Thunderbolt tries to draw them away, but the troopers shoot Thompson and he falls. Thunderbolt urges Tommy to go, and Tommy takes off his hat and returns to the present.

1. The author uses many descriptive phrases to help the reader visualise the battle. Read the chapter and list as many descriptive phrases as you can.
2. How did Thunderbolt try to save Thompson?
3. Was he successful? Explain.
4. Predict what will happen to Thompson now.

Chapter 10 - Lost

When Tommy returns to the present, he is still lost. He is scared and lonely, and he's worried about Mary Ann and her daughters. He doesn't know if John Thompson is dead or alive. He decides to go back to the past settle his fears.

1. Read the first paragraph. Predict what will happen to Tommy and Combo now.
2. Use Google, Google Maps or an atlas to find Narran Lake. How far is it from Boggy Creek Mine? Add it to your map.
3. Tommy has many questions about Mary Ann. List them.
4. What does Tommy decide to do? why?

Chapter 11 - Arrest

Tommy finds himself back at Thunderbolt and Mary Ann's bush camp. The baby has been born. But the other children are living with Mary Ann's family. Tommy catches up on news of Thompson and the others. He learns that Mary Ann has spent time in prison for 'vagrancy'. The troopers arrive to arrest Thunderbolt, but he flees—leaving Mary Ann to be arrested in his place yet again. Searching her belongings, they find fabric and accuse her of stealing it, but she insists that she paid for it.

1. How much time had passed when Tommy came to?
2. What happened to Thompson?
3. What reasons did the police give for arresting Mary Ann? Why is Mary Ann free?
4. Do you think Thunderbolt's reaction when the troopers arrived was right or wrong? Explain.
5. When they couldn't catch Thunderbolt, what did the troopers do?
6. Mary Ann needs proof that she bought the fabric from Wolfe and Gorrick's store in Maitland. Predict how Tommy can help Mary Ann.

Chapter 12 - Proof

Tommy goes to the store where Mary Ann said she bought the fabric. The draper confirms that she paid for it and agrees to tell the magistrate. Mary Ann is released from jail. Tommy tells Mary Ann that a magistrate wants to pardon Thunderbolt before he kills someone and has suggested that Thunderbolt could work for the police. Mary Ann tells him that the Law would never allow it, and Thunderbolt would never agree to it. Tommy leaves her to return to the present.

1. How did Thunderbolt react to Mary Ann?
2. How does Tommy try to help Mary Ann?
3. What does the draper do to help?
4. How long did it take to free Mary Ann? Explain.
5. Tommy reads in the newspaper that Thunderbolt has been offered a chance to turn his life around. What is it? Does Mary Ann think it will work? Why, or why not?
6. Tommy leaves Mary Ann to head back to his own time. Read the Historical Notes to find out what happened to Mary Ann and Fred Ward (Thunderbolt).

Chapter 13 - Safe

Tommy is back in present times and is relieved when his camp leader appears. He's amazed to find that he has only been missing for fifteen minutes.

1. List the things you would have done if you were Tommy and had been lost in the bush.
2. If you met Thunderbolt and Mary Ann, what questions would you ask them?
3. Predict what adventure Tommy (and his friend Martin) might have next.

Historical Note

1. Add any final characteristics to the Character Chart you have been working with throughout the book.

Character Profile

Mary Ann Bugg

<p>Draw a picture of Mary Ann Bugg</p>	<p>Describe how Mary Ann Bugg looks</p>
<p>Describe your character's personality.</p>	<p>Describe your character's role in the story</p>

