

Teacher's Notes

Australian Bushranger Series by Jane Smith

Captain Thunderbolt shortlisted for 2015 ABIA Awards



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1. Synopsis - About the *Australian Bushranger series*

Full of colourful characters and daring exploits, young readers will love learning about these Australian legends. These entertaining, historically accurate books are aligned with the national curriculum and will appeal to students, teachers and schools. Meticulously researched, they refute many popular myths and present a balanced view of new facts and legendary exploits.

2. Themes

- Bushrangers
- Gold rush
- Crime
- Australian history
- The past
- Police
- Law enforcement
- Prisons
- Poverty
- Rural Australia

3. About the Author

Jane Smith is a school librarian at Concordia Lutheran College in Toowoomba, Queensland and an avid historical researcher and lover of Australian history. Jane's fascination with Australian history inspired her to write her *Australian Bushranger series* to share the colourful lives of these bushranging legends with younger readers, and show kids that history is far from boring and sometimes truth is even more entertaining than fiction. Her meticulous research helped her to uncover new facts and dispel many of the myths that have surrounded these characters for years.

4. The Author's Motivation

When I decided to research the bushrangers, I began by reading all the books about Captain Thunderbolt that I could get my hands on. I quickly became very confused. The books all said different things! They disagreed on just about everything: when and where he was born, who his parents were, what crimes he committed and the dates on which he committed them, whether he had two different girlfriends or one, whether he could read and write, and whether he really hated guns or not. They couldn't even agree on the story of his death.

But why were there so many different stories? And how was I to decide which were true and which were myths?

There are many reasons for the discrepancies. One is that these events took place a long time ago. If you've ever played a game of 'Chinese whispers', you will know that every time a story is told, some of the little details will change, so that after ten re-tellings it will be almost completely different from how it was at the start. This is what happens with stories that are handed down from generation to generation. We call these stories 'oral histories'. Many of the books about bushrangers are based on these 'oral histories' – they are written versions of stories that were told a long time ago and passed down from one person to the next. And with each telling, someone has forgotten a detail, or invented a detail, or left out one fact, or misheard another. That is why some of the stories differ.

I didn't want to tell the *legends* of the bushrangers; I wanted to tell the *truth*. But how do we know the truth? The answer is to look at the *evidence* critically – to think about which sources of information we can trust and which sources to be wary of. In general, *primary sources* are more reliable than *secondary sources*. Primary sources are original materials that have not been altered – for instance, photos and documents like birth certificates, jail records and police reports. Secondary sources are information sources that build upon or comment on primary sources. Generally, they have been written sometime after the event. They include books, movies and internet sites. In my books I have included lots of images of and references to a range of sources, both primary and secondary. Where there's a discrepancy, I've generally relied on the primary source rather than the secondary.

Be careful, though; primary sources are not *always* reliable – after all, people can lie! Remember that these bushrangers were criminals who were trying to keep one step ahead of the police. They *wanted* to confuse the authorities. They used false names and told lies to save their own skins. Sometimes this false information was written on official documents like jail records or even marriage and death records. So it is not always possible to know the whole truth, but understanding how reliable sources are and being able to examine evidence critically *will* bring us closer to it.



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This is an important skill to have. It may not matter to us now whether Fred Ward really died in the shoot-out in Uralla in 1870. But in a world in which we are bombarded with information via the Internet, it *does* matter that you have the skills to sort out fact from fiction. That's why the ability to evaluate sources critically is one of the most important skills you can learn today. It's a vital part of making good decisions.

A final word: many storytellers present the bushrangers' lives as glamorous and full of adventure, and the outlaws themselves as heroes. The reality was quite different. In colonial times, many poor people resented and distrusted the authorities and sympathised with the bushrangers (which is another reason for the myths), but the fact is that they were often violent men who caused a good deal of suffering. However, times were harsh. Once a man embarked on a life of crime, it was very hard to turn back. I hope that these books will give you some idea of *why* and *how* each of these men became bushrangers.

Their stories are all very different and, in my opinion, all fascinating. There's really no need for the myths. The true stories are amazing enough!

Reading Responses – Australian Bushrangers Series

	Working with Words	Numeracy	Spatial skills	Body	Music and arts	Social	Own reflection	Environment
Knowledge – What do I remember?	<p>List the <i>primary sources</i> which can be found in one of the bushranger books you have read (eg. Photograph, news report)</p> <p>List 5 facts about a particular bushranger's life which has surprised you</p> <p>Create a mind map of information about the bushranger you have read about based on what you have read in the book</p>	<p>Using dates from your book, calculate how many years your bushranger spent involved in criminal activities</p> <p>Create a timeline outlining major events in the life of one of the bushrangers as told in the book</p>	<p>Create a story map outlining events in the book. You could use words and illustrations to show your ideas</p> <p>Draw or paint a picture of your favourite event in the story.</p>	<p>Look at how many of the people in the photos are all posing in a similar way. With a friend, pose and photograph a portrait of yourself in a similar pose which was used for photos in that era.</p> <p>Create a mime and perform an event from the book</p> <p>Use your face to create some emotions you may have felt when reading your book, or emotions portrayed by characters. You may choose to photograph these and write about the event which inspired your emotions</p>	<p>Are there any bush ballads or folk songs you can find which is about bushrangers?</p> <p>List the sounds that you would expect to hear if the text was to come alive</p>	<p>Join with a group to discuss what everyone thinks are the main events in the book</p> <p>Tell a partner 5 new things you have now learnt about Australian history after reading your book.</p>	<p>After each chapter , write about something you now know about the lives of the bushrangers</p> <p>Draw an illustration for your favourite part of the book.</p> <p>Did you know anything about Australian Bushrangers before reading the book? If so, create a mind map of your prior knowledge.</p>	<p>Are there any aspects of the book that refer to Australia's bush environment? If so draw an image or create a collage which represents the bush settings</p>



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	Working with Words	Numeracy	Spatial skills	Body	Music and arts	Social	Own reflection	Environment
Comprehension – what do I understand?	Retell the story of an interesting person from the book in your own words. You can rewrite this or share it verbally	Can you create a new or recreate an existing game or board game based on the book?	Create a bookmark which could be used to promote the book in your school library	Act out your favourite event from the book.	Choose your favourite part of the book and create sound effects. Record these with yourself reading from the book	Create a mini Multiple choice test based on the book	Create a diary entry describing how you felt when reading the book	Search online for any images of the characters, settings or events which could be included in the book. Try using Trove Pictures: http://trove.nla.gov.au/picture
	Word	Logic and Maths	Space and Vision	Body	Music	People	Self	Nature
Application – How do I apply my understanding?	Write a small persuasive argument which convinces your audiences that the use of primary sources makes the Bushranger series much more entertaining to read.	Create a map using information from your book. Choose a particular setting or context to use for your map. Make sure that your map includes all necessary features such as a title, scale etc	Create some items which you could use to retell your bushranger story to a younger audience.	Choose a character from the book and collect a series of items which you would intend to use for that character in a play or movie. Think about costume items etc. You may be able to research items online and create a list.	Write lyrics for a song which could be performed about a character, setting or event from the book.	Find someone who has read a different book from the bushranger series to you, discuss the similarities and differences between the two books	Think about some of the challenges the author may have faced when researching historical facts for the book. Write a list of what you think some of the challenges of researching history are.	What can you learn about Australia's environment from the book?



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	Working with Words	Numeracy	Spatial skills	Body	Music and arts	Social	Own reflection	Environment
Analysis – Can I organise my ideas?	Use a diagram to compare the differences between both “Captain Starlights” (Frank Pearson and Henry Readford)	Survey other students to determine who their favourite bushranger is. You may be able to publish your results in a chart or graph.	Imagine that the Bushranger series of books are to be published as a boxed set. Design the cover art for the boxed set.	You read about various hiding places used by characters in the Bushranger series. Find a spot in the classroom that would be a great place to hide. Photograph your hiding spot and explain why an adult could hide there.	Research which occasions/ events united people through music in the 1800s. Were there special songs/ dances/ activities for special occasions?	Ask other students why they would recommend these books to other people? Record their responses and evaluate whether their thoughts are similar to yours	Who from the book would you most like to meet and why? If you could spend a day with anyone from the book, what would you do and why?	Examine the drawings and illustrations of many buildings, streets and towns which are in the books. How do these places look different to today's modern streets and buildings?
	Word	Logic and Maths	Space and Vision	Body	Music	People	Self	Nature
Synthesis – Can I use old ideas in new ways?	Think of somebody outside of your class. Write a letter to them recommending the bushranger series of books	Create a scale to rank the Bushranger series of books. There might be rankings for historical accuracy, entertainment, actions etc	How do you feel about the cover artwork for an individual book or all of the series? Do you think it is better to have illustrations or a primary source such as a photo on the cover? Justify your response.	You can read about some very challenging escapes the bushrangers made to escape the police. What kind of physical strengths/skills would you need as a bushranger to successfully escape police?	When you are reading the books, which sounds come to mind? Horses galloping? Gunshots?’ Create a list of these sounds	How might the relatives of the bushrangers today feel about their ancestor's past? Would they be proud to have someone who is part of Australia's history?	Do you see these bushrangers as Villains or heroes? Do you approve of some of the choices they made? Write a reflection based on your responses.	Do you think there should be some sort of monument built somewhere to acknowledge this part of our history? Research a location which would be suitable for a monument. Some examples of monuments may be found here: http://www.monumentaustralia.org.au/



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	Working with Words	Numeracy	Spatial skills	Body	Music and arts	Social	Own reflection	Environment
Designing and Creating – What can I now do with what I have learnt?	<p>Create a webpage about one of the Bushrangers. You may choose to create links to biographical information and primary sources</p> <p>Here is an example of a website about Captain Starlight (Frank Pearson): http://www.starlightjan.esmith.com/</p>	<p>Create a table and list the amounts of money stolen by some bushrangers in one column and in another column list the amounts of rewards offered for the bushrangers. Now convert the amounts from pounds to dollars</p>	<p>On a map of Australia, mark the locations of all of the towns listed in the bushranger series. You may create a key so that certain colours represent the travels of certain bushrangers.</p>	<p>Write a script and produce, film and edit a TV advertisement for the Bushranger series</p>	<p>Watch some videos which feature bush dancing. With your class, learn and participate in a dance from the bushranger era</p>	<p>In a group, recreate a Newspaper edition based on the time and era of one of the bushrangers from the series. Use primary and secondary sources from the books to influence your news articles, images, advertising etc.</p> <p>Some examples of old-fashioned newspapers may be found here: https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper</p>	<p>Send the author an email asking any questions you have about the book, you may choose to attach or scan one of the activities you have completed.</p> <p>Websites for sending a message: http://www.janesmithauthor.com/ Or http://www.starlightjan.esmith.com/</p>	<p>Identify a location in your local area which may be a useful and appropriate setting for a TV series based on the bushranger books. Think about historic areas and buildings in your district alongside the natural environment.</p>

Based on Bloom Taxonomy, Gardners Multiple Intelligences and De Bono's Six hats



Australian Bushrangers Series Name _____

Working with Maps

Throughout the Australian Bushrangers Series, maps have been used to help the reader have a greater understanding of the lives and events of those people featured in the book.

Informative maps contain the following features:

- Border
- Orientation
- Legend
- Title
- Scale
- Source

1. Examine the map of the Gold Escort Robbery Site on page 26 in the Ben Hall Book.

What is the **purpose** of this map?

2. Who would use this map? Why?

3. What information **can't** be found on the map?

Australian Bushranger Series

Name _____

Examining Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary Sources are items which are from or were created during the time period being studied. Letters, newspaper articles, photographs, written records, journals, clothing and personal belongings can be used by historians to draw conclusions and investigate the past.

Secondary Sources are items about a particular time in history which were created sometime later. Items such as reference books, textbooks, documentaries, Tv programs, and websites are used by historians to learn about what others have learnt about the time, place or event they are examining.

1. Identifying Sources

The images below are all of **Primary Sources**.

Justify in the table why these sources would be useful to examine if you were investigating the history of Australian bushrangers.

Image 1
(Captain
Moonlite, page
62)

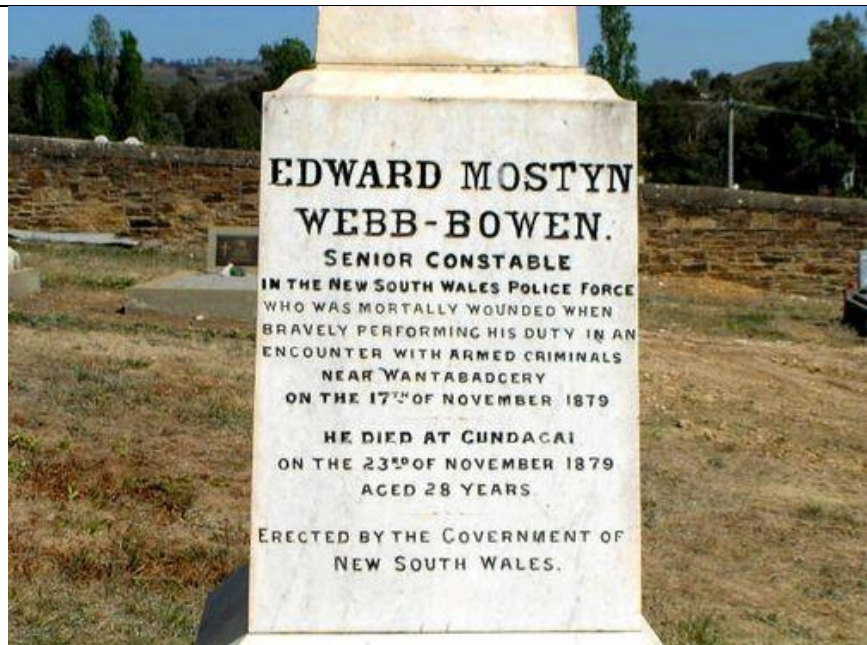


Image of Constable Webb-Bowen's grave, from Monuments Australia

Image 2
(Ben Hall, page 44)



William Street, Bathurst, early 1870s.
From the State Library of NSW

Image 3
(Captain Starlight, page 23)

5 21 8

Name *"Frank Pearson, alias Rutherford"* No. *2574*
alias Doctor Pearson

Date when Portrait was taken, *6th February 1873.*

Native place *London*
Year of birth *1837*
Arrived in { Ship *Not known*
Colony { Year *1866*
Trade or occupation { *Doctor*
previous to conviction {
Religion *Roman Catholic*
Education, degree of *Rx. IV*
Height { *5* feet *9 1/4* inches.
Weight { On committal *180*
in lbs. { On discharge
Colour of hair *Dark Brown*
Colour of eyes *Brown*
Marks or special features:— *Two*
Bullet wounds on right
arm, also on the groin
and hip, and on the
right shoulder, left
arm covered with tattooing
Sailor and flag aloft
right wrist

Where and when tried { *Bathurst G. Dely*
6 May 1869
Offence *Murder*
Sentence *Death commuted*
to Labor for life first
Remarks:— *3 years in prison*

(No. of previous Portrait *Had 18 2574*)

CRIMINAL HISTORY AND REMARKS:—

Frank Pearson's gaol record from Darlinghurst Gaol, 1873
From NSW State Archives

2. Selecting Sources

The National Library of Australia's TROVE website can be accessed via the URL below.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

This website assists many historians in their research as it is an online search engine which helps you find content about Australia's history from many Australian libraries, museums and archives.

1. Access the Trove site and use the keyword search to search the name of a person, place or event from Australia's past.
2. Create a list of the items which you find through your search. Did you find a newspaper report? Photo?

My Keyword _____

My Findings are:

Working with Archives to find sources

Examine the list of sources which are included in the back of the Australian Bushrangers books.

These are located near the index in the back.

1. Where did the author find most of her information?

2. Providing the source list as a guide, write an example of one **Secondary Source** which was used in the Author's research.
