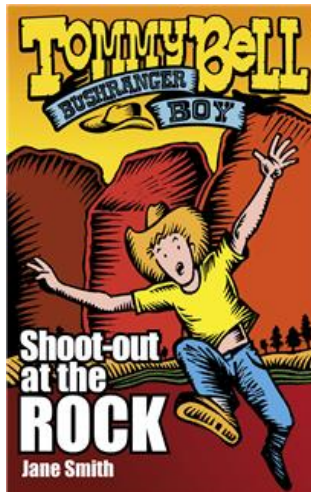


Teaching Notes for Tommy Bell Bushranger Boy – *Shoot Out At the Rock.*

Author: Jane Smith

Teaching notes by Rebecca Crichton



Summary

Tommy Bell is sent to stay with grandparents as a consequence for poor behaviour at school. Tommy expects to be spending his school holidays working hard on the farm but rather unexpectedly discovers himself travelling back in time as a result of a special find in a cave encountered whilst out riding a horse on his grandparent's farm.

The narrative travels forwards and backwards in time as Tommy has several encounters with Fred Ward (AKA Captain Thunderbolt) during the 1860's setting of his Grandparent's region and community.

Tommy feels somewhat conflicted as he gradually befriends Captain Thunderbolt, being both concerned and empathetic for the bushranger's plight whilst also feeling that Captain Thunderbolt's actions are wrong. This reveals to young readers the long time Australian argument concerning whether or not Australian Bushrangers take their place in history as heroes, villains or somewhat victims of circumstance.

Shoot-out at the Rock is the first book in the Tommy Bell Bushranger 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
- Comparison of city and country life in Australia
- The roles and relationships between extended family members
- Comparison of rural communities in the past and present.
- The importance of local knowledge in a region's history
- Adventure



Curriculum Links

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 signaled 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 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 this 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 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.
- As students discover new words, create a running glossary list
- Choose words from within the text to include in spelling lists.

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
- Compose a simple email to a classmate, recommending why they might enjoy the story
- Create an advertising poster which could be displayed in a bookstore which would persuade readers to purchase the book.
- Rewrite the shoot-out where Tommy first encounters Captain Thunderbolt from Captain Thunderbolt's point of view.

Chapter Summaries and Comprehension Questions

Chapter 1

After becoming engrossed in a book about bushrangers whilst being kept in at lunch, Tommy is late to the tuckshop on Donut day (of all days!) As a result, Tommy reacts and his actions get him in to big trouble. He arrives home from school to discover that his parents are very upset to hear about the incident at school.

1. Why did Mrs O'Grady keep Tommy in at lunch?
2. What special day was it at school?
3. Explain what Tommy tried to do in order to get a donut after the tuckshop was shut?
4. Suggest a better way for Tommy to have reacted to Martin refusing to sell Tommy a donut
5. How would you react if you had discovered that you had missed Donut Day?
6. Identify how Tommy's parents found out about the incident at school.
7. Describe how Tommy's parents felt about Tommy's behaviour
8. Imagine that you are Tommy. Write a letter to Martin apologising and explaining your behaviour.

Chapter 2

Tommy's parents reveal to him that as a punishment for his poor behaviour that he will be spending the school holidays helping his grandparents at their farm. Tommy is rather unimpressed by this.

1. Which three things was Tommy worried about missing the most over the school holidays while he was away working on the farm?
2. What promise did Tommy make to his parents in an attempt to get out of going to the farm?
3. List the adjectives used to describe how Tommy was feeling as he had the discussion with his parents
4. Explain why Tommy felt that this punishment was unfair
5. What kind of work do you predict Tommy will have to do at the farm?
6. Can you think of a different punishment for Tommy?



Chapter 3

Tommy arrives at his grandparent's farm and is pleasantly surprised to discover that he quite likes it. We are introduced to a central character in the story, Combo the horse, alongside a significant setting in the story, a strange cave in which Tommy makes an even stranger discovery – an old hat that unbeknown to Tommy, holds time travelling powers.

1. What was the name of the horse Grandad gave Tommy?
2. Based on the description in the chapter, draw a picture of what the cave Tommy discovered looked like.
3. Describe what the hat Tommy found looked like
4. List the information Grandpa told Tommy about Captain Thunderbolt.
5. In which time period was Captain Thunderbolt a bushranger?
6. At the end of the chapter you read that something strange happens when Tommy sneaks out to the creek at night. Predict what you think will happen.

Chapter 4

Tommy travels back in time and coincidentally finds himself face to face with Captain Thunderbolt himself. After being initially concerned as he witnesses a shoot-out at the rock, Tommy finds himself intrigued and in awe of Fred Ward. As the chapter unfolds, Tommy discovers more about Fred's life as Tommy and he set up camp for the night.

1. Confused, Tommy discovers that he has somehow travelled back to the 1860s. What around him had changed since he went back in time?
2. What does the saying "Bail up" mean?
3. Describe what Fred Ward looked like
4. Where on his body was Fred shot?
5. Explain why bushrangers were so interested in stealing the mail
6. What was Cockatoo Island?
7. Guess how Tommy would have felt at night time when he realised he had to sleep outside on the ground.



Chapter 5

It is with some relief that Tommy discovers that he has woken up again safe and sound in his own bed – did he dream his encounter with Fred Ward? As Tommy goes about his work at the farm, He asks his grandfather more questions about Captain Thunderbolt. He is intrigued by the local knowledge his Grandfather has. Tommy gets in the Ute to travel to town with Granddad. Suddenly he travels in time again...

1. What type of farm work did Tommy have to complete the morning after his adventure back in time?
2. What year had the shootout at Thunderbolt's Rock occurred?
3. How did Tommy feel when he heard that Thunderbolt survived the shooting?
4. Do you think Tommy is starting to enjoy his school holiday at the farm? Justify.
5. In your own words, describe how Captain Thunderbolt got his name.
6. Research Thunderbolt's Rock. Does it exist today?
7. Predict why you think everything went blurry for Tommy when he put the hat back on.

Chapter 6

In this chapter, Tommy encounters Thunderbolt once again and after witnessing a robbery, Tommy finds him challenging Thunderbolt about his actions. Tommy has well and truly settled in to life at his grandparents' farm and finds himself anticipating his next adventure with Captain Thunderbolt.

1. Create a list of how the town was different in 1863
2. Why does Tommy feel frustrated by Captain Thunderbolt's decisions to steal money from people?
3. Explain why you think Tommy might finally choose to tell his grandparents how he feels for stealing the donut from Martin?
4. What is the gift that Tommy's grandparents decide to give him?
5. Imagine that you are Tommy and write a diary entry describing what happened when Captain Thunderbolt stopped the wagon you were travelling in?
6. Predict what might happen the next time Tommy travels back in time



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Character Profile

Tommy Bell

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



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Bushranger's Shopping List

Imagine that you are a bushranger like Fred Ward (Captain Thunderbolt). What sort of supplies and equipment would you need to be a successful bushranger?

Write a list of items that you think you would need below.
