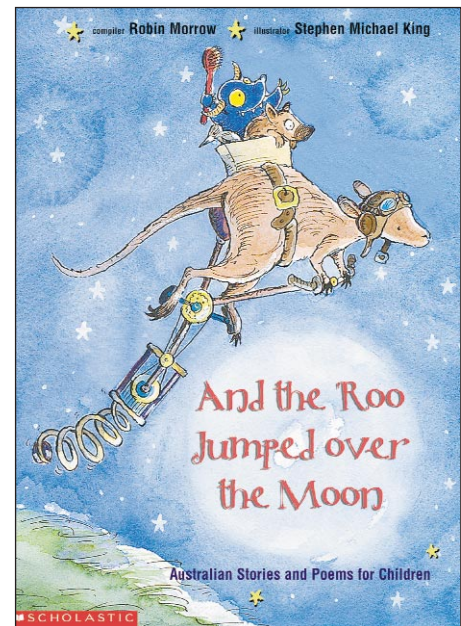


And the 'Roo Jumped Over the Moon

Compiled by Robin Morrow

Illustrated by Stephen Michael King



◀ The Back Story ▶ with Robin Morrow

What made you decide to compile a book of poems and short stories?

I spent many years as a children's bookseller and I noticed that adults liked to buy handsome-looking gift books for children. But most available ones came from overseas. This made me determined to make a collection of solely Australian stories and poems, both for the sake of young readers here, and also for those who wanted to send a copy (boastfully) as a gift to a child in another country. A bonus was that the book then became eligible for the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) awards, being shortlisted in the year of publication. The book has been so popular – people are attracted by Stephen's gentle, amusing illustrations, and after they get to know the contents, often buy copies for other families. I love hearing of families that read aloud from the book.

Are these types of texts important in developing a child's reading?

Yes, I am sure there is a stage when it is good to dip into a collection of short pieces. And some states produce a school magazine for people in school to enjoy, full of short articles and items. These provide good reading practice. More importantly, they help readers understand their own developing taste, so they can look for more material by a particular author or in a particular style.

How did you choose the contents for this book from the wealth of poems and stories 'out there'?

Did you have certain criteria?

It was very hard to choose. I spent many hours searching through libraries, but ended up with most of the items coming from my own collection of Australian books! I wanted some from the early days of writing in Australia, and some that were more modern – and everything needed to be worth re-reading. And if you read the book from beginning to end, you will find the arrangement is important too: there are themes that develop from item to item. Poetry is so important – in a few short words a poet can make you laugh, cry, feel and think.

◀ with Stephen Michael King

Why did you choose to illustrate this book?

The Publisher really liked my light and breezy style, and it seemed like a fun book to illustrate. Most of the stories have a full-page illustration at the start of the story while the poems generally have something a bit smaller. The whole book only took six weeks to illustrate, which is very fast for this type of thing – the deadlines were tight!

What materials did you use?

Ink and watercolours. I love using them because they make it hard to plan exactly how the finished picture is going to look. There are surprises! There are watermarks and the dipping nib makes the ink run slightly, and it can also run out of ink. You can't completely control the result so there can be imperfections but they are generally beautiful ones. Great fun!

You seem to use a lot of blue. Is this your favourite colour?

I do like blue but my 'secret' colour is brown, as it earths the illustration. Too many bold colours are unreal and unnatural.

Which is your favourite poem/story and illustration in the book?

My favourite piece of writing is 'A Short, Summery Thin Thong Song' by Max Fatchen (page 89). The rhythm is great and it's fun trying to wrap your tongue around the words. My favourite illustration is in 'The Sock Funeral' by Gwendda McKay (page 24). I like having characters looking down to investigate things on the ground and then realising how interesting these things are.

About the compiler: Robin Morrow

I was a bookworm as a child. I recently unpacked some books that were stored away from when I was about eight years old and I am amazed at how much of their content I still know off by heart. Favourites included Australian classics such as books by May Gibbs and Peg Maltby but I also loved Grimm and Andersen tales, and stories set in exotic places. I loved poetry and taught myself many from *A Child's Garden of Verses* and some that now appear in *And the 'Roo Jumped Over the Moon*.

About the illustrator: Stephen Michael King

I was, and still am for that matter, a wannabe hippie. I have always loved art; it's a great form of (visual) communication and just as important as written language. I've worked in children's libraries, as an animator for Walt Disney, and I now write and illustrate my own books (nominated six times in the CBCA awards and in the American 'Pick of the List') as well as illustrating for other writers. My own favourite book is *Millie, Jack and the Dancing Cat* while my favourite book by someone else is *Mr Magnolia* by Quentin Blake.

Teaching Ideas ✓

Before Reading ✓

- Ask students to bring in books of nonsense rhymes, nursery rhymes and short stories from home. As a class, go to the school library and use the library catalogue or computer system to access similar books. As well as finding relevant books, this will also reinforce the purpose of catalogues and how to retrieve books from the library shelves. Display the books on a table in the classroom and give students the opportunity to browse through them.
- Discuss nonsense poems and nursery rhymes with students. Are nonsense poems different to nursery rhymes? Can students name some nursery rhymes? Have they heard of 'The Cat and the Fiddle'? Can anyone recite it? What might this poem have in common with *And the 'Roo Jumped Over the Moon*? Perhaps this is a coincidence. What do students think?
- Have students ever read any short stories? Did they like these stories? What might be some of the purposes for compiling a book of short stories? List answers on the board. Refer to these answers after reading the book to see if students agree with their original ideas. They might also like to add some new thoughts.

■ Have students read the title and blurb of this book. Without looking at the contents, can students name any Australian short stories and poems? List these on the board. Then ask students to go through the contents page to see what is in this book.

Activities

Cracking the cover

The publishers have decided that they do not want a picture of a kangaroo jumping over the moon. They want something that is completely different. The only demand is that the cover and title reflect the Australian content. Imagine that you have been asked to create a cover and title for a book of Australian short stories and poems.

Show your completed cover to the class, explaining why you chose this title and illustration. What medium did you use to illustrate the cover and why? Display your completed cover on the classroom wall.

Aussie animals

Revisit the title, 'And the 'Roo Jumped Over the Moon'. How might other Aussie animals get to the other side of the moon? Think of some 'nonsense' things, and then read them out to the class. (eg And the brown snake slithered under the moon; And the koala climbed up the moon.) Read your nonsense titles out to class members, and then enjoy listening to other ideas.

During reading ✓

■ Use a variety of reading methods with students during the reading of this book. For example, read some parts aloud; have students read some poems and stories quietly to themselves; encourage students to take the book home so they can enjoy reading some of the poems and stories out loud; divide students into small groups for shared reading.

■ Before starting the book, remind students that all of the poems and stories are by Australian writers. Read the first poem in the book to students. Do they think that Lilydale is a real place or is a name used for poetic purposes (such as rhythm)? Are there any clues that this poem might be set in Australia? (Yes, the billy-can.) What is a billy-can used for?

■ Before allowing students to read the book on their own or with peers, reinforce the importance of reading with enthusiasm as well as being articulate. Discuss the purpose of 'emphasis'. The best way to do this is by reading a segment aloud. For example, read 'The Bathroom Bunyip' (page 11) to students. Read it in a variety of ways: bored, quickly, slowly, and by emphasising certain words or phrases ('The BUNYIP'S had a bath; The bunyip's had a BATH etc). Encourage students to see the importance of thinking about the words as they read them and about the audience they are reading to. Do they want to entertain the audience, educate the audience, or put the audience to sleep? Allow students to try experimenting with their voice and tone as they take it in turns to read the poem. Discuss which methods are more effective and why.

■ As students read the book, ask them to note down unusual words or words they like to say aloud, for example, Hippolottamuss and Thomas-across-the-street (page 13) and gobblegrass (page 40). These words can be discussed once everyone has read the book. What effect do they have on the story?

■ In his 'interview', the illustrator Stephen Michael King mentions that his favourite text in the book is 'A Short, Summery Thin Thong Song' by Max Fatchen (page 89) while his favourite illustration is in 'The Sock Funeral' by Gwendda McKay (page 24). Ask students what their favourite segment of the book is, as well as the illustration they like the most. Ask them to explain their reasons for their choices (remembering to point out that there are no wrong or right answers as long as the answers are justified).

Activities

Alliteration lives

Have you ever heard of alliteration? It is the repetition of a word or sound, for example Libby Hathorn in 'There and Back' (page 26) uses the words 'gnawing and gnashing', and 'shudder and shake'. Can you think of any other alliteration to describe a train? Present your ideas to the class. Try to do this imaginatively. For example, you could draw a train on a large piece of paper and then write the words around it. Completed work could be displayed around the room.

Rhyme time

Not all poems have to rhyme but many in this book do. For example, in 'Gardening Day' (page 46) rhyming words include 'hedge and edge', 'dirt and hurt' and 'worms and turns'. Examine other poems to find rhyming words. With a partner, list as many rhyming words as you can in ten minutes. Display your words around the room. These might come in handy when you write a poem or short story in the following activity.

Mine is fine

Many of the poems are about something really simple: flies (page 23), socks (page 24), hills (page 65). Work with a partner to write and illustrate your own poem. Decide the genre (humour, fantasy, nonsense, realistic etc), setting and characters. You will also have to decide how you will work together: will one person write and the other illustrate? Or will you share both tasks?

When completed, read your text to the class. When everyone has completed their work, the segments could be compiled into a class book of poetry – once the order of material has been decided!

Nobble that gobbler

'The Gobblers' (page 39) is a humorous story about a man whose lawnmower has broken down – and then one disaster, or so-called good idea, leads to another. Imagine that you have been asked to invent a very creative thing that will replace lawnmowers. You might like to build your creation out of recycled materials, or you might like to draw and label it. Show class members your brilliant idea. Will it cause any problems like the gobblegrass did? Allow class members to constructively discuss your invention.

After reading ✓

■ Once students have read some or all of this book, come together as a class to discuss it. Encourage students to be as honest as they can and to justify any comments. Generate a discussion by asking questions such as:

- Do you like a book that is filled with lots of different stories and poems?
- What are some of the benefits of reading a book like this? (You can read different styles and find out about different authors.)
- Would you like to read any more stories or poems from these writers?
- Which writers did you like the best? Why is this?
- If, for example, you really liked the poem 'Statue' by Sally Odgers (page 90) how would you go about finding more poems and stories by her?
- Do you think that there was a good selection of stories and poems? Would you change anything?
- Have you got any questions that you would like to ask Robin Morrow, the compiler, or Stephen Michael King, the illustrator?

Activities

Who's who

As you know, Australians have written all of these poems and stories. Choose one of the writers and research to find out more about them (eg when were they born, where did they live, what else have they written, interesting facts). Prepare a report about this person and present it to class members. Remember to make your report as interesting and as lively as possible.

BEHIND THE BOOK TEACHER'S NOTES

Reading list

Choose at least three of the writers from this book and go to the library to find at least three more books or poems they have written. Write down the titles and when they were written. Discuss your answers with class members. Do some writers have more books/poems than others? Were some easier to find than others? Why might this be?

Playing with words

With two or three friends, create a short play from one of these stories or (longer) poems. You will have to create a script. Decide on roles, props, clothing, music etc. Allow plenty of time for rehearsal before presenting your play to the class (or entire grade). And remember, have fun!

Australia

What do you think of when you think of Australia? Make a mind map by putting 'Australia' in the middle and then writing all the words you associate with Australia around it. You might like to add pictures. Be as creative as you can. When you have completed your mind map, compare it with other members of the class.

Literature study

To encourage students to read, and to increase their enjoyment and understanding of this book, discuss the following questions. Students might like to add some questions of their own.

- What do you think of the book's title? Where might the idea for the title have come from? Why might the compiler have used the word 'Roo'?
- What is the common element that all of the stories and poems in this book have?
- Do you think that it matters how the poems and stories are ordered? Why do you think they are arranged in this way? Would you change the order?
- Do you know what the word 'genre' means? Different genres include fantasy, humour, realistic and science fiction. What are some of the different genres used in this book?
- How do the illustrations affect the overall look of the book? Do you think that these illustrations complement and add to the text? What might the effect be if the illustrations were darker or had a more serious tone?