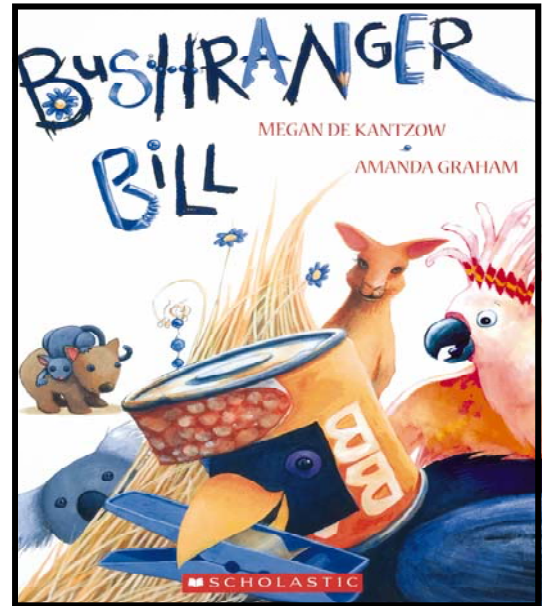


TEACHER'S BOOK NOTES

Bushranger Bill

Written by Megan de Kantzow
Illustrated by Amanda Graham



Synopsis

Bushranger Bill loves Tourmaline Lil. Being a bower bird, and a romantic bush poet, he brings her gifts of blue flowers and the blue things he has found in the bush. They were going to live happily ever after - that is, until Captain Bluff came to town. When he see Tourmaline, he decides that he wants her, and so he kidnaps her and locks her up in his bower. Bushranger creeps up to Tourmaline Lil's prison and sings her a song, promising to set her free. A mysterious stranger comes to town wearing a mask and carrying what looks like a big bag of treasure. Captain Bluff can't resist, and stages an ambush, bailing up the mysterious stranger. Bushranger Bill throws away his disguise and upends his swag on Captain Bluff's head. The sweethearts are reunited and live happily ever after.

Megan de Kantzow explains her inspiration for the story like this: 'On a visit to outback NSW, I was shown a bower bird's bower. Spotted bower birds collect white things like bones, anything shiny like bullets or cutlery, and some red things. Strangely enough, a few months later, a visitor to my parents' farm in the Blue Mountains found a satin bird's bower. It was full of blue things he had collected from the bush and surrounding gardens: pegs, prize flowers, feathers, even broken glass and plastic lids. Thinking about their thieving ways, I remembered Tom Robert's painting Bailed Up, and this story was the result.'

Writing Style

Bushranger Bill is a story written in an Australian ballad style. Although it is not rendered in verse, it has a mock-heroic quality and a strong sense of fair play and poetic justice. The brave and daring rescue by Bushranger Bill of his sweetheart Tourmaline Lil from the evil clutches of Captain Bluff

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should appeal to young children, and there are resonances in the story that will appeal to the adults who read it to them (such as the reference to Ned Kelly's last words).

Points for Teachers

In the words of author Megan de Kantzow, 'Bill is a satin bower bird, Captain Bluff is a spotted bower bird. Both species construct an avenue bower with arched walls made of twigs and paint the walls with macerated berries and such. All bower birds are great mimics. The dancing girls are rosellas. Major Mitchell is, of course, a cockatoo.' Students could be shown pictures of the real birds that are the basis for the author's characters, and compare them with Amanda Graham's artwork. The book could be used as an introduction to Australian birds. Older students could be asked to develop a character of their own based on a real bird or animal.

Illustrator Amanda Graham dedicates *Bushranger Bill* to her friends 'Frog, Mouse and Gecko'. Children could be asked to point out these characters wherever they appear on each double page spread.

The title type for *Bushranger Bill* is written in an alphabet invented by Amanda Graham. Older students might like to think about how they might create their own alphabet based on a theme, in this case the theme of objects found in the bush.