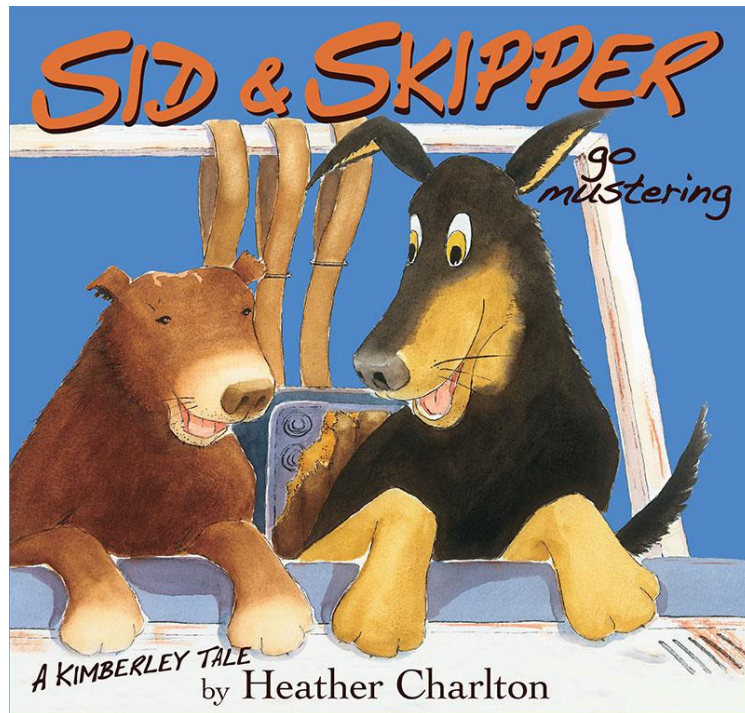


Teaching Notes

Sid & Skipper Go Mustering



Written and illustrated by Heather Charlton

Backroom Press

<http://backroompress.com.au/index.php/sid-skipper-go-mustering/>

Synopsis

Sid is an old dog, living and working on a Kimberley cattle station. He is very experienced at working with cattle and enjoys his position as 'Top Dog'. Sid lives and works with a younger dog named Skipper, who is a boisterous puppy and tends to get in Sid's way. One day, when the dogs are helping with the muster, Sid is tossed by an angry bull into a flooded river. Now, it is Skipper who comes to the rescue – saving Sid from drowning as well as mustering the cattle across the swollen river.

These notes have been written to help teachers use *Sid & Skipper Go Mustering* as a teaching resource for Early Childhood & Junior Primary classrooms (Kindergarten – Year 2), with Australian Curriculum, English (version 8.1) links for years 1 & 2. They are also written assuming students have little knowledge of station life in the Kimberley.

About the Author & Illustrator

The following is taken from the Backroom Press website and was written by the author herself:

'Born in Melbourne, and with a background in a variety of art media, I have followed a lifelong creative pathway, which has led me to travel extensively (armed with brushes and canvas) through outback Australia.

I spent time in the Kimberley where I met the real Sid and Skipper, who gave me inspiration to write their stories, and in recent years I have been engaged as Manager of an Indigenous Art Centre in remote Western Australia. My creative pursuits continue.'

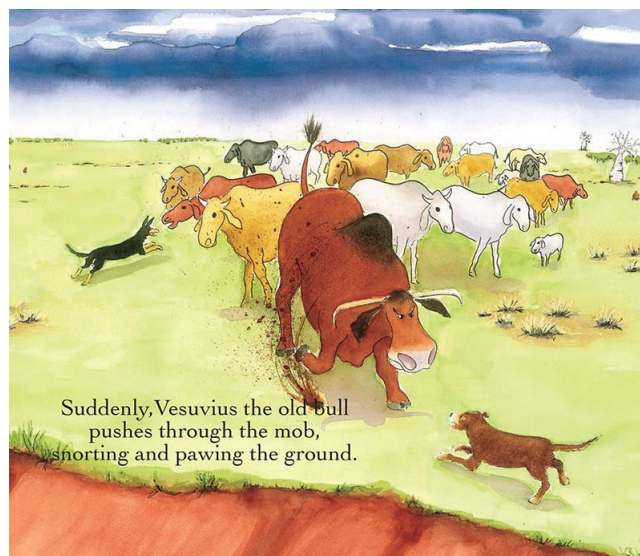
<http://backroompress.com.au/index.php/meet-heather/>

Writing Style

Sid & Skipper Go Mustering is written in the third person, present tense. Being in the present tense is somewhat unusual for a narrative; they tend to be written in the past tense. The use of present tense lends a slightly colloquial, informal feel to the story, which is worth discussing with students. This is balanced by literary features throughout the text such as alliteration, rhyme, repetition¹ and onomatopoeia.

Themes

- Life on remote cattle stations
- Experience versus youth (hierarchy)
- A 'weak' character helping a 'strong' character (links with other narratives such as the Aesop's Fable, *The Lion and the Mouse*).
- Friendship and loyalty



¹Australian Curriculum, English, Year 1: Understand patterns of [repetition](#) and contrast in simple texts ([ACELA1448](#))

Text structure

Sid & Skipper Go Mustering follows a typical narrative structure of orientation, complication and resolution.²

Orientation

The book begins with an introduction to one of the principal characters – Sid. Sid is introduced as an experienced, reliable, hard-working dog.³ This contrasts with our second main character – Skipper – who is a young, boisterous puppy. Immediately, the images of Skipper on pages 10-11 portray him as immature and inexperienced, which is confirmed by the fact that, ‘At work, he’s always in the way’ (p.12). Heather Charlton uses her character-filled illustrations to emphasise the contrasting natures of the two dogs – Sid is stocky and ‘sensible’-looking, whilst Skipper is a gangly puppy with wide, slightly crazed-looking eyes.⁴ This is a contrast emphasised throughout the book’s illustrations – for example, on the back cover Sid is sitting calmly in the back of the ute whilst Skipper is standing up, looking over-excited. Again, on page 24, Sid sits faithfully by Stockman Jack’s side whilst Skipper is in the background, furiously digging for something. Students might enjoy guessing what Skipper is trying to unearth so enthusiastically!

Complication

Nowadays on most cattle stations helicopters are used for mustering as this is one of the most efficient ways to muster cattle on stations that cover such huge areas. But when bad weather sets in, Stockman Jack decides that it is too risky for the helicopters (often called choppers) to do the job. This means that the stockmen must rely on the dogs to muster the cattle in the absence of the helicopters. It is this event that leads to the main complication of the story – when Vesuvius the bull tosses Sid into the flooded river and he almost drowns. This event brings the added complication of there being no way (without the helicopters or Sid) to muster the cattle across the river.

Resolution

Just when the reader thinks that Sid is about to drown, an unlikely hero comes to the rescue – Skipper. Throughout the book we have been led to believe that Skipper is only good at getting in the way of real work; now, the tables are turned and it is Skipper who shows courage and loyalty in rescuing Sid. On page 36, Heather Charlton cleverly uses her illustrations to relieve some of the tension by having Skipper perform CPR on Sid, reminding us that this is a book for younger children, whom the author would not want to frighten. Skipper then resolves the initial complication of moving the cattle without helicopters; this shows that in fact he is much more capable than previously suggested.

² Australian Curriculum, English, Year 1: Understand that the purposes texts serve shape their structure in predictable ways ([ACELA1447](#)); Year 2: Understand that different [types of texts](#) have identifiable [text](#) structures and [language features](#) that help the [text](#) serve its purpose ([ACELA1463](#))

³ Australian Curriculum, English, Year 1: Discuss how authors [create](#) characters using language and images ([ACELT1581](#)); Year 2: Identify visual representations of characters’ actions, reactions, speech and thought processes in narratives, and consider how these images add to or contradict or multiply the meaning of accompanying words ([ACELA1469](#))

⁴ Australian Curriculum, English, Year 1: Compare different kinds of images in [narrative](#) and informative texts and discuss how they contribute to meaning ([ACELA1453](#))

Further Teaching Suggestions

Students could:

- ✓ Retell the story of *Sid & Skipper Go Mustering* in their own words
- ✓ Explore the use of illustrations in the book:
 - to build characters... How does Heather Charlton make Sid look like a good working dog with plenty of experience? How does she make Skipper seem silly and annoying?
 - to show the relationships between characters and how these relationships change (e.g. Sid will not share his bone on pages 10 & 23, but after Skipper rescues him, Sid is happily sharing his bone with Skipper in the last illustration of the book).
 - to set the story on a cattle station (e.g. stockman, fences, tin sheds), and specifically in the Kimberley (e.g. boab trees, red dust, termite mounds, spinifex, red hills).
 - to entertain readers. Many of the illustrations are deliberately drawn to make readers laugh and enjoy the story, often by making the dogs act like humans (e.g. Sid feeding a calf with a bottle, Sid standing up and looking like a head stockman, Skipper performing CPR on Sid).
- ✓ Learn about the use of literary devices such as alliteration, repetition, rhyme and onomatopoeia and try to use these in their own writing:
 - *Alliteration*: 'Sid & Skipper', 'welding & wiring', 'fuelling & firing up', 'paddles & puffs'.
 - *Repetition*: 'paddles and puffs and puffs and paddles'.
 - *Rhyme*: 'Out in the bush bull buggies race – ringers keep a cracking pace', 'running and yapping, barking and snapping'.
 - *Onomatopoeia*: 'THWACK!'
- ✓ Discuss anthropomorphism – the attribution of human characteristic and behaviours to the animals in the book. This is very common in children's literature, especially picture books, so the class could compile a list of books where anthropomorphism is used.
- ✓ Write about an 'odd' couple that become firm friends despite their differences. These differences could then be reflected in illustrations of these characters.
- ✓ Compare *Sid & Skipper Go Mustering* with other texts where a 'weak' character helps a 'strong' character against expectations – e.g. the Aesop's fable *The Lion and the Mouse*, *Me and My Dad* (Sally Morgan and Ezekiel Kwaymullina), *Rose Meets Mr Wintergarten* (Bob Graham).
- ✓ Discuss the structure of narrative texts and the importance of each stage for engaging readers, and apply this understanding to their own writing.
- ✓ Use a variety of graphic organisers to think about station life. For example, the class could set up a KWL chart about station life – what we **K**now, what we **W**ant to know and what we have **L**earnt. Another example could be to use a 'Y chart' to describe what students imagine station life looks, sounds and feels like.
- ✓ Research working dogs – it is possible to train dogs to do some pretty amazing things! Students could even record their own dog doing a clever trick and share it with the class, including explaining how the dog learnt to do the trick (link to procedural texts).

- ✓ Make connections with their own lives – maybe students have a younger brother or sister who can be annoying sometimes? Maybe a younger brother or sister has helped them out when there has been a complication in their lives?
- ✓ Discuss the interesting use of punctuation throughout the text, to support momentum and excitement:⁵
 - Ellipses (...)
 - Dashes (–)
 - Exclamation marks (!)
- ✓ Investigate text-specific vocabulary.⁶ Throughout the story, Heather Charlton uses vocabulary that is particular to life on a cattle station, which may be quite foreign to some readers. This vocabulary includes:
 - ‘working dog’ – as opposed to a pet dog.
 - ‘yard the cattle’ – in this sentence, yard is being used as a verb (process). Students are likely to have come across this word used only as a noun (participant).⁷ Students may also have a very different mental picture of what a ‘yard’ looks like if they have only experienced an urban environment.
 - ‘wildest bull’ – in Kimberley Kriol,⁸ the word ‘wild’ can mean both untamed and angry. Vesuvius is both of these – untamed and very angry that Sid is trying to round him up.
 - ‘drive the cattle out of the scrub’ – in this context, ‘to drive’ means to push/move.
 - ‘station hands’ – workers on a station.
 - ‘swags’ – a swag is a camping mattress, inside a canvas cover that is rolled up to make it easy to take out into the bush.
 - ‘Cookie packs the tuckerbox with smoko treats...’ – a tuckerbox is a good compound word to explore; ‘smoko’ is a word for a short break from work, called so because workers would often have a cigarette to accompany a quick snack.
 - ‘bull buggies’ – these are modified cars with an extended bull bar and often reinforced with steel plates, old tyres and pipes. These vehicles can be used to knock down a bull if necessary.⁹
 - ‘ringers’ – a word for horse-riding stockmen, who help to muster cattle by encircling them.
 - ‘the mob’ – used as a collective noun to describe the cattle, and a word commonly used in Kimberley Kriol.

⁵ Year 1: Recognise that different types of punctuation, including full stops, question marks and exclamation marks, signal sentences that make statements, ask questions, express emotion or give commands ([ACELA1449](#))

⁶ Australian Curriculum, English, Year 2: Understand the use of vocabulary about familiar and new topics and experiment with and begin to make conscious choices of vocabulary to suit [audience](#) and purpose ([ACELA1470](#))

⁷ Australian Curriculum, English, Year 1: Explore differences in words that represent people, places and things (nouns, including pronouns), happenings and states (verbs), qualities (adjectives) and details such as when, where and how (adverbs) ([ACELA1452](#))

⁸ ‘Kriol is a language spoken across the north of Australia, from WA into the Northern Territory and part of Queensland. For more information, see <http://www.klrc.org.au/kimberley-kriol/overview>

⁹ <http://www.abc.net.au/gnt/history/Transcripts/s1208041.htm>

Other relevant links to the Australian Curriculum, English

Year 1

- ✓ Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences ([ACELT1582](#))
- ✓ Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts ([ACELT1584](#))
- ✓ Compare different kinds of images in narrative and informative texts and discuss how they contribute to meaning ([ACELA1453](#))
- ✓ Express preferences for specific texts and authors and listen to the opinions of others ([ACELT1583](#))
- ✓ Recreate texts imaginatively using drawing, writing, performance and digital forms of communication ([ACELT1586](#))
- ✓ Innovate on familiar texts by using similar characters, repetitive patterns or vocabulary ([ACELT1832](#))
- ✓ Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours, showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions ([ACELY1656](#))
- ✓ Describe some differences between imaginative informative and persuasive texts ([ACELY1658](#))
- ✓ Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning about key events, ideas and information in texts that they listen to, view and read by drawing on growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features ([ACELY1660](#))

Year 2

- ✓ Identify aspects of different types of literary texts that entertain, and give reasons for personal preferences ([ACELT1590](#))
- ✓ Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways ([ACELT1591](#))
- ✓ Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and begin to analyse texts by drawing on growing knowledge of context, language and visual features and print and multimodal text structures ([ACELY1670](#))
- ✓ Recognise that capital letters signal proper nouns and commas are used to separate items in lists ([ACELA1465](#))
- ✓ Understand that simple connections can be made between ideas by using a compound sentence with two or more clauses usually linked by a coordinating conjunction ([ACELA1467](#))
- ✓ Understand that nouns represent people, places, concrete objects and abstract concepts; that there are three types of nouns: common, proper and pronouns; and that noun groups/phrases can be expanded using articles and adjectives ([ACELA1468](#))
- ✓ Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts ([ACELT1589](#))
- ✓ Innovate on familiar texts by experimenting with character, setting or plot ([ACELT1833](#))

- ✓ Discuss different texts on a similar topic, identifying similarities and differences between the texts (ACELY1665)
- ✓ Identify the audience of imaginative, informative and persuasive texts (ACELY1668)
- ✓ Create short imaginative, informative and persuasive texts using growing knowledge of text structures and language features for familiar and some less familiar audiences, selecting print and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose (ACELY1671)

