

CROSS-EYED JACK

Josie Montano
& Mary Serenc

Teacher's Notes
(written by Mary Serenc)

Cross-eyed Jack by Josie Montano and Mary Serenc in the Lothian Books Younger Readers series is a fast-paced mystery adventure with a ghostly twist about Jacko and his friends as they unexpectedly travel back in time to the days of bold bushrangers and gold fever.

Join the characters as they begin to uncover the mystery surrounding the lost Pigtail Nugget and piece together maps and clues left behind by bushranger Cross-Eyed Jack.

Amazing events unfold as they meet larger than life characters like the grumbling Constable McLachlan, the cranky principal, Cutthroat Cutler, the curious China man Mr. Wong and gold digger Charlie Kennedy with his tales of the Eureka Stockade.

Imagine being thrown into the local jail, going to school with the local kids, meeting the real Ned Kelly (as a kid!) and coming face to face with a gang of bumbling bushrangers. Such is life in a gold mining town in 1867.

Get caught up in the gold fever, the search for the nugget and the race for time as Jacko and his friends struggle to get back home to their own time.

Reading and Discussion

- As you read the book, you find there are many people interested in locating the Pigtail Nugget. Make a list of all the people interested in finding the nugget. Then explain what you think is each person's motivation/reason in wanting to find it.
- At the beginning of the book, Jacko thought the others in his film group were losers and vice versa. How did their views about each other change throughout the book?
- Jacko wanted to be the hero of this adventure. Do you think he really was? Why/why not?
- What part did the ghost of Cross-eyed Jack play in helping Jacko and his friends find the Pigtail Nugget?
- Did Cross-eyed Jack really have the last laugh? Why?
- What clues do the authors give to hint at Ned's true identity as the future bushranger Ned Kelly?
- On a number of occasions, Jacko compares Mr. Wong to Wally from *Where's Wally?* Why? When did Mr. Wong first appear to Jacko and the others?

Genre Study

A variety of genres are explored within this book. Use these text samples as starting points/examples for children's own writing.

- Epitaphs page 25-26
- News report page 21
- Script writing page 32 -34
- Text messaging page 35
- Rhyme page 44, 77,
- Wanted poster page 61
- Ballads/songs page 62,96,130,
- Maps and riddles page90-91,100-101,108-109,146-149,
- Diary/journal writing page 112-115
- Spooky stories page30-31,page19-20,

Ballads/folksongs

Examples of ballads/folksongs are shown throughout the book, however the wording has deliberately been changed or they are incomplete. Find the correct version of these ballads. Discuss the setting and meaning of the ballads. Find other popular Australian ballads/folksongs to listen to, learn or recite.

- The Wild Colonial Boy page 130
- Thunderbolt came from the Hawkesbury River page 62
- With My Swag All on my Shoulder page 96

Australian History

- The book mentions Ned Kelly, Dan Kelly and Captain Thunderbolt. Investigate and research these or other Australian bushrangers. Draw a timeline showing their life and times. Include date of birth, early life, family, education, how he became a bushranger, key events, how did they spend their final years, when did they die and how?
- Ask children to design their own wanted poster for a bushranger of their choice using the wanted poster on page 61 as an example.
- An epitaph is a commemorative inscription on a tomb. It also provides information about the person who has died. Read the three epitaphs on pages 25 and 26. List what you know about their names, ages, cause of death and any other information. If possible arrange an excursion to a historical cemetery in the local community. Copy some of the epitaphs. Research common names, family plots, causes of death. Draw some of the tombstone designs.
- In the book, we find that Mr. Wong was the Chinese digger who first discovered the Pigtail Nugget. Following the discovery of gold in Australia, people arrived from all over the world to try their luck. Research multiculturalism on the goldfields and in particular Chinese migration, settlement and influence.
- Read the chapter titled School Daze (p80) which describes a typical day at school in 1867. Draw up a comparison chart of schools past and present. Compare technology, teaching styles, discipline and punishment, subjects taught, classroom facilities. Read CamClub 2000 The Ghost of the Bell (by Josie Santomauro & Mary Serenc) for a more detailed story on schooling and life back in the 1900's.)
- Hold a heritage day at school – dress in costume, play traditional games such as hopscotch and marbles, try old fashioned handwriting and arithmetic, cook damper and display historical materials/old school readers.

Characters

- Make two lists: characters from the past and characters from the present.
- Who tells the story?
- Who is your favourite character? Why?
- Create character profiles for Jacko, Jas, Carla and Josh. Include personal descriptions, personality traits, skills, annoying habits, likes/dislikes.

Vocabulary

- Mr. Wong uses a number of Chinese proverbs in the story: page 76 “Talk no cook rice”, page 134 “Journey of thousand mile start with single step” page 139 “Wherever you go, go with your heart.” Explain the meaning of each of these proverbs. Have students write a proverb of their own.
- Jacko sometimes has trouble with his vocabulary. On page 12, he tries to think of a big word. He says ‘ indisposable’ then ‘ indespesable’. Which word was he really trying to think of? What does it mean?
- Phrases used by the children in the past were unfamiliar to Jacko and his friends. What do the following phrases mean?

1. I ain’t seen nuthin’ the likes of you. p45
2. Pleased to make your acquaintance. p46
3. ‘Tis not a laughing matter. p46
4. Shut ya gob.p47

How would you rephrase the above in today’s language?
Find words and phrases used by Jacko, Josh, Carla and Jas which would be strange to people living in the 1860’s? e.g. “Just a sec.”

Role Play

- Choose a scene from the story to act out. Ideal sections would be:
- Cross-Eyed Jack p38-48 (They travel back in time and try to make sense of where they are.)
- Jailbirds p 59-68 (Jacko’s great escape plan!)
- The Secret Tomb script p32-34
- Cross-Eyed Jack’s diary entries p 112-115

Film and television

In **Cross-Eyed Jack**, the video camera is used as the medium for time travel. Brainstorm other ideas as the catalyst for time travel eg. walking through a doorway, texting a particular word on a mobile phone, finding an ancient artefact.

Then in groups, write and video a short film clip about traveling back or forwards in time.

About the authors

Josie and Mary met in Gladstone fifteen years ago as young mums who shared similar interests in writing and history. They still have a special bond all these years later and are proud of their second novel, *Cross-Eyed Jack*.

Josie Montano: Josie Montano lives with her family in The Gap, Brisbane, and works as a full-time writer (also writing resources on Asperger Syndrome under the name of Josie Santomauro.) Her love of fiction writing began at age 8, when she would shelve her self-published stories in her primary school library. Josie has worked in the primary school environment as a teacher-aide, a secretary and a library-aide. She completed a Graduate Certificate in Creative Writing at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. Her published works include the very successful *Wogaluccis*, *Chicken Pox Yuck*, *Stuff They Don't Teach You at School*, *Who's Wheelie the Fastest*, *Snot Fair*, *Snot Funny*, *Snot Cool*, and *Pop Starlets*, *The Bubble*, *Little Penguin*.

Mary Serenc: For Mary Serenc, growing up on a farm in North Queensland meant every day was an adventure. Whether it was watching a small creek turn into a raging river overnight, taking care of an injured kingfisher or looking out for carpet pythons wrapped in a corner of the chook shed, life was never boring. Her love of books and reading began at age five when she received a very thick picture dictionary filled with words, pictures and short stories which she could not put down. Now living in Cairns with her family, she works part-time as a teacher specializing in literacy. She writes teaching resource books, poetry and children's novels.