

This slender volume is the third in the *Transport, Trade and Travel in Australia* series. It is very reader friendly, with beautifully drawn colour illustrations, clear font, plenty of white space, and a conversational tone which packs a surprisingly heavy load of information. Nicholson's authorial voice tells truths in a non-judgmental tone, and leads us seamlessly through a balanced, wide ranging account of Australian history since European settlement. The opening passage sets up a scenario of a bullock team being harnessed, all of the bullocks have interesting names and personalities, and the way into the book is made smooth by these interesting personalities; Skaggle, Tiger, and 'philosopher bullocks', Vassek and Neville. But the book is not just about entertainment. Painlessly, the reader is provided with an array of interesting data and facts which show Australian history as it was, with its mixture of races, religions, and circumstances. There are true stories and brief vignettes. Like the man who was found crushed or suffocated or starved to death between transported wool bales; or the story of Captain Murray, who was forced to shoot the cook dead, but was unable to deter the ship's crew from mutiny.

Nicholson has made new many stories that are known to us, through research into social history, and careful re-working of the text, so that there are no wasted words.

Written for 9-13 year olds, and should hold their interest through the quality of the writing, the density and sheer interest of the facts, and the brevity of the text overall.

A bonus for teachers is that an 11 page support document is available to download from the A&U website.

Helen Wilde, SA

John Nicholson has found a formula for success in his series of books about transport, trade and travel in Australia. Book 3, entitled *Wool, Wagons and Clipper Ships* has the familiar layout of the previous two books, with exquisite illustrations that complement the interesting and informative text.

Australian history from 1830-1880s has been made palatable for the child aged 9 and over who may think history is 'boring.' The adventure begins with a fictional yet plausible descriptive narrative that captures attention and introduces the idea that Australia rode on the sheep's back, earning wealth by selling wool overseas. A simple fact box shows us how the number of sheep in Australia grew exponentially during his period in history. The text is detailed and thorough, although the conversational tone makes it engaging and interesting reading. Sub-headings (such as 'Sheep stations as big as Scotland') break the text into manageable chunks for the less confident reader.

Chapter 2 provides technical details about the bullock teams and wagons that were used for transportation to the ports. Many Australian country towns are named as well as a few of the significant pioneers such as Thomas Elder. A chart gives us an easy comparison of factors to consider regarding the use of bullocks, horses and camels. Here we also learn some facts and fiction concerning the 'bullocky' and the 'Afghan' (cameleer).

Having safely delivered the cargo to the port, Chapter 3 describes the clipper ships that were used to quickly transport wool and other cargo (such as gold and wheat) to England. We see the effect that the Gold Rush had on wool exportation, as well as discovering the hazards of shipwreck and piracy that threatened the ships.

The final chapter examines the horse-powered world and its eventual decline with the onset of the steam age (to be addressed in Book 4: *Steam, Steel and Speed*). We are made aware of how much waste was produced by working horses and discover how your wealth determined your mode of transport. Coach-building is described with reference to Cobb and Co, and we are amused by the tale of Skippy the post kangaroo.

John Nicholson has crammed a lot of information into these 32 pages. It is a treasure trove waiting to be discovered by the diligent student who will wade through the pages to extract the gems that are contained within it.

Barbara Caruana, Home Educator, VIC

Wool, Wagons & Clipper Ships is an informative and easy to read text that would serve as a great resource for any secondary or upper primary library. The book deals with the resources that were farmed, grown and exported to England and other countries during the 1830 – 1880's. In doing so it clearly shows how the prosperity of Australia rose during this time and greatly influenced the country that we live in today. Not only does the book deal with the resources that Australia had it also deals with *how* they were transported from the farms to the wharves and ultimately to the other countries. The easy to understand diagrams are excellent for readers and keeps them engaged and interested. At 32 pages the book is not too thick for many reluctant readers and its interesting cover is enough to encourage any young reader to pick it up and have a look. Getting students to simply open a book these days is a huge struggle but I found that this one is not threatening to students.

I believe that the section on 'The Afghan' p. 17 serves a great purpose in introducing to young people that the Afghani people have in fact been in our country for a long time and not just in recent years. This really works towards helping students understand the truly multicultural society in which we live, has been that way for many decades.

The true story snippets of Captain Murray killing his cook p.19, the mysterious fate of the *Madagascar* p.23-24 as well as the unfortunate story of the passenger who met an untimely end on the clipper *Result* p.24 all serve to inform and entertain any reader. Adding a human face to historic fact makes the read all the more interesting and every young reader loves to read about mystery, murder and death.

While entertaining this book is a true historical source and it deals with an important part of Australia's heritage. This is often a part that is overlooked in favour of 'settlement' 'federation' or 'the bushrangers'. I have found it especially good for boys who love to read about transport of any kind and it could really be a great way of getting them back on track and maybe they will just learn something along the way.

Nicole Chettle, Smithton High School, TAS

In the first few paragraphs this book has covered the invasion of Australia, the politics of land grants and set the scene with a description of a bullocky heading off for the day with a wagon load of wool. *Wool, Wagons & Clipper Ships* is extremely readable and educational. The author explains Australian farming and transport history of the period between the 1830s and 1880s in a concise and interesting manner. The readers' interest is piqued to explore the transport of the time further in depth. It contains detailed illustrations complimenting the text. Each chapter includes a table of facts from the period. The table comparing the relative cost and benefit of bullocks, horses and camels was particularly interesting. One thing I don't like to see in books is missing punctuation and in my opinion there should be an apostrophe after the 's' in 'several years wool clip'.

There are stories of mutiny, fire, death and dung to keep lovers of horrible history happy. It is amazing that in such a short (32 page) text so many interesting stories can be told. This book can be appreciated by opening at any page – excellent for students with short attention spans and who don't want a long read. It will appeal to many upper primary and secondary students and their teachers.

Jennifer Davey, Invermay Primary School, TAS

A further volume in John Nicholson's landmark series, *Wool, Wagons and Clipper Ships* is a valuable contribution to the history shelves. Our Year 2 teachers, who are just starting a unit on transport, are delighted to know that there's another one out and I am delighted to note on the back cover of this volume that two more are anticipated, taking us through the age of steam and up to the year 2000.

As with all of John Nicholson's books that I've seen, *Wool, Wagons and Clipper Ships* is packed full of information and statistics, but without being didactic and boring. Along with the meaty information, there's enough "wow stuff" to hold even a fidgety young reader's attention right to the end, like the "shadowy figure" between the wool bales on p.24, or the reharnessing of horses and buggies to the owners' bewilderment (p.27). And where else would you find out that the horses of Melbourne produced 90,000 tonnes of manure and 27 million litres of urine in the year 1900??

In each book so far, John Nicholson sets the scene at the start with some imaginative narrative. It certainly deserves close reading — you don't want to miss the description of the "big, strong, reliable 'polers' — philosopher bullocks" (p.6)!

Once again, John Nicholson's illustrations are finely drawn and relevant, his tables are clear, and the overall presentation is attractive. Roll on the next two volumes!

Julie Davies, Sutherland Shire Christian School, NSW

Wool, Wagons and Clipper Ships is the third book in John Nicholson's series *Transport, Trade and Travel in Australia*. Like the previous two volumes, it brings together three significant areas of Australia's history and presents them in a format which is both attractive and useful for students of Australian history. The language is accessible to students from age 10 up and the sub-headings and bullet-points within each chapter create a work which is easy to navigate. In addition, the straightforward index and list of references assist the reader further in using the book.

The period covered by this volume is the 1830s to the 1880s and the four chapters each focus on a different area of trade and transport: sheep; bullock teams; clipper ships and horse power.

Two aspects make this book special: additional information, which goes beyond the basics, and makes the reader think further is the first. An example of this is a comparison of the relative cost of using bullocks, horses and camels, set out in table format.

However, the stand-out feature of this book, like John Nicholson's other books, is the wonderful use of illustrations, which are not just for show, but bring to life the subject matter to present information in pictorial form and to take us right into the nineteenth century.

I recommend this volume highly and am beginning to plan ways the whole series, when published, could become the basis of a useful unit of work for students in Stages 3 and 4.

Barbara Wilson, St George Christian School, NSW

This is a fascinating book. The third in the *Transport, Trade and Travel in Australia* series, *Wool, Wagons and Clipper Ships* is a valuable contribution to any school library's history and economics collection, but kids researching for a project on transport will enjoy reading it for its own sake.

Although the focus is on transport, it's pleasing to see that Aboriginal prior ownership of the land is acknowledged right from the outset, and this includes acknowledging the massacres which took place in border conflicts. This history is inclusive of a wide variety of workers and bosses, revealing interesting aspects of their lives and the hardships they faced in labour-intensive industries. It shows that Australia was multicultural even in the nineteenth century, but – as you perhaps might expect – there is no mention of women (other than a passing reference to Elizabeth Macarthur as a pioneer in sheep breeding.)

The book covers not only the growth and development of transport on land and sea, but also the agricultural and mining enterprises which created the economic demand for reliable carriers of Australia's emerging export industries. Produce including wool, wheat, timber and minerals had to be carted across Australia's vast expanses by wagons and drays, which were hauled by bullocks, horses or camels and then loaded onto fast clipper ships to England. Kids will be intrigued to learn about the difficulties and dangers of these journeys – which included everything from piracy at sea and bushrangers on land to mechanical failure or an overturned wagon on Australia's rough roads.

There's a particularly useful chart in the chapter called *The Power of the Teams*, which compares the relative merits of bullocks, horses and camels. This could be used with students who, given a scenario to work with, could prepare costings for the job, a task which would involve mathematics, geography and economics. In what ever way teachers use this book, it's bound to introduce students to Australia's history in a way that brings it alive.

Lisa Hill, Mossgiel Park Primary School, VIC

Wool, Wagons and Clippers Ships by John Nicholson contains a general overview of Transport, Trade and Travel in Australia between the 1830s and 1880s. The book contains an excellent combination of pictures, narrative, facts, tables and interesting asides to the topic under consideration. The reader has the opportunity to explore the text and gain a general understanding of the modes of transport and their specific uses throughout this period of time. Clear and well labelled illustrations allow the reader to readily translate the written information. The book contains more than information about transport, it gives an insight into the lives of the people who worked with and used the modes of transport reviewed in the book and asks students to weigh up the economics associated with using each mode.

This book is perfectly suitable as a general introduction to transport within this period of Australian History and would compliment an integrated Australian History Unit or a specific inquiry into the History of Transport in Australia. Students could be asked to reflect on the lives of the people associated with the modes of transport and participate in creative writing exercises from their given perspective. The book has enough information for students to compare and explore a favourite mode of transport and justify their decision using the facts contained within the text.

Jill Richardson, Wynyard High School, TAS

This is a well-researched, factually accurate, well-structured hardcover book with interesting and useful illustrations and charts that is eminently suitable for the primary school library. It has both a contents page and an index, and contains four chapters: *On the Sheep's Back*, *The Power of the Teams*, *Clipper Ships to England* and *A Horse Powered World*.

This book will be useful for both lower and upper primary, in the fields of Australian history, transportation, economics, art, culture and writing.

It details interesting facts and information on the various forms of land and sea transport within its time frame, with the lead story about a bullocky and his bullocks being used to good effect to gain children's attention.

A good inclusion for economic studies is the comparison chart on the economics on the commercial use of horses, bullocks and camels. The excellent diagrams and illustrations of vehicle design and the required

pulling power required for their use will set the children to thinking and comparing this to modern transportation means.

The chapter on ships and the various hazards they faced, including mutiny, piracy and shipwrecks, will help bring Australia's early marine and wool industry to life, as it provides the economic, and historical climate behind their operation.

The last chapter on horse power covers the various buggies and coaches, and includes some humorous details that children will enjoy, about tricks played on parked horses and buggies.

The close gives a concise overview of the transitional modes of transport from bullocks, camels and horses to railways and steam engines.

Annette Dawes, Manning Valley Anglican College, NSW