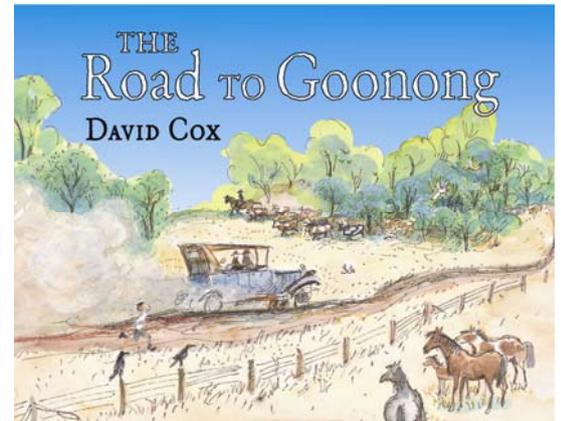


The Road to Goonong

By David Cox

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Summary

The Road to Goonong is an engaging account of a farming family and their daily life during the time of the Great Depression and during World War II. The story is told from a young boy's perspective, in an engaging way that students can readily identify with. It captures the fun and freedom of being a child of that era as he watches timber cutters work with axes and cross saw, and enjoys the freedoms and rhythm of farm life—riding horses, milking cows and sleeping on the veranda under mosquito nets.

The story depicts not only the reality of living on the land with drought and little money, but also the strong community spirit when neighbors depended on and helped each other. This was a time when the first automobiles were seen in rural areas, when country dances and travelling shows or cinemas provided entertainment, and news of the wider world came via newspapers or the wireless. The sensitive and often humorous illustrations capture the different characters and Australian landscape superbly.

Use in the curriculum

As a teaching tool, the book provides a perfect introduction to differences in Australian past and present ways of living. It provides examples on work, transport, technology, styles of clothes, education and modes of communication. In addition, it touches on the effects of white settlement on the local indigenous community. It also serves as a writing model for autobiography or family history.

Age suitability: lower primary to middle primary.

Relevant areas of study:

- Australian History Curriculum—Continuity and change, cause and effect, and significance within the context of personal, family and local history. Impact of white settlement on local aboriginal people. Understanding heritage of students' community and their ability to contribute to it.
- State curriculum areas of Human Society and Environment—significant events and people; changes in community and family life; changes and consequences of colonisation for local aboriginal groups.

The book suits studies of:

- Similarities and differences between family life today and in the past.
- Family heritage, how did Australians live in the past?
- How has the past influenced the present? How has our local area changed?
- Changes in transport, clothes, communication and technology.

The book is a memoir, and provides a deep understanding of one boy's daily Australian life in earlier times in engaging language and pictures that the reader can identify with. It is excellent for promoting further discussion on differences and continuities with students' lives today—the family home, how they play and work, and what community they live in. In addition, issues are sensitively portrayed such as the impact of the white settlement on the local indigenous community, and the impact of drought and depression on farming families.

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