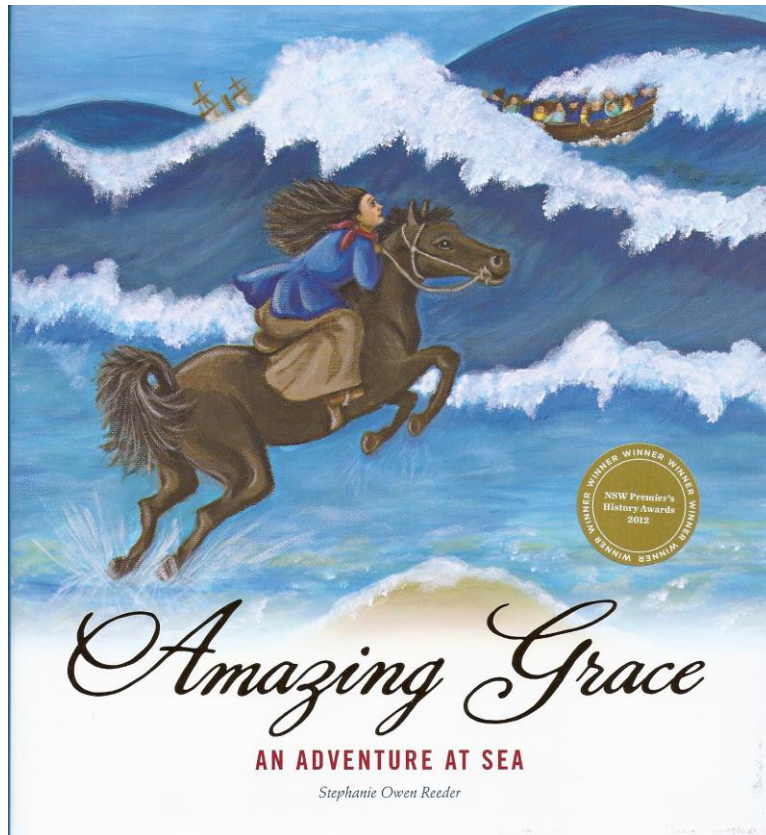


Teachers Notes for
Amazing Grace: An Adventure at Sea
by
Stephanie Owen Reeder



About *Amazing Grace*

Amazing Grace: An Adventure at Sea by Stephanie Owen Reeder is a fictionalised retelling of the true story of the sinking of the SS *Georgette*, a steam and sailing ship which was wrecked off the Western Australian coast in 1876. Grace Bussell, a 16 year-old girl who lived on a nearby farm, bravely rode her horse into the surf and helped to save over fifty people from drowning. However, she was not the only brave soul in this amazing tale of perseverance, selflessness and heroism.

Based on eye-witness accounts and newspaper articles from the time, as well as later versions of the story, *Amazing Grace* relates the story from the perspective of Grace, as well as the people on board both the ship and its ill-fated lifeboat. The book is lavishly illustrated with paintings and drawings from the 1800s, drawn from the vast Pictures Collection of the National Library of Australia, as well as illustrations by the author based on pictures from illustrated newspapers of the time.

Amazing Grace also features photographs of the main characters, as well as extracts from newspaper reports and from letters written by the people involved. Information sections at the end of each chapter present extra information about:

- the *Georgette*
- life at sea
- pioneering life
- wrecks and rescues
- Christmas in the colonies
- communications and newspapers.

An epilogue relates what happened after the shipwreck and rescue to Grace, Sam and the other people involved. A glossary explains nautical terms, and a select bibliography provides suggestions for background reading.

Amazing Grace is a companion book to *Lost! A True Tale from the Bush*, which has gained the following recognition:

- Notable Book, Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards 2010

- Shortlisted, Eve Pownall Award for Information Books, Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards 2010
- Honour Book, Junior Judges Project, Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards 2010.

It is intended that *Lost!* and *Amazing Grace* will be the first two books in a Heritage Heroes series of books about brave young people from Australia's history.

Using *Amazing Grace* in the classroom

Amazing Grace can be used across the curriculum, including in the following areas:

- Visual Literacy
- Creative Arts
- Studies of Society and Environment (themes such as heroism, shipwrecks, pioneering life, Australian colonial history)
- Studies of Society and Environment (values such as compassion, resilience, fear, bravery, hope)

A number of possible activities based on the book for teachers to present to their students are outlined below.

Family History

Interview your parents and grandparents and find out more about your family history. Document it in a family scrapbook. It could feature the following:

- Pictures of a house that your relatives built, or of houses that you and your family members have lived in
- Retellings of family stories that have been handed down from generation to generation
- A family tree going back to your great-grandparents, with information about the people featured
- A letter describing an exciting event in your life or in the life of a member of your family
- Newspaper-style interviews with family members
- Photos and drawings of family members
- A map showing where your family members have lived in a particular state, or in Australia or in the world
- Information about your family's Christmas traditions, including: menus and recipes, decorations, presents, special traditions.

Local History

Busselton and Grace Bussell

Sadly, Grace Bussell's home, Wallcliffe House, which was built by her father in the 1860s and features in *Amazing Grace*, was destroyed in the bushfires that swept through the Margaret River area of Western Australia in November 2011, the month that *Amazing Grace* was released.

- Research the history of Wallcliffe House and either draw a picture or make a model of the house.
- Find a map of the Margaret River area and see how many things you can find (streets, towns, roads, highways, caves etc) that are named after Grace, the Bussell family or the *Georgette*.
- Create a multi media artwork showing either the sinking of the lifeboat or the wrecking of the *Georgette*. Select media, colours and imagery that best reflect the drama and horror of the situation.
- Who is your favourite character in *Amazing Grace*? Do a painting, drawing, collage or model construction which shows their role in the story.

Your local area

- Research the history of your local area. Identify any shipwrecks or other historical events of interest. Write either a newspaper report about the incident or a fictionalised retelling of the story. Draw, paint or construct a picture of the incident.

Heroes and Heroines

- What is the definition of a hero or heroine? Discuss who should be deemed a hero. Does this include sports stars?
- Research some modern child heroes. What brave act did they perform? Did they get a bravery medal? Were they as brave as Grace, Sam and James? Discuss what you would do in a similar situation.

Visual literacy

- Carefully look at one of the five images that appear at the end of each chapter:
 - Shipboard life (pages 32–33)
 - Fighting a bushfire (pages 48–49)

- Surviving a shipwreck (pages 62–63)
- Celebrating Christmas (pages 78–79)
- Finding out about Australia (pages 94–95).
- Discuss the images using the following questions as guidelines.
 - What atmosphere has the artist tried to create?
 - What have they used to create this atmosphere (colour, composition, linework)?
 - What is the focal point of the picture? How does the artist draw your eye to this point? Why have they chosen this particular aspect of the image to focus on?
 - How do the people in the picture feel? How has the artist used body language, facial expressions etc to communicate this?
- Paint/draw or construct a picture of the same topic using a different focal point, and creating a different atmosphere by varying the colour, composition and/or linework, and changing the reactions of the people in the picture.

Creative writing

Write a story based on one of the five narrative pictures that appear at the end of each chapter:

- Shipboard life (pages 32–33)
- Fighting a bushfire (pages 48–49)
- Surviving a shipwreck (pages 62–63)
- Celebrating Christmas (pages 78–79)
- Finding out about Australia (pages 94–95).

Use the following questions as guidelines.

Plot: What is happening in the picture? How will you structure your narrative? Where will your story start and end?

Setting: Where and when is the story set? Is the setting integral to the story or does it just provide the background?

Point of View: Whose point of view will you tell the story from (one of the characters or a narrator)?

Characters: Who is your main character and what sort of person are they? Who else will you feature?

Theme: What is the point of the story? What message do you want to convey?

Atmosphere and tone: What sort of story is it? How do you want the reader to feel?

Title: What is the title of your story? Make sure it

Other narrative paintings and images can be found in the National Library of Australia's Pictures Collection. They are available online at www.nla.gov.au.

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