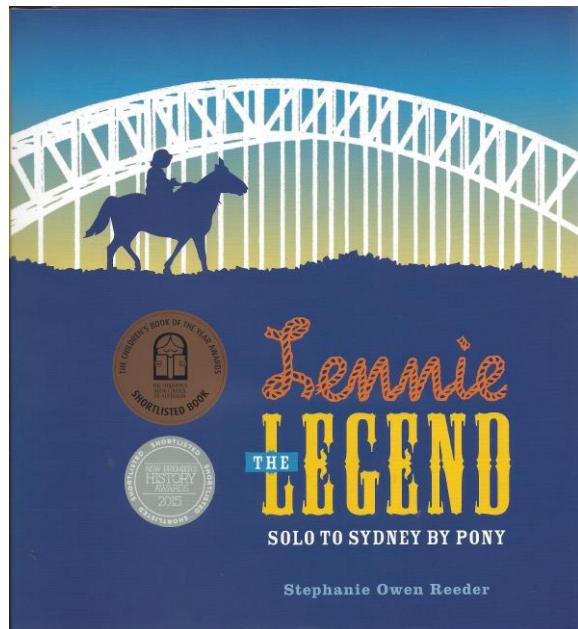


Teacher's Notes for  
*Lennie the Legend: Solo to Sydney by Pony*  
by  
Stephanie Owen Reeder



#### **ABOUT LENNIE THE LEGEND**

*Lennie the Legend* is a fictionalised retelling of the true story of a nine-year-old boy's amazing 1,000-kilometre solo journey on his pony Ginger Mick from Leongatha in Victoria to Sydney in New South Wales. It was 1932 and Lennie wanted to experience firsthand the opening of the engineering marvel of his day—the now iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge. Along the way, Lennie braved bushfires and horse thieves, met lots of interesting and important people, and became a ‘little legend’. Featuring photographs, advertisements, maps and images from the time, this story brings to life one boy’s experiences during the Depression years in Australia in the 1930s.

#### **USING LENNIE THE LEGEND IN THE CLASSROOM**

*Lennie the Legend* is a companion book to Dr Reeder's award-winning titles *Lost! A True Tale from the Bush* (Short-listed in the CBCA Children's Book of the Year Awards) and *Amazing Grace: An Adventure at Sea* (Winner of the Young People's Prize in the New South Wales Premier's History Awards). *Lennie the Legend* can be used across the curriculum, including in the following areas:

- Studies of Society and Environment (themes such as heroism, life in the 1930s, World War 1, the Great Depression, the development of Australian Cities)
- Studies of Society and Environment (values such as resilience, bravery, perseverance, hope)
- Creative arts

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

## **World War I**

1. Visit the memorial to the First World War in your town, suburb or city. Select the name of one of the fallen soldiers listed on the memorial and find out as much as you can about him. Where did he come from? Where did he live? What was he doing before he went away to war? Which country was he sent to? What battles did he fight and die in? Both the Australian War Memorial ([www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)) and your local library are good starting points for research.
2. Tell your soldier's story using one of the following: a fictionalised story; a newspaper account; a graphic novel/comic book; a picture book; a poem.
3. What is the definition of a hero or heroine? Discuss who should be deemed a hero. Research some modern child heroes. What did they do? Would a nine-year-old boy be able to do what Lennie did today?

4. Research and present a report on one of the following heroes from the 1920s and 1930s. Include the following: where and when they were born, what their childhood was like, how and why they became famous, and how and why they are remembered today. Who are our equivalent ‘heroes’ today?
- Cricketer Donald Bradman
  - Racehorse Phar Lap
  - Aviator Charles Kingsford Smith
  - Singer Dame Nellie Melba

## **Life in the 1930s**

1. Research home life in the 1930s, including what household appliances they had—how did they cook, bathe, wash up, wash their clothes etc? Advertisements in old newspapers can provide good visual information.
2. Make a model, mock-up or collage of two kitchens—one from the 1930s and one from the 2010s.
3. Compare the chores that you do now with those that Lennie and his brothers and sisters were expected to do. Write two paragraphs, one describing what you have to do in the morning before you go to school and the other describing what children like Lennie had to do before they went to school.
4. Using Trove (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspapers>), research the Gippsland bushfires of 1932 and write your own newspaper report about one of the incidents that occurred during those fires.

## **The Great Depression**

1. How did the Great Depression affect the people in your part of Australia? Were there shanty towns for the unemployed and the homeless, or soup kitchens to feed the hungry?
2. Interview an elderly person who lived through the Depression years about what life was like for them then.
  - Write a story (or create a comic strip or a short video) based on the photograph of the children collecting firewood on pages 38–39. Structure your story using the following questions as guidelines. What is happening in the picture? Where and when is the story set? Whose point of view will you tell the story from (one of the children or as narrator)? Who is your main character and what sort of person are they? What is the theme of the story? What message do you want to convey and how do you want the reader to react or feel?
  - Other images of children during the Depression can be found in the National Library of Australia's Pictures Collection at [www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au).

## Australian cities

1. Research and write a report or create a scrapbook about one of the following:
  - The creation, design and history of your state or territories' capital city;
  - The creation, design and history of Australia's capital city, Canberra.
2. Discover some interesting or unusual facts about your capital city/Canberra.
3. Draw and decorate a map, like the one on page 57, featuring the main tourist attractions in your capital city/Canberra.

## The Sydney Harbour Bridge

1. Research newspaper articles on Trove (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspapers>) about the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Make a scrapbook like Lennie's showing the building of the bridge and including images of it during construction (search for

pictures of the bridge at <http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/>). Include a timeline of its construction and interesting facts about the building of the bridge.

2. Construct a replica of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. You could use the following materials: multimedia collage, toy building-bricks, pipe cleaners, paddle-pop sticks, paper or clay.
3. Select one of the children featured on page 71 who crossed the bridge before it was officially opened. You will find their names on page 103. Imagine that you are them and write a letter to your grandparents telling them about your amazing experience that day.
4. Imagine that you are one of the people watching the Sydney Harbour Bridge opening parade. Describe what it was like and what you saw. You can see actual footage taken by families who attended the opening online at  
<http://aso.gov.au/titles/newsreels/opening-sydney-harbour-bridge/clip2/> and  
<http://aso.gov.au/titles/home-movies/farey-sydney-harbour-bridge/clip1/>. The one titled *Farey: Opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge* shows Lennie riding on Ginger Mick.

### **Maps and journeys**

1. Use a modern map to plot Lennie's journey from Leongatha in Victoria to Sydney in New South Wales. What are the names of the roads he would follow now and which towns would he travel through? Work out how long it would take to make the journey by car today.
2. Choose one of the towns along the route and research its history. When was it established? Why was it established? How big was it in 1932? How many people live there now? What is its main claim to fame?

3. Interview your parents and grandparents and find out if any family members have undertaken an interesting or unusual journey. Write a report or create a scrapbook about their journey, including photographs, drawings and maps.
4. Create a boardgame, similar to Snakes and Ladders, based on Lennie's journey.

## **BACKGROUND READING**

### **Sydney Harbour Bridge**

Cazneaux, Harold, *The Second Bridge Book*. Sydney: Ure Smith, 1931

Lalor, Peter, *The Bridge: The Epic Story of an Australian Icon—The Sydney Harbour Bridge*.

Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005

Luck, Peter, *The Sydney Harbour Bridge: Celebrating 80 Years with 80 Fascinating Facts*.

Sydney: New Holland, 2012

Mackaness, Caroline (ed.), *Bridging Sydney*. Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2006

Prunster, Ursula, *The Sydney Harbour Bridge 1932–1982: A Golden Anniversary Celebration*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1982

Spearritt, Peter, *The Sydney Harbour Bridge: A Life*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2011

Sydney Morning Herald, *The Sydney Harbour Bridge: A History Spanning 50 Years*. Sydney: John Fairfax & Sons, 1982

### **Lennie Gwyther and Leongatha**

Holt, Fred, *Koonwarra My Home 1878–2000*. Koonwarra, Vic.: F.J. Holt, 2001

Kearney, Neil, 'Little Lennie the Toast of a Nation', *Herald Sun*, Saturday, March 17, 2007,  
p. 33

Small, Mary, *Lennie's Ride*. Sydney: Small Endeavour Publishing, 2010

### **Australia in the 1930s**

Art in Australia, *The Sydney Book*, with photography by H. Cazneaux, T. Purcell and Milton Kent. Sydney: Art in Australia, 1931

*Australia through Time*. Sydney: Random House, 2000

*Australia's Yesterdays: The Illustrated Story of How We Lived, Worked and Played*, 3rd ed. Sydney: Reader's Digest, 2001

Gill, Lydia, *My Town: Sydney in the 1930s*. Sydney: State Library of New South Wales Press, 1993

Mourot, Suzanne, *This Was Sydney: A Pictorial History from 1788 to the Present Time*. Sydney: Ure Smith, 1969