

So you want to be Prime Minister?

By Nicolas Brasch, illustrated by David Rowe

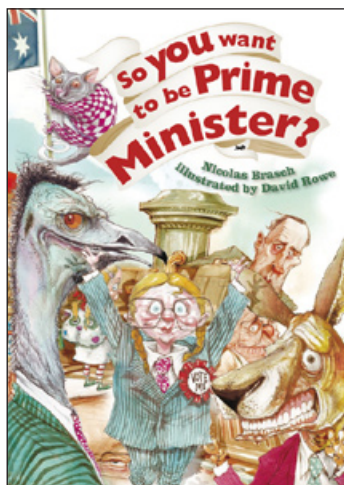
There have been 26 Prime Ministers since Federation. Under the guise of giving students tips on what it takes to be a Prime Minister, Brasch introduces the reader to all of them from an array of eclectic perspectives. Each brief chapter is delightfully titled to spike the interest of the reader. Information is presented in a lively, engaging manner that should leave the student wanting to know more.

The picture book genre is perfect for this subject matter, pitched as it is at the younger student (upper primary/lower secondary). The collaboration between Brasch and Rowe is a great success as together they bring the Prime Ministers to life. Importantly, Rowe's wonderfully crafted illustrations give the Prime Ministers a face. His contributions add colour and humour and are worthy of discussion in themselves.

The book has applications in the learning areas of Australian History, English, Visual Literacy, Creative Arts and Personal Development

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1. VISUAL LITERACY

Illustrations

Class to identify the following:

- How does the illustrator indicate on the book cover that the book is about Australian Prime Ministers?
- What does the small black dog on the cover represent?
- Explain why you think the illustrator has included a girl on the front cover saying Vote Me. Why do you think she is wearing a man's suit? What attitudes to the girl can you detect from the expressions on the faces of the emu, kangaroo and possum?
- What point, therefore, might the illustrator be trying to make?
- In many of the illustrations throughout the book, Rowe incorporates photographs into the illustrations, for example, pages 24 and 25. Why do you think he has done that?
- What is your favourite illustration in the book? Explain your choice.

Creative Art

Create a "Vote Me" advertisement for the Leader of the Opposition—the alternative Prime Minister,

OR

Draw a cartoon with caption about Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd

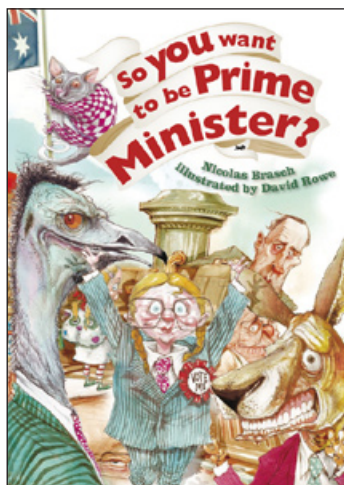
2. AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Students answer the following questions using the information in the book, starting with the index, timeline and glossary:

Name and explain the event that occurred in 1901 leading to Edmund Barton becoming the first Prime Minister of Australia.

Just over 50 years ago a national referendum was held.

- What is a referendum?
- What was this particular referendum about?
- What year was it held?
- Who was the Prime Minister at the time?
- What does "indigenous" mean?
- Name one right Aborigines gained with citizenship (do not confuse with Land Rights – a separate issue)



— On the book's back cover, former PM Harold Holt is wearing a diving suit and snorkel. What tragic event does this allude to?

Also on the book's back cover, former PM Malcolm Fraser is wearing a tie with a crown and GG printed on it.

— Who does the crown represent?

— What does GG stand for?

— What major political event does this refer to?

In 1983 Australia won the America's Cup yachting race for the first time in the race's history which caused huge celebrations in Australia.

— Who was the PM at the time?

— Can you locate him on the back cover?

— What is he wearing? (Explain to class that Bob Hawke wore a jacket emblazoned with the word Australia the day Australia won the race.)

Quiz: Who am I?

Give each student the name of a different PM on a piece of paper and have them prepare a list of questions based on information in the book. Exclude Rudd. Student to give one clue at a time, keeping the most obvious clues until last.

Put example on board: I was born in Queensland

I studied at the Australian National University

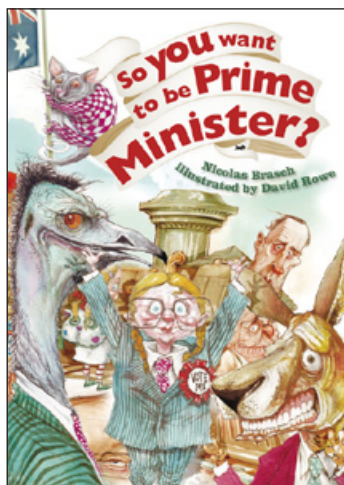
I used to clean houses when I was a student.

I have never belonged to a union

I am the leader of the Australian Labor Party

I live at The Lodge

I am Kevin ... (Rudd)



3. ENGLISH

Group discussion

What are the attributes of a good Prime Minister?

'Polarised' Debate

Topic: It's time Australia had a female Prime Minister.

In a polarised debate, students sit in a horseshoe position, with those who agree on one side, those who disagree on the other and the undecided in between.

The debate begins with the first speaker who agrees, followed by one who disagrees, and then by a speaker who is undecided and so on. Students change positions around the horseshoe if they change their mind (polarized debate: p. 11, Board of Studies NSW, A Resource of Classroom Practices, 1998)

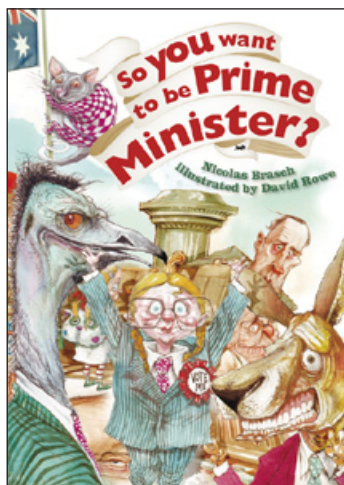
Keep opinion log on board and update when positions change

Letter writing

Write a letter to the Prime Minister about an important issue that concerns you. Outline what the issue is and why it concerns you; make a suggestion how PM might deal with issue, and outline why you think your suggestion is a good one.

Research essay

Write a short biographical essay about Julia Gillard, the Deputy Prime Minister.



4. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

When he was Prime Minister, Paul Keating once compared the then Leader of the Opposition John Howard to a “mangy maggot” (p.20). Do you think such language/behaviour is appropriate for a Prime Minister, indeed any politician? Explain why/why not.

Imagine you have ambitions to become Prime Minister one day — what aspects of your own personal development would you need to work on. Why?

USEFUL WEBSITE

<http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/meetpm.asp>

5. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A prolific author, Nicolas Brasch has written over 250 books for the education, trade and library markets both in Australia and overseas.

He has, moreover, presented workshops and seminars on writing and story-telling and is the founder of Writers in Residence, a company that provides writing services to the corporate sector.

6. ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Award winning illustrator David Rowe has been called “one of Australia’s great cartoon geniuses”. His cartoons have been published daily in The Financial Review for the past ten years.