



Old Man Emu

Author: John Williamson

Illustrator: Simon McLean

Publisher: Penguin Australia
ISBN: 9781760898793

Synopsis

A new picture book adaptation of John Williamson's first and now legendary hit song, 'Old Man Emu', to celebrate John's 50th year of performing and the song's 50th anniversary in 2020.

This iconic Australian song tells the very funny tale of the emu and its many traits – good and bad: He can't fly, but I'm telling you, he can run the pants off akangaroo! The story compares the emu to lots of other Australian birds (galah, cockatoo, wedge-tail eagle, kookaburra) and of course to the kangaroo, providing wonderful opportunities for hilarious illustrations.

It's the song that launched John Williamson's career way back in 1970. John performed the song on the TV talent quest of the day, 'New Faces' and won first place, which led him to his first recording contract with Fable Records. It still remains one of John Williamson's most popular songs

Author Bio

John Williamson is, without question, an Australian Icon. His entertainment career spans more than fifty years, boasting sales of over 5 million albums.

His unofficial anthems, funny and tender ballads and tributes to unsung heroes have captured the spirit of the nation in song more than any other performer. He remains one of the most in-demand live performers in Australia.

His fiftieth album, *Honest People*, was released in 2014 at the same time as his autobiography, and in 2018 he released his fifty-first, *Butcherbird*. Three songs from his popular JW's Family Album have been made into delightful, entertaining picture books for children.



Illustrator Bio

Simon Mclean is an Australian born artist based on the Gold Coast in Queensland. He has received numerous awards and prizes for his artworks and illustration, and is represented in private collections throughout Australia and internationally.

His work displays deft graphic skills, with an underlining sense of humour, finely honed over many years working in publishing and advertising, whilst also developing and illustrating his own children's book ranges and a myriad illustration projects.

McLean's art on paper, canvas and also as sculpture and public Artworks, continues to be applauded for its originality and eclectic themes, and has been described as anything from dark and moody to hilariously disturbing.

Curriculum Links

English Foundation:

ACELT1575 Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences

ACELT1577 Respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors and illustrators

ACELT1785 Recognise some different types of literary texts and identify some characteristic features of literary texts, for example beginnings and endings of traditional texts and rhyme in poetry.

English Year 1

ACELT1581 Discuss how authors create characters using language and images

ACELT1585 Listen to, recite and perform poems, chants, rhymes and songs, imitating and inventing sound patterns including alliteration and rhyme

Science Foundation Biological Science

ACSSU002 Living things have basic needs, including food and water

Science Year 1 Biological Science

ACSSU017 Living things have a variety of external features

Pre Reading

Look at the cover of the book.
 Identify the author and the illustrator.
 What do you think this book will be about?
 Read the blurb.
 Ask if anyone has ever heard the song before.

You may choose to:

Read the book

OR

Show a clip of the author and illustrator reading the book:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31B0_CTVBi4

Then show the clip of John Williamson singing the original song (the book is an adaptation of the song, so it's not exactly the same text)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZLx4Os8TBs&feature=youtu.be>

Ask the students if they prefer the song or the book?
 Why? Do the illustrations make the story better? Or does singing the words make it better?
 Are there other reasons they prefer one over the other?

Australian Animals

There are a number of Australian animals in the book.
 Make a list of them.
 See if the class can name them all.

Choose an animal from the book and find out some facts about it.
 eg:

- What does it look like?
- Is it a bird, mammal, reptile, marsupial?
- Where does it live?
- What does it eat?

Some facts you may learn from the story.

What do we know about emus from this story?

- An emu is a bird
- It can't fly
- It can run very fast

Watch this clip for more information on emus.

<https://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/2528433/emu-families>

Then ask the class what else they found out from watching the clip.

Depending on the age level of the class students may research individually/in pairs or research as a class.

