



Teachers' Notes

A Brief History of the Island of Dipsquittie

Why Moo Coos are Important and Going to War is Not a Brilliant Idea

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OMNIBUS BOOKS

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INTRODUCTION

The fantastic island of Dipsquittie, with its tiny population, is ruled peacefully by the royal family of King Eggberga and Queen Syllia. Their family are descended from the first Englishman to set foot upon the island. Since their arrival, the English have implemented many successful changes on Dipsquittie. They have built castles and towns, taught the Dipsquittians to read and write, and set up a royal family. But no one is prepared for the arrival of a shipwrecked sailor and the changes he will bring to the island.

In the small town on the southern part of the island, the population welcomes a stranger to their midst, Samuel B. Gliblip. The townspeople of FitzNicely City are engaged in a serious town meeting, for one of their members had been 'moored' at by an animal of unknown origin. This scandalous event has no precedent. Seeing a perfect opportunity, Gliblip offers his services and, with his warlike nature and notions of freedom, convinces the people the solution is war. The royal family is identified as the enemy and a declaration of war is sent to the castle.

As the Dipsquittians have never engaged in warfare of any kind, the resulting conflict is rather unorthodox. Combatants on both sides begin to enjoy themselves too much and forget about very important matters that should never ever be forgotten about. Before long, a very real threat from the northern part of the island is upon them, and both sides must come together to escape a dire fate.

A delightfully funny story about why moo coos are important and going to war is not a brilliant idea!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Walter Loder-Bull was born plain Wally Bull. He is not related to Terry and Horrie Bull, or at least he doesn't think he is. Wally grew up with his seven brothers and five sisters in a town in outback Australia that nobody ever heard of. His father was the local postmaster and postman. But hardly anybody writes to a place they've never heard of, so Mr Bull was often out of work. This meant that the family was very poor, but Wally didn't mind.

There was no school in the town, so Mrs Bull taught all of her children herself. She must have done a fairly good job, because as they grew up they left home and

managed to get work in places like Berriwillock and Wollowombi, which some people have heard of – you might even live there!

Wally was the last to leave. His home town had only four houses, a shop, a petrol station and, of course, a post office; but to him it was a fascinating place. It was a fascination that was to become his life's work. 'The words, "Never heard of it" are to me the most exciting and challenging in any language,' says Professor Loder-Bull. 'When I finally left my home town, it was to travel the world and make a study of all places that nobody ever heard of.'

After several years of travel and study, Wally Bull made up his mind to become a Professor of Places Nobody Heard Of. His only problem was that he couldn't find a university that had a course in that subject. At last he found a university that nobody had heard of that was willing to start a course in Places that Nobody Heard Of, as long as Wally would run it. So he designed a course and wrote several exams. Then, as he was the only student who enrolled, he took the course himself, passed the exams with High Distinctions and became the world's first Professor of Places Nobody Heard Of. He also added his mother's family name to his own and became Professor Walter Loder-Bull PPNHO. 'It sounds a lot more like me,' the Professor says. 'I have never thought of myself as a Wally.'

Professor Loder-Bull has written a number of books which nobody has read – possibly because they were never published. But at last he has found a publisher, and he has high hopes that his *Brief History of the Island of Dipsquittie* will become one of the best-known books of its kind.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Janine Dawson has a background in cartoon animation. She worked for many years with Hanna-Barbera and has lived and travelled all over the world. She now lives in Sydney with her daughter and two cats.

BEFORE READING THE TEXT

1. HUMOUR

Have a discussion with your class about what funny books students have read. Consider what makes a good 'funny' book. What do funny stories have in common? Do Australians have a unique sense of humour? What subjects do we find funny?

There are many kinds of humour. Identify and discuss variations of humour with your class, such as tongue in cheek, pun, word play, situation comedy, names, and descriptions. Make a list of these forms, and ask the class to provide examples. Involve the class in a dictionary search for the meanings.

2. READING SHORT STORIES

Read some funny short stories (consider those by Paul Jennings and Roald Dahl, and the Lily Quench series by Natalie Jane Prior. Refer to the list at the end of the notes). Using the list made in the previous activity, ask the students to see if they can recognise examples of humour in their reading. Ask the teacher librarian to talk to your class about locating humorous books in the library.

3. APPROACHING THE TEXT

There are a number of different ways your class could read this novel:

- Together as a class
- Read aloud by the teacher
- In small groups (literature circles)
- At home, with chapters read aloud in class

4. ALLEGORY

Allegory is defined as 'a story in which the characters and events stand for something or someone else'. (*The Pocket Macquarie Writers Guide*, Jacaranda, 1990)

Have students use their dictionaries to look up and discuss the meaning of the word 'allegory'. Write the definition on the board. Invite the students to give examples of what an allegory might look like. Read some of Aesop's fables to the class as examples of allegorical literature (*The Three Little Pigs*, for example).

READING THE TEXT

1. COMPLETE TABLE WHILE READING TEXT

Set up a table for the students to add to as they read the book.

Continue the table through to Chapter 10.

Chapter	Setting	Event	Characters
Intro			
1			
2			
3			

2. ANIMALS

Have students list the animals in the text as they encounter them. Include a description of appearance, characteristics, and habits. Some students may like to draw them for display.

3. APPENDICES

At the end of the book are several appendices that provide information additional to the story. Have your students fill in the table below as they read the book.

Appendix of Slightly Essential Information	What is it about?	What did you learn?
Geography of Dipsquittie		
Northern Dipsquittie: Some Terrifying Things You Need to Know		
Out of the Darkness: The Miracle That Saved Dipsquittie in 700DD		
Traditional Dipsquittian Songs and Poems Mentioned in This Volume		
Glossary of Odd Dipsquittian Words		

4. AUTHOR AND SUBTITLE

The following questions can be answered individually or in a class discussion.

- Have a close look at the subtitle. What does it tell you about the book and its contents? Do you know of any other books with subtitles?
-
- Who is the author of this book? Do you think this may be a pseudonym? If so, can you find the name of the real author? Why would an author write under a pseudonym?

5. CLASS PROJECT

As a class, have students make a large map of the island. Pin it in a prominent place in the classroom or library and attach pictures, diagrams, mountains, cities, rivers etc. This can be used as a reference in class discussions. As the book is read, ask students to attach small pieces of descriptive writing about specific locations.

6. FAMILY TREE

Ask your class to draw a family tree for the Royal Family of Dipsquittie.

7. WORD PLAY

At the end of the book is a glossary of odd Dipsquittian words. There are many other new words in the book that are not listed in the glossary. Divide the class into pairs, and allocate a chapter or appendix to each pair. Have them reread their section and ask them to list all the Dipsquittian words they can find, with their meanings. Ask your students to create a Dipsquittian Dictionary using all the found words, placing them in alphabetical order.

Descriptive words are used in amusing ways (e.g. 'cattipoop' is a play on the word 'catapult'). The words that describe animals are funny because they not only name the animal but reflect the noise or smell it makes (e.g. Fire-Belchers). See if your class can find others as they read the book.

8. LETTER WRITING

Ask the class to write a letter to a friend on Dipsquittie. Have them choose one of the characters they would like to meet, and write a letter to that person introducing themselves and saying why they are interested in them. Alternatively, students can choose to write a letter to a foreigner from the point of view of a Dipsquittian.

9. TIME LINE

Divide your students into groups, and have them make a time line of the events on the island. Instruct them to begin with the introduction and move towards the conclusion, adding each major event. The time line could be a large banner going around the room or smaller A3 sheets given to each child or group.

10. HISTORICAL ASPECTS

Discuss the historical aspects of the book. Consider explorers, old fashioned clothing, old ships, castles etc. Try to determine what century is being used as a foundation for the story. Borrow some medieval books from the library for the class to look at castles. Ask the students what they know about castles, and as a class create a list of words associated with them (dungeons, secret passages, bailey, keep, moat, catapult etc.).

11. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

As the text is read (aloud, in groups, at home, or individually) ask the class to answer a question from each chapter. Their responses can be used as a lead into the work with the novel the following week.

Introduction: How does Professor Loder-Bull meet Fergus McFloogle?

Chapter 1: How did Reggie (Sir Reginald FitzNicely) and his wife, Cynthia, find Dipsquittie?

Chapter 2: What differences do you see between the Dipsquittians and Reggie and Cynthia?

Chapter 3: What changes do Reggie and Cynthia make to Dipsquittie? What is DAG? What changes occur as a result of colonisation?

Chapter 4: Who is Samuel B. Gliblip? What impact does he have on Dipsquittie?

Chapter 5: How do the Dipsquittians prepare for war?

Chapter 6: What weapons are used against the enemy?

Chapter 7: How do we know that the army is not taking the war as seriously as Samuel B. Gliblip?

Chapter 8: How does Brother Diddipuss become the first casualty?

Chapter 9: What must Fillup do to save the day?

Chapter 10: Why is Gliblip banished?

AFTER READING THE TEXT

1. CREATURES

Have students reread the descriptions of the Fire-Belchers and Flip-Flappers. Ask the class what sort of creatures they think they are and if they sound familiar.

2. EXPLORING A DESERT ISLAND

Ask the class to consider what they would take on an expedition. List these things and divide the list into needs and wants.

Talk about the difference. What is absolutely necessary? Split the class into small groups to answer these questions.

- Check the list in Chapter 3 and then make up your own list of what you think you would need for an exploration of a desert island.
- Find a book that talks about the expedition of Burke and Wills, and see if you can locate a list of things these explorers took with them into the Australian desert. Do you think this was a sensible list? Are there any inappropriate items?

3. MAPPING

Have students draw their version of the island, using descriptions in the text (Geography of Dipsquittie, p. 127–132). The map can be completed in groups or done individually. The map should include a legend showing what colours are used for each distinguishing feature such as a scale, a north–south sign, and a title.

4. TOURISM

Create a tourism industry for the island. Put students into small groups and allocate each a task.

- Group 1 is to produce a passport for visitors to the island.
- Group 2 is to create a webpage about the island (a facsimile).
- Group 3 is to produce a flag for the island (think about the things that the Dipsquittians admire and treasure).
- Group 4 is to produce an advertisement for the island to appear in a foreign paper.
- Group 5 is to produce a brochure outlining the island’s history, culture, and oddities.
- Group 6 is to produce information about Fire-Belchers and Flip-Flappers and any other animals visitors might come across.
- Group 7 is to produce a set of postcards that could be sold to visitors.
- Group 8 is to design souvenirs that can be sold to tourists.

5. COLONISATION

Engage the class in a discussion about colonisation. Provide a definition of the term and explain that it means to establish a colony and take over a place for one’s own use. Look closely at the settlement of Dipsquittie by Sir Reginald

FitzNicely on behalf of England. Ask the class to identify the effects of colonisation on the people of Dipsquittie. This conversation can lead to a broader discussion on colonisation in the world and how it applies to Australia. Do the students know any countries that have been colonised? Are there long-lasting effects of colonisation?

Discuss with your class why so little is written from the perspective of indigenous populations. Are there books in your library that give an alternate view? Ask your teacher librarian. Look at the countries around the world that have been colonised, and see if students can find out what happened to their indigenous populations.

The International Day of Indigenous People is held each year on August 9. It may be appropriate for your class to observe this day. For further information visit <<http://www.un.org/depts/dh/indigenous/>>

This website has links to maps, different indigenous people around the world, activities, and the International Year of Indigenous People.

6. WAR

Samuel B. Gliblip provokes a war in Dipsquittie. Ask the class to reread how Gliblip convinces the Dipsquittian people to engage in warfare (see Chapter 4). Why does Gliblip do this?

Discuss the issue of war with your class. Your class could put pins on a map to show the areas of conflict around the world. The class could collect newspaper articles that tell us of conflict in the world today, and pin them on the board next to the map. Use different coloured pins for those with Australian involvement. The class could take a further look at the wars Australia has been involved with in the past. This could lead to activities at Anzac Day or Remembrance Day. There are many suggestions for this on the Department of Veterans' Affairs website <http://www.dva.gov.au/> or the website of the Australian War Memorial <http://www.awm.gov.au/> .

A long-term effect of the Second World War has occurred recently (2008) with the discovery of the HMAS *Sydney*. Ask your class to find newspaper articles written about the finding of the sunken ship. Ask them to think about the relatives of these dead sailors and what they are now thinking. See if they can find out what war the ship was involved in and where she was and why she was sunk.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. FURTHER READING

Encourage your class to borrow and read another funny book from the library. Enlist the help of your teacher librarian. Below is a list of suggested reading.

Chatterton, Martin	<i>The Brain Finds a Leg</i>
Catchpole, Heather	<i>It's True! Pirates Ate Rats</i> (It's True series)
Colfer, Eoin	<i>Artemis Fowl</i>
Cummings, Phil	<i>Danny Allen Was Here</i>
D'Ath, Justin	<i>Dangerous Games</i>
Deary, Terry	<i>Loathsome London</i>
Gleitzman, Morris	<i>Doubting Thomas</i>
Griffiths, Andy	<i>The Day My Bum Went Psycho</i> (and others)
Horowitz, Anthony	<i>The Greek Who Stole Christmas</i>
Jennings, Paul	<i>Unmentionable</i>
Pershall, Anna and Mary	<i>Escape from Year Eight</i>
Spillman, Ken	<i>Love is a UFO</i>
Winton, Tim	<i>The Bugalugs Bum Thief</i>
Wolfer, Dianne	<i>The Mum Who Kept Possums in Her Bra</i>
Wright, Rachel	<i>You've Got Blackmail</i>

2. AUTHOR STUDY

The author on the title page is listed as Professor Walter Loder-Bull. Ask the class how we know that this is not a real person. Ask the class to search the publication details for the true author. They will find that an author called **Carol Ann Martin** wrote this book, and information about her can be found at: <http://www.scholastic.com.au/> Click on the heading 'Authors and Illustrators' on the left hand side, scroll down to 'Martin', and click on 'Carol Ann'.

Can your students find other authors who write under a pseudonym? Emily Rodda is an Australian author who writes under several different names. Ask your class to find out her real name and any other names she writes under. Discuss with your class the possible reasons why she writes under assumed names.

3. MADE-UP WORLDS

Ask your class if they know of any other books with made-up worlds. Discuss common features of made-up worlds and what genre these books fall into.

The following questions can be answered individually or in groups.

- Closely look at Dipsquittie. What indicates that it is a made-up world? (Hint: geography, island nature, people and their clothing, animals that inhabit the island, customs)
- Create your own new world. Draw a map. Set up a dictionary of new words you have created for your world. List the animals, the country's features, and the people who inhabit your country.

4. ALLEGORY

Many authors have written of other worlds in an allegorical way. Talk to your class about the famous allegorical novel, *Animal Farm*.