



Teachers' Notes Crooked Mick

DAVE LUCKETT
ILLUSTRATED BY ANDREW
JOYNER

OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Young Readers
Title	Mates: Crooked Mick
Author	Dave Lockett
Illustrator	Andrew Joyner
Extent	64 pp
Age	6+
Australian RRP	\$10.99
Binding	Paperback
Printing	Colour
ISBN	978 1 86291 815 3
Format	198 x 128 mm

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INTRODUCTION

Just how tall can a tall tale become? In *Crooked Mick*, Dave Lockett and illustrator Andrew Joyner stretch a yarnning session between a jackaroo, a drover, and a mysterious stranger into *the tallest tale ever told!*

Crooked Mick was a giant of a man (but perhaps not *that* big), who could ride lightning bolts bareback – with his arms folded! He could pull a fence straight just by swearing at the fence posts, and he could shear so fast that once he'd shorn two sheep dogs, a shed hand and the wool classer before he'd even slowed down.

Dave Lockett's *Crooked Mick* captures the essence of a bush yarnning session filled with humour, the driest of wit, and ludicrous straight-faced exaggeration. Perfectly accompanied by Andrew Joyner's laid-back bush characters and understated humour, *Crooked Mick* will be loved by everyone who has ever heard a tale they couldn't quite believe.

From tall tales to spooky stories and everything in between, **Mates** are all-Australian stories for Aussie kids, illustrated in colour on every page.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dave Lockett is the author of the Rhianna books and many other novels for younger readers. He is a full-time writer whose specialities are fantasy, historical fiction and history.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Andrew Joyner is an illustrator based in Strathalbyn, South Australia. He works regularly for *School Magazine*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Sun Herald*, *Reader's Digest*, *The Age* and *The Sunday Age*, among others.

ACTIVITIES

The following questions can be used to begin a class discussion, or they can be answered individually, in pairs or in groups.

1. English

The **Mates** series explores many commonly understood elements about what it is to be Australian. The **Mates** are made specially for Australian children. One of the ways that we know we are Australian is to do with how we speak.

a) List all the words in *Crooked Mick* that you think are especially Australian. Then check your score!

5 words	Look harder!
10 words	Good work!
15 words	Now you're talking!

b) The word 'bushman' in *Crooked Mick* describes someone who can survive living and working in the Australian bush or outback. What skills would a person need to live and work outside? Where would they sleep? What would they eat? And how would they cook?

c) A bunyip is a mythical creature, but Australians who travel overseas sometimes tell tall tales and describe them as being real. Can you describe a bunyip?

d) A 'jackaroo', or 'jillaroo', and a 'drover' are uniquely Australian words. With some help from your teacher, look these words up in the dictionary. What do they mean? Use the word 'dinkum' in a sentence.

e) The author Dave Lockett says '*The stringybarks leaned over them, and the bush was full of night noises*'. Try to re-write this spooky sentence using your own words.

2. History

a) When European settlers first came to Australia and started farming sheep and cattle, there were not many fences or roads. People had to look after the sheep and cattle to make sure they weren't attacked by dingoes and didn't wander away during the night.

- Research the Dingo Fence and draw it on the map of Australia.
- Before four-wheel-drives and motorbikes and helicopters, how did people travel around their farms and stations? Find out how the jackaroo and drover travelled by looking in the book.

b) Did you know that a sheep's fleece just grows and grows? A shearer is a person with special skills. The person has to be very strong and also very careful not to hurt the sheep while it's being shorn. Usually sheep are shorn once a year in spring and their wool is made into many different things.

- Why is wool a valuable fibre? Find out what a bale of wool was valued at in 1850.

c) In the book, Crooked Mick builds a huge shearing shed on the Speewah Station and the illustration shows sheep pouring out of its doors. There are many other stories about the Speewah. Find one on the internet.

3. Creative Activities

a) *Crooked Mick* is full of 'tall tales'. See if you can write your own tall tale, like this one: *'The Speewah is out past the Black Stump. It's so far out in the bush that the crows fly backwards. The ground gets so hot at Speewah Station that the emus wear army boots.'*

b) Imagine it is your job to make advertisements for *Crooked Mick* at your school. Design a poster that might make other children want to read the book.

c) Do you know how to play 'Chinese' Whispers? Play this game with your class and then discuss how a story sometimes gets changed the more it is told.

- d) What does Crooked Mick *really* look like? Draw your version of him.

4. Natural History

Points for discussion:

- a) Have you ever been outside at night to see the Milky Way? Do you know why you can see the Milky Way much more clearly in the bush?
- b) A shearers' cook has to get up very early in the morning and cook breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner for all the hungry, hard-working shearers. What might be on the menu? Write your own shearers' menu.
- c) Why are sheep are usually shorn in spring?
- d) Do some research to find out how many sheep one shearer can *really* shear in one day.

5. Geography

What identifies this as an Australian story? Do you think it could take place anywhere in the world? Find out all you can about Pecos Bill.

- a) Where in Australia would you be likely to have trouble with big hungry mosquitoes? Why? What diseases can mosquitoes carry?
- b) The Todd River near Alice Springs, in central Australia, is dry almost all the time and is even the location for an annual dry river boat race. In 1993 the boat race was cancelled due to a flood! Research on the internet the history of this fun local event.
- c) The author of *Crooked Mick*, Dave Lockett, lives in Perth. Mark where Perth is on your map of Australia. The illustrator, Andrew Joyner, lives in Strathalbyn in South Australia. Work out how far it is from Dave's house to Andy's house.



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