

The Legend of Moondyne Joe

These notes to accompany The Legend of Moondyne Joe provide suggestions for classroom activities based on or linked to the book's text and illustrations and highlight points for discussion.

Synopsis

Not known for gunfights or robbing banks, it was the convict bushranger Moondyne Joe's amazing ability to escape every time he was placed behind bars that won him fame and the affection of the early settlers.

Wearing a kangaroo-skin cape and possum-skin slippers, he found freedom in the wooded valleys and winding creeks at Moondyne Hills.

Joe was harmless, except possibly to a few settlers whose horses had a 'mysterious' way of straying. When blamed for the disappearance of a farmer's prize stallion the colonial authorities were soon to find out that there wasn't a jail that could hold Joe!

On Writing "The Legend of Moondyne Joe"

By Mark Greenwood

I wanted to create a fun story, accurate in detail, about a strength of spirit that was nurtured by life in the new colony. A book that would bring to life a legend from our colourful history. I believe by having an appreciation of their own history, children better understand themselves, their community and their culture.

The Legend of Moondyne Joe aims to encourage interest in our convict history to a wide audience of middle to upper primary and lower secondary age children. The picture book format allows illustrations to bring characters and settings to life. Illustrations help readers to develop a feel for bygone eras that words alone cannot portray. The Legend of Moondyne Joe story subtly explores the frontier qualities of the Australian bush and provides children an insight into the early years of settlement.

Compared to stories of other bushrangers, Moondyne Joe is a topic about which little is known. Children's knowledge of bushrangers usually concerns blazing gunfights or robberies. Joe was different. He was a bushranger known to a few settlers whose horses had a 'mysterious' way of straying, but he became a legend for keeping the colony amused with some remarkable escapes from custody.

Joe had many friends and admirers. He was an outstanding bushman, rough and ready, willing to improvise and 'give it a go'. The underlying theme of the book – freedom, independence and determination forms the basis of the historical origins of the Australian legend, and Joe's way of life and determination to be free have universal appeal.

About the Author

Mark Greenwood is an author and musician. His books and songs have been published internationally. Mark's series of children's books, "Magic Boomerang", "Outback Adventure" and "Our Big Island", were prompted an interest in multicultural literature and the unique way illustrated books can assist children to develop an understanding of other cultures and perspectives.

Mark's new work aims to encourage an appreciation of Australia's unique myths and legends. He enjoys working with students of all ages, inspiring and developing their natural curiosity about books and writing.

Mark's other interests include combining music and children's books with multimedia technology.

About the Illustrator

Frané Lessac has over 25 children's books published throughout the world. Residing in Western Australia, Lessac was born in the United States. Before turning to painting she studied feature film production at UCLA in California.

Travelling is a major source of inspiration for her work as she paints her impressions of a country and the way of life in her oil and gouache artwork. A prolific artist, she has captured the magic, the simplicity and the reality of West Indian, African, Indian and urban American folk cultures and environments. More recently her work is inspired by brilliant blue skies and the distinctive red ochre of the Australian landscape.

To bring the legend of Moondyne Joe to life, Frané used gouache paints.

Suggestions for classroom activities

Talk / write about life in the days of the convicts. Research one element, such as transport, fashion, school days, or kinds of work, home life and pastimes.

Imagine you were suddenly transported back in time. What was life like in the Swan River Colony of Western Australia.

Create a time-line of the important dates and places in the story of Moondyne Joe, and include in it your own illustrations.

Look at the reasons why people were sent to Australia as convicts.

Discuss how Moondyne Joe was different from other bushrangers.

Design a wanted poster for an imaginary escaped convict.

Imagine you are a convict – write a diary entry titled: "My first day working on the chain gang".

Newsflash! Write a front-page story about one of Moondyne Joe's escapes. Design your own article with a catchy title, sub-headings, text and illustrations.

Write a song or poem about Moondyne Joe and / or the convict era.

Using the book's endpapers as a guide, design a map showing positions of Perth and Fremantle, Moondyne Joe's horse traps, the Newcastle Goal in Toodyay, the prison stables, Joe's hideouts, the Avon River, his cell in Fremantle Prison, and Ferguson's (Houghton's) wine cellar, scene of his last capture.

Describe the countryside where Moondyne Joe lived: the flora, fauna, landmarks, colours and country in the Avon Valley, where Joe lived the bushman's life.

The story and its themes

Discussion – Does an appreciation of our convict history, give us a better understanding of ourselves, and our culture?

Moondyne Joe was an outstanding bushman, rough and ready, willing to improvise and 'give it a go'. Discuss the strength of spirit nurtured by life in a convict colony.

Why does Moondyne Joe's simple way of life and his determination to be free have such an appeal. What did the settlers admire about him?

Discuss the theme of freedom and independence, and how important they are to the historical origins of other Australian stories and legends.

The cover

Ask students to look closely at the front cover (without turning the book over to look at the back and without opening the book to look inside). Have them jot down quickly, like a brainstorming session, their responses to the cover. What questions come to mind? What might the story be about? How do they feel about the dashing figure? Where is the story set?

Questions based on the text and Glossary

When did the first convict labour in Western Australia arrive?

What made the policeman, patrolling the dimly lit streets, suspicious of Joseph Johns?

Why was Moondyne Joe arrested?

Where and when was he arrested?

What was the length of his sentence?

What was Moondyne Joe's real name?

When was Moondyne Joe born?

How long was Joe waiting in a crowded English gaol before he was herded aboard the convict ship?

A convict could be sentenced to transportation if his sentence was _____ years or over.

How did Moondyne Joe get to Australia?

Describe the voyage and what life may have been like on a convict ship.

What was the name of the Ship he arrived on?

How long did the voyage take?

How many convicts were on board?

When Joe had his first glimpse of the bleak, windswept shores of the Swan River settlement what was his attention drawn to?

What year did Moondyne Joe arrive in Australia?

What was Moondyne Joe's Convict number?

When did Moondyne Joe receive his Ticket-of-Leave?

What was a ticket-of-leave?

After serving how much of an original sentence could a prisoner receive a conditional pardon?

When did Moondyne Joe receive his Conditional Pardon ?

What did the Governor of the colony do?

What was a pensioner guard?

Who could order punishment for convicts?

What did Joe wear when his clothes became ragged and torn?

When MJ lived in bush where did he like to sleep and where did he take a shower?

What did Joe construct around the freshwater springs to capture lost stock and the wild brumbies that came to drink?

What did 'sawyers' and 'teamsters' do in the new colony?.

While the warders dozed, how did Joe escape from his damp prison cell?

Where did Joe hide in the prison stables?

What did he "borrow" from the Magistrate?

Who did Joe mingle with at the Mahogany Creek Inn.

What were Joe's mates named?

How did Joe make his getaway from the Mahogany Creek Inn.

When Joe was released from prison why did he get into trouble again?

What was the length Joe's sentence?

What were leg irons?

Why was Joe put in leg irons?

Why did the early settlers like Moondyne Joe?

The shrill call of what instrument raised the alarm when Joe escaped from the chain gang?

How did Joe scale the wall of Fremantle prison?

What song, sung to a familiar tune, did children sing to tease the Governor?

Where did Joe strike off his chains?

What did Joe use to cross the turbulent Avon River?

What was specially constructed for Joe at Fremantle prison ?

What was the the Governor's promise to Joe?

How did Joe use the rocks Governor ordered to be brought inside the prison, to make his escape?

What was it that Joe had a fondness for that ultimately cost him his freedom ?

What did the new Governor do for Joe?

Where did Joe go to find a new home ?

Was Moondyne Joe ever married?

Where is Moondyne Joe's Grave?

Why is Moondyne Joe a legend?

Further reading for teachers

Moondyne Joe – The Man and the Myth by Ian Elliot

Moondyne Joe – The life and Times of by WJ Edgar

Old Toodyay and Newcastle by Rica Erickson

Australian Bushranging by Bill Warren

Midnite The Story of a Wild Colonial Boy by Randolph Stow

Unwilling Emigrants by Alexandra Hasluck

Convicts and Colonial Society 1788 – 1868

Moondyne by John Boyle O'Reilly

Archives of the WA State Library (Battye Library), The WA Historical Society, The York Society, The Fremantle Prison.

Interesting places to visit

(for Western Australian children)

Visit the old Toodyay / Newcastle jail

Tour the Fremantle Prison and see Moondyne Joes 'escape proof' cell.

Find Moondyne Joes Horse traps in the Avon National Park

Picnic at Houghton's Winery – the scene of Joe's last capture.

Bushwalk in the Avon National Park

Visit the ghost at Moondyne Joes grave at Fremantle cemetery.

Join in the fun at the annual Moondyne Festival in Toodyay.

Discover where Moondyne Joe's Cave is.

Ask for more information at Toodyay Tourist Centre.

Stirling Tce – (08) 9574 2435 Fax: (08) 9574 2431

WEB SITES

Avon River <http://www.avon.net.au/tourism/attractn/avonrivr.htm>

Avon Valley National Park

http://www.calm.wa.gov.au/national_parks/previous_parks_month/avon_valley.html

Fremantle Prison – <http://www.fremantleprison.com>

Moondyne Festival <http://www.gidgenet.com.au/toodyay/contact.html>

Swan River System Landscape

www.wrc.wa.gov.au/srt/publications/landscape/precincts/precinct13/index.html

Toodyay Tourist Office – toodyay@gidgenet.com.au

Internet Home Page <http://www.gidgenet.com.au/toodyay/>

Further Information

For information regarding school bookings for the book's author and/or illustrator
contact: artbeat@ozemail.com.au