

Introduction to Module A

Experience Through Language requires you to explore how one specific element of language in a text can be used to influence a responder's view of other people and the world. This module is divided into two electives: Distinctive Voices and Distinctively Visual. You are only expected to study ONE of these electives.

Elective 2: Distinctively Visual

For the Distinctively Visual elective, the particular focus is *images* and how the language of texts create images that can be seen and/or visualised by the responder. Your extended response for this elective will reflect how your exploration of this element of language, *visual images*, has led you to develop a better appreciation of your relationships with others and the world. To fully develop your understanding of how this aspect of language shapes meaning you must explore its use in your prescribed text, as well as in other texts of your own choosing. You will look closely at the particular language structures and features used to create distinctive *images* within your chosen texts. You should look at different forms of texts (advertisements, works of art, etc.) produced in a range of media (sound, print, film and electronic media), and consider the specific conventions used in each to create images in *distinctively visual* texts. Finally, as part of your study of this elective, you will also come to realise that the creation of distinctive images in a text often results in quite varied and distinct interpretations by responders.

To be placed in the highest band you must:

- reveal an extensive, detailed exploration and analysis of the way language is used deliberately by the composers to construct meaning and affect responses to the texts
- demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of well-analysed related texts and how these can be compared to the prescribed text in relation to ideas and techniques
- demonstrate an ability to construct a skilful argument which is well supported by detailed textual knowledge and a clear understanding of the module and elective.

You must not only consider the way language is used to create the distinctive images within the chosen texts, but also how this creates meaning within the texts and impacts on the responder's interpretation of the texts. You need to demonstrate your understanding of these concepts through a thorough examination of how they are explored in one prescribed text and at least TWO related texts.

Choosing related texts

It is important that your choice of related text is relevant to both the module and the elective. It must be a text that effectively demonstrates the ways in which language is used to reflect a particular experience. It should also demonstrate an effective use of its language form and features to create distinctive images. Finally, when choosing your related texts you should ensure that they link to your prescribed text either through the key ideas being explored or through the ways in which a distinctive image is used to affect responses to the text.

HSC Standard English syllabus outcomes

The syllabus outcomes listed below are directly covered in the chapters of this module/elective:

1. You must demonstrate understanding of how relationships between composer, responder, text and context shape meaning.
2. You must demonstrate understanding of the relationships among texts.
4. You must describe and analyse the ways that language forms and features, and structures of texts, shape meaning and influence responses.
5. You must analyse the effect of technology and medium on meaning.
6. You must engage with the details of the text in order to respond critically and personally.
7. You must adapt and synthesise a range of textual features to explore and communicate information, ideas and values for a variety of purposes, audiences and contexts.

However, you must also demonstrate the following syllabus outcomes in your extended responses:

3. You must develop language relevant to the study of English.
8. You must articulate and represent your own ideas in critical, interpretive and imaginative texts from a range of perspectives.
9. You must assess the appropriateness of a range of processes and technologies in the investigation and organisation of information and ideas.
10. You must analyse and synthesise information and ideas into sustained and logical argument for a range of purposes and audiences.
11. You must draw upon the imagination to transform experience and ideas into text demonstrating control of language.
12. You must reflect on your own processes of responding and composing.
13. You must reflect on your own processes of learning.

SELECTED SHORT STORIES

OF HENRY LAWSON

Introduction to the text

About the author

New South Wales on 17 June 1867. He was the son of a Norwegian seaman, Niels Larson, who later changed his name to Peter Lawson.

In Henry's early years, the family lived on a poor selection in the Mudgee district. Lawson suffered from deafness and was often teased as a result.

His parents separated in 1883, and Henry moved to Sydney with his mother Louisa. Henry married Bertha Bredt in 1896, and they had two children, but it was not a happy relationship and they separated in 1903. Henry spent periods of time in institutions for his alcoholism, and periods of time in jail for failing to support his family. He died on 2 September 1922 in Sydney. At his funeral, crowds lined the streets to farewell Australia's 'poet of the people'.

Type of text

The Drover's Wife, *In a Dry Season*, *The Loaded Dog* and *Joe Wilson's Courtship* are short stories.

Context

The context of the period—Australia defined its 'bush' identity during the 1890s and the writings of Henry Lawson helped formulate a particular image of Australia that is still held today.

Much of Lawson's work was set in the Australian bush or was about bush life. His characters reflect his experiences of the world during his time, focusing on 'real' characters who are down on their luck, women and children, roving workers and bush larrikins.

In September 1892, with five pounds and a rail ticket to Bourke, Lawson set out on what was to be one of the most important journeys of his life. Much of what he saw in the drought-blasted west of New South Wales shocked and horrified him and the experience at Bourke itself and in surrounding districts overwhelmed him. By the time he returned to the city he was armed with tragic and comic memories and experiences that allowed him to create credible situations and contexts.

The context of the setting—although most Australians lived in cities and towns in the 19th century it was the bush that somehow fascinated people because of its overall harshness and the types of people who survived

there. By the 1890s Australia had been settled for a little more than one hundred years and Lawson was the first Australian-born writer who really looked at Australia with 'Australian' eyes. He was the first to form and articulate concepts of what we now consider an 'Australian' character and identity.

The impact of the context on the content and setting—Lawson was from the bush, had lived on a selection, had been brought up in bush poverty, suffered hardship and unemployment, and knew of the characters and lifestyles he talked about. His work reflected Australian experience with a freshness and reality that the average reader recognised. His perspective is unique as many of his short stories feature elements of loneliness, depression, alcoholism and death in an unforgiving environment, something which was unusual at the time.

Audience

By 1892, at the age of twenty-five, Lawson was already endeared to the reading public. Much of his published work was accompanied by illustrations from well-known artists of the time and the reputable Sydney publication *The Bulletin* was eager to publish his work. Lawson was granted a state funeral when he died in 1922. Lawson today has achieved iconic Australian status and is considered Australia's 'poet of the people'. His popularity has continued and his uniquely Australian voice resonates with modern readers.

Purpose

Henry Lawson wrote with the intent purpose of representing the 'real' Australian story as he interpreted it.

Reading the short stories

One of the features of a good short story is that it maintains enough variety to keep the reader's interest through structure and suspense within limited complicated action. It should also succeed in presenting a life story in the restricted time-frame of twenty-four hours as this allows for adequate development of theme and setting as well as some detailed exploration of character.

Common features of a short story include:

- limited number of characters
- short time-frame
- one main action

- limited places of action
- characters that are not fully developed
- often open-ended
- text may begin with the action itself.

◆ Areas to consider when reading a short story

Identify the main characters, plot and situation. Consider the story's point of view. Think about why the author chose to tell the story through a particular point of view. Also consider the author's use of time. Look for any words that signal time has passed.

Pay attention to the setting. Setting refers not only to where the story takes place, but also when it happens. It also includes and influences aspects of tone and mood.

Locate the crucial moment. Every short story has some key conflict, tension or element of suspense in it.

Analyse language and structure. Consider how the composer communicates his or her ideas. Also consider the context. Are features such as time, location, gender, religion, socio-economic status and cultural information significant? How does your understanding of today's world influence your interpretation of the text?

Key concepts and definitions

Droving—the practice of moving livestock over large distances by walking them. A drover is an experienced stockman who moves livestock, usually sheep or cattle,

'on the hoof' over long distances. Reasons for droving may include delivering animals to a new owner's property, taking animals to market, or moving animals during a drought in search of better feed and/or water.

Larrikinism—the name given to the Australian cultural tradition of irreverence, mockery of authority and disregard for rigid norms of propriety. Larrikinism can also be associated with a self-deprecating humour.

Selection—this allowed those with limited means to acquire land and referred to land that was 'free selection before survey'. Selectors often came into conflict with squatters, who already occupied the land and often managed to circumvent the law.

Shaft mining or shaft sinking—refers to the method of excavating a vertical tunnel from the top down, where there is initially no access to the bottom. When the top of the excavation is the ground surface it is referred to as a shaft; when the top of the excavation is underground it is called a winze.

Sundowner or swagman—an Australian term describing an underclass of transient itinerant workers, who travelled by foot from farm to farm carrying the traditional swag.

You need to know the following terms for this unit. The meanings are given in the glossary on pages iv–ix.

- Travelogue
- Vernacular

Focus on the syllabus

Details of the text

The Drover's Wife

This story illustrates the strength and survival of a bush woman. The narrative begins with a description of a harsh landscape and it is this setting that highlights the drover's wife's struggle against her circumstances and environment. A snake threatens the safety of her family as it moves from the woodpile to under the house, and her dog, Alligator, proves to be a strong ally in the absence of her husband. She keeps watch the whole night, the snake eventually appears and action erupts as the dog and woman mangle and kill the reptile. The event unifies the mother and her son, who declares that he 'won't never go drovin' (p. 26) as he fully realises the harshness of her situation and seeks to protect her and to take the place of the absent man.

◆ Characters

The reader is invited into a snapshot of the drover's wife's life. Her appearance and behaviour create contrasting appreciation of her strengths and frailties. Lawson's description of the woman carefully avoids excessive emotion in order to maintain the appearance

of narrative objectivity but there is heroism in her struggle for survival and great sensitivity to her suffering, seen in 'she cried' and 'wept' (p. 23). Through this disconnection of the narrative voice the mother is developed as strong and practical, though Lawson's interjectory 'Heaven help her!' (p. 22) reinforces his sensitivity towards her situation.

The mother is never named and the third-person references to her as 'she' universalise her bush experiences and lifestyle. It is the absence of her husband, forced to go droving, which leaves her as the sole provider and protector. If her husband had the means he 'would take her to the city and keep her there like a princess' (p. 22), which is ironic given the extreme harshness of her situation. She would, however, 'feel strange away from it' and despite her privations appears 'contented with her lot' (p. 25).

References to natural disasters the wife has overcome—bushfire and flood—reinforce her stoicism. The responder is invited to visualise the woman through Lawson's realistic visual description of a 'gaunt, sun-browned bush woman' (p. 19) which corresponds with the uncompromising isolation and circumstance.

The children are described with cruel clarity as 'ragged, dried-up looking' while the son is a 'sharp faced urchin' (p. 19). These descriptions visually reinforce the family's privations and social status.

◆ Setting

A stunted landscape and isolation are features of Lawson's bush descriptions and they work in this narrative to reflect the bleak psychology of the mother: 'Everlasting, maddening sameness of the stunted trees' (p. 24). The strong visual description of setting and landscape visually presents a harsh, hostile and unforgiving location. The composer's descriptions are blunt and unromanticised: 'near waterless creek ... nothing to relieve the eye' (p. 19), while the descriptions of the house visually impress upon the responder its bareness and functionality: 'A bog bark kitchen standing at one end is larger than the house itself' (p. 19).

The closing tableau of the setting sun is symbolic yet thematically true to the rest of the story. The woman's breast is 'worn-out' and the daylight is 'sickly' (p. 26), visually reinforcing the harsh, hostile, unforgiving, monotonous, unrelenting and bleak environment.

◆ Language

The story is remarkable for the way it conveys a sense of an entire life in a few pages. This impression is communicated chiefly through flashback, as seen by the quick tense changes that illuminate the wife's past and present and serve to develop her stoicism and resolve. The girl-bride who once 'hated' (p. 25) the loneliness of the bush develops over time into a gaunt, determined and 'cunning' (p. 24) bush woman.

Present tense and third-person narrative in combination with an omniscient narrative point of view creates immediacy that invites an imaginative 'seeing' of the contextual situation being described.

Emotive adverbs and adjectives heighten the visual imagery and bring both the scene and the characters to life. In the absence of her husband, she must contend with a 'villainous-looking sundowner' (p. 24).

Descriptive vocabulary heightens the narrative's visual effect: 'drenching downpour' (p. 23), as do clichés such as 'castles in the air' (p. 22), and they serve to exaggerate the extreme nature of the family's life and environment as well as to create an informal bond between responder and composer. That the children are 'dried-up looking' (p. 19) corresponds to the arid setting.

There is affection and humour in Lawson's description of Alligator, who is given a character profile within the text: '... the dog's chewing-up apparatus greatly resembled that of the reptile he was named after' (p. 24). His grizzled appearance and role in the family life is well established and easily visualised.

Figurative language is used sparingly but is powerful, with thunderstorms brought to life visually: 'At every

flash of lightning, the cracks between the slabs gleam like polished silver' (p. 21).

In terms of dialogue, idiomatic phrases and colourful expressions bring the bush to life: 'Stand back! I'll have the beggar!' (p. 19). The text moves between prose passages and rich colloquial expressions and content. Swear words are never directly used. Instead, euphemisms create humour and add to the harshness of the characters' lives: 'I'd like to screw their blanky necks' (p. 21), while also informing of the social rigidity of the day when swearing was censored.

In a Dry Season

At the height of summer the narrator embarks on a train journey to Bourke and introduces the responder to a variety of Australian personalities—a shearer, a sundowner, or swagman, a larrikin—as well as the town itself. It is written as a short 'sketch' or travelogue and is a subjective and honest appraisal of what the composer sees and feels.

Lawson's themes of bush desolation and harshness are continued throughout this short story and everything in it is 'dry', as the title suggests. The narrator perceives a sundowner to be madly attacking a train, when in reality he is just killing a snake. There is chaos in the boxing tall-tales of a bush liar, who entertains the passengers but is taken down by a 'quiet looking bushman' (p. 39) in a short space of time.

◆ Characters

The narrator aims to give a realistic picture of a train journey through the central west of New South Wales, revealing strong sympathy for the unemployed, something which corresponds thematically with Lawson's overall compassion for bush characters in his other stories. People are characterised and stereotyped by what they are wearing and not by their actions, and as the journey moves further away from civilisation the more 'old fashioned' the outfits become.

The sundowner, the shearers, the unemployed, the bush liar and the 'refined' bushman are not named but type-classed through visual descriptions of their appearances, with clothing communicating ideas about these characters: 'an animated mummy of a swagman' (p. 39). They are not personalised, as seen through the predominant use of 'they', and Lawson creates anonymity in order to communicate a broad image of bush life. By the end of the story the responder feels that he or she has been inducted into a special world by a person who knows it intimately, having been positioned to picture the setting and characters.

◆ Setting

The narrator finds the setting dry, harsh and largely unimpressive. Punctuation in 'Talk of people settling on the land!' (p. 38) conveys the narrator's incredulity, and the world outside the train is described in simple

and unadorned visual detail with 'a wire fence and a few ragged gums' (p. 39) reinforcing the arid uniformity and emptiness of the scene.

◆ Language

Lawson adopts the persona of an experienced traveller and the journey is brought to life with the reader directly addressed in a conversational tone. The first-person plural pronoun 'we' (p. 38) is inclusive and is used to involve the responder in this common experience.

Literal rather than figurative language paints a composite of simplistic images that communicate the monotony and dryness of the environment: 'narrow muddy gutter' (p. 38).

The strong use of authorial comment is condemnatory: 'Struggle dimly through to the bitter end' (p. 38). Sarcasm and irony are used to highlight the anomalies of the bush: 'death is about the only cheerful thing in the bush' (p. 38).

Colourful and colloquial language brings the characters to life and places the responder within the context of the experience: 'He was a bit of a scrapper' (p. 39), while animal references provide deeper insights into casual observations: 'something snaky about camels' (p. 39).

The Loaded Dog

Gold miners Dave Regan, Jim Bently and Andy Page are sinking a shaft at Stony Creek. Andy and Dave, fishing enthusiasts, devise a unique method of catching fish by throwing an explosive cartridge into the creek. The three men own a young retriever dog named Tommy, who picks up the deadly cartridge in its mouth and runs the fuse through the campfire. This causes the three men to run. The retriever, thinking it is all a game, comically chases the men who try everything in their power to escape. When Dave seeks refuge in the local pub the dog bounds in after him, causing the bushmen inside to scatter. A crowd of dogs, curious about this unusual object, gather around the cartridge, while the lit fuse gradually shortens in length. The explosion injures numerous dogs and for half an hour the bushmen who witnessed the spectacle are laughing hysterically. Tommy the retriever trots home after Dave, 'smiling his broadest, longest, and reddest smile of amiability, and apparently satisfied for one afternoon with the fun he'd had' (p. 100).

◆ Characters

Lawson creates a narrator who 'speaks from experience' and is himself a typical bushman telling a yarn, adding credibility to the story. The narrative's protagonists, Andy and Dave, are revealed in a gently mocking way, adding to the comedy of the situation. They are built up as individuals but also fit into bush stereotypes created through Lawson's idiomatic descriptions: 'I am the life out of ye' (p. 100). Dogs are personified within the story and prescribed human-like personality traits: 'spidery, thievish, cold-blooded ... good heartedness' (p. 99).

◆ Setting

The goldfields are a dangerous location but Lawson turns a very hazardous situation into a funny and comic scene. Lawson sets the location through the use of jargon associated with mining—'sinking a shaft ... rich reef' (p. 94)—which allows the responder to visualise details of the men's work.

◆ Language

Alliteration creates atmosphere and mood. During the chase scene, the 'dog dodged' (p. 97) while the men 'snatched up sticks and stones' (p. 97), creating a visual urgency and increasing the pace.

Visual detail and descriptions heighten the responder's sensory engagement with the narrative. The dog is described with slapstick humour, creating irony when the men realise it is the cause of the debacle: 'The retriever with the cartridge in his mouth wedged into his broadest and silliest grin' (p. 97). The personification adds humour that assigns cheeky intention on the dog's behalf. This continues on to the very end, where the vivid description allows the responder to visualise the comedy of how 'Andy's legs started with a jolt; his legs started before his legs did' (p. 97). The language is engaging and colourful and gives an appealing impression.

'Colourful' local vernacular adds to visual dimension. The language is colloquial and idiomatic—'come nosing round again' (p. 95)—and euphemisms such as 'coloured fool' (p. 97) and 'blanky retriever' (p. 98) are used. It is the final drawled 'El-lo, Da-a-ve! How's the fishin' getting on, Da-a-ve?' (p. 100) that prescribes bush legend status to the men's experience.

Joe Wilson's Courtship

The Joe who tells of his courting days is now an old man who advises young men to make the most of the period of courtship as such days 'will never come again' (p. 169). He presents his young self as a gawky, uncertain man whose friend at that time was the confident, would-be poet Jack Barnes.

Throughout the story it is evident that Joe finds it hard to take part in the camaraderie of the others working at the homestead. His courtship of Mary, or Possum, is a faltering affair, which only comes to fruition when Mary is insulted by a passing shearer, who Joe fights. This man is as much of a loner as Joe, who finds the event distasteful: 'I thought it was a low brutal business all round' (p. 188). There are elements of humour in the story, such as the incident with the broken clothesline—'I'd a reckless idea once of holding her up while she pegged' (p. 178)—and the absent-minded proposal: 'Then it dawned on me! I'd forgot all about proposing' (p. 194). The nostalgic reminiscences illuminate the passing of time and the troubled years in between.

◆ Characters

First-person narrative voice creates insight into Joe's character and motivations. The responder becomes the 'young chaps' (p. 168) listening to old Joe's tale, his vivid experiences recounted with a considered pace. This audience inclusion in the tale is reinforced by second-person references such as 'do you' (p. 171). The dialogue creates realism and immediacy and brings Joe's past to life: 'Make the best of them and you'll never regret them' (p. 169). Possum (Mary) is characterised by Joe and his reminiscences are affectionate: 'real good little girl and good looking into the bargain' (p. 170). Joe, with his self-doubt and shyness, is contrasted by other characters such as the harsh and sarcastic Jim, and Romany with his bitter innuendos.

◆ Language

Humour develops characters and themes within the story and the reader's empathy is engaged by humorous recounts and highly visual descriptions: 'the reddest shy lanky fool of a bushman' (p. 174). Understatement and inference provide enough detail for the responder to visualise the scene: 'We got very chummy' (p. 179). Flashbacks provide a dramatic and visual glimpse into the past: 'I remember the first glimpse I got of Mary' (p. 171). The detailed descriptions during the anniversary dance are visually poignant and help create tension within the narrative: 'I pressed my hand on her shoulder, just a little, so she couldn't pretend not to know it was there' (p. 193).

Honest reflection and recollection validates the older Joe's credibility: 'I reckoned that I was a fool' (p. 176). Emotional strain is communicated visually by Lawson: 'white as notepaper ... as if I'd been stung by a swarm of bees' (p. 190). His self-criticism and honesty make him an appealing character and narrator: 'I was mostly cool in a crisis' (p. 185). At times, a typical Lawson exclamation—'Ah, well!' (p. 170)—conveys Joe's fatalistic attitude towards life while the punctuation use in '... wasn't I happy walking home with Mary that night!' (p. 194) illustrates his sheer pleasure at the memory.

A range of textual features

Distinctively visual language techniques are used to communicate information, ideas and values in the text.

Lawson became one of Australia's most influential writers and his interest in the Australian bush experience became of significant artistic importance. He believed that many writers who had written about the bush had been unrealistic and so, drawing on childhood experiences and interactions with colourful people, he began to recount his own version of life in the bush. His main themes were conveyed chiefly through Characters and dialogue that did not follow conventional plots or narrative structures. His stories helped form features of

modern Australian identity such as endurance, resilience, mateship, larrikinism and humour in the face of adversity. As well as helping to formulate these ideas about Australian culture, it is Lawson's narrative style and Characters techniques that enable the responder to clearly visualise setting, character and ideas within his stories and that invite an imaginative understanding of the contextual situation being described.

The Drover's Wife is about average people existing off the land on an Australian selection and is a seminal moment in Australian short fiction. Lawson's fascination has created a visually-inspired bush realism and its brutal effects on struggling white settlers have become an accepted narrative motif in Australian literature and popular culture.

The Drover's Wife communicates a visually repugnant, tedious landscape, and the trees 'sighing above' an 'almost waterless creek' (p. 19) seem to foreshadow the stoic, lonely, 'gaunt, sun-browned bush woman' (p. 19) who is at the centre of the story and who also represents the great Australian legend of European struggle, battle and survival. She represents those who barely hung on, clinging to some distant memory of 'civilisation', marriage, and family life within and against the bitter land. Lawson's mastery of visual imagery pays tribute to the drover's wife and all like her who command respect through their tenacity and fighting spirits in the face of adversity.

The harsh reality of the bush is communicated visually throughout *In a Dry Season* and descriptions of the dry and lifeless setting are created that complement the hardened and dusty characters, reinforced by the omission of any female characters which highlights the lack of any softness or femininity.

Lawson comments on the arid state of the economy and is cutting in his commentary on the pathetic nature of local industry, as seen by his deadpan description: 'Native industry was represented ... by three tiles, a chimney pot and a length of piping on a slab' (p. 39).

Lawson highlights those traits he views as honourable through his Characters, and allows the actions of the 'quiet looking bushman ... who took the liar down in about three minutes' (p. 39) to show his sympathy for the hardworking bushman as opposed to the pomposity of the city character.

In *The Loaded Dog* it is the comical, light-hearted impression of the irreverent goldfield characters who are humanised by Lawson, and whose struggles to make their fortunes form such a strong link to modern Australian identity. Lawson's humorous yarn allows for themes of mateship and humour to speak in the face of adversity. He sets the location through the use of jargon associated with mining, allowing the responder to visualise details of the men's work.

When the three men first realise the dog has the live cartridge they run together in single file away from the dog, but here their 'mateship' is tested as there is a danger they will all be blown up. In separating there is a terrible moment where the animal stands grinning over one of the men trapped at the bottom of a miner's shaft, one which serves to remind us that in the end we are all alone. The final visual image of the '... lanky easygoing Bushmen, riding lazily past' reinforces features of Australian good humour in popular culture, as does 'El-lo, Da-a-ve! How's the fishin' getting on, Da-a-ve?' (p. 100).

In *Joe Wilson's Courtship* the difficulties of bush life are shown to have a way of toughening those who experience them. Relationships and romance serve more of a functional social purpose that sees men and women marry and fulfill specific roles within their relationships. The older Joe, watching his more hopeful younger self, seems to know that age and experience will harden him and the tale communicates that human happiness and youth is destined to be brief, particularly in the harshness of the bush:

Make the most of your courting days, you young chaps, and keep them clean, for they're about the only days when there's a chance of poetry and beauty coming into this life ... Make the most of your courting days, you young chaps, for they will never come again. (p. 168)

The detailed descriptions during the anniversary dance are visually poignant and help create tension within the narrative: 'I pressed my hand on her shoulder, just a little, so she couldn't pretend not to know it was there' (p. 193).

Circumstances force Joe to defend Mary's honour and it is through this that other aspects of his Australianness are revealed, in particular his relationship with his mates. When he is forced to take a dominant position his mates are amazed at his pluck: 'I'm damn proud of you, Joe' (p. 188). However, Lawson allows for a deeper insight into Joe's character: '... a fighting man ... suffers more mentally than he does physically' (p. 187), and it is a feature such as this that accounts for Lawson's enduring popularity and resonance. The dialogue creates realism and immediacy and brings Joe's past to life: 'Make the best of them and you'll never regret them' (p. 169).

Understanding of the relationships among texts

Related text—*Crocodile Dundee* by Peter Faiman

Connections between the film *Crocodile Dundee* and the short stories of Henry Lawson include:

- Both texts use visual language techniques to create strong Australian identities.
- An exploration of the modern text *Crocodile Dundee* allows for discussion of how context (time, location, cultural attitudes and values) has influenced attitudes towards Australian identity.
- Both texts deal with stereotypical ideas of what it means to be Australian, although *Crocodile Dundee* for the most part humorously inverts this stereotype while Lawson's stories helped formalise and create it.

◆ Type of text

Crocodile Dundee is a feature film.

◆ Plot summary

Accustomed to a simple life in the Australian outback, a legendary crocodile hunter has trouble adjusting to his new surroundings when an American journalist brings him to New York City. This Australian comedy delivers many fish-out-of-water gags about the bushman's reactions to the absurdity of modern urban life. Though he initially seems rather naive, Paul Hogan's Mick 'Crocodile' Dundee soon demonstrates that his natural ways are quite well-suited to city life, proving himself equally adept at defeating muggers and charming members of high society. Along the way, a romance develops between Dundee and the hardened journalist who finds herself enchanted by his down-to-earth behaviour.

◆ Historical context of the film

In splitting the movie into two different settings, the first half being in a typical, although figurative, small town in the Australian bush, and the second half being in the city of all cities, Manhattan, the text appealed to an audience of various ages, classes and lifestyles. It was groundbreaking as well, crossing the ocean to draw in the lucrative American market. It appealed to Australians for the extremes of Australian outback living and to Americans for the comedic results of a bushman existing in a major US city. *Crocodile Dundee* also referenced uranium mining, Aboriginal land rights and the tourist industry in an effort to be socially conscious. It is a simple and humorous text that made fun of the stereotypes of outback Australia and a contrasting American context.

◆ Links to 'Distinctively Visual'

Sue (Linda Kozlowski) is seen on the phone during the film's orientation. Her location is communicated visually by the shot of the Sydney Harbour Bridge that appears through the window behind her. The bridge visually represents an Australian stereotype or cliché and it also acts with irony in the film, as Paul Hogan worked as a rigger on the bridge before finding fame as a comedian and actor.

The film uses humour to illustrate the stark differences between the settings of New York and Australia. The scene in which Mick Dundee's business partner, Walter Reilly, appears in his outdated and tight 'safari suit' visually pokes fun at the contrasts in the settings. Walter is protesting the flood of American tourists who are about to visit the town: 'They haven't got anything like this over here'. In visual juxtaposition, the camera cuts to a wide shot of a dead-looking tree and some ruined 'outback' buildings. This creates visual irony as perceptions of the stereotyped beautiful outback often fall short of reality.

The film uses visual language techniques to offer reversed, or contrary, ideas about Australian stereotypes. Neville Bell is characterised as a 'city feller' rather than that of the skilled bushman. Neville is seen falling over in the dark as Mick Dundee explains that many Aborigines are 'telepathic'.

Mick Dundee's character visually stems from two well-known Australian identities—that of the bushman and the larrikin. His face is lined and browned from surviving the outback elements and a good-humoured smirk is often plastered on his face. He wears leather 'jewellery' and a crocodile-tooth necklace that visually communicates his Australian bush context. His frame is thin and wiry and it is easy to imagine him grappling with crocodiles or creating a three-course meal from bush tucker.

Hogan's persona revolves around him as the 'everyman', a socially accepted representative type. This populist aspect of the text is present in Mick Dundee as he represents the ingénue and colonial candidate, who in following a simpler, more rustic set of values influences the representatives of New York sophistication.

The Characters of Mick Dundee is often contrasted with the New York setting of the text for visual comic effect. The audience at times experiences the new environment along with Mick. At one point he is in the bath washing his socks, at another it is visually implied that he has slept on the floor and not the bed. He drives on the wrong side of the road and thinks a cocaine user has a head cold. These visual examples act as punch-lines that often stem from exaggerating or lampooning stereotypes.

Henry Lawson's stories helped form features of modern Australian identity such as endurance, resilience, mateship, larrikinism and humour in the face of adversity and it is these features of Australian identity that are exaggerated for humorous effect in *Crocodile Dundee*. As well as helping to formulate these ideas about Australian culture, it is Lawson's narrative style and Characters techniques that enable the responder to clearly visualise setting, character and ideas within his stories, and that invites an imaginative understanding of the contextual situation being described. Through its highly visual exaggeration of cultural ideas and juxtaposition of setting *Crocodile Dundee* allows for a modern interpretation of the ways context affects identity.

◆ Other related material

'My Country', a poem by Dorothea Mackellar, published in 1908. This iconic Australian poem was the first to embrace the features of the Australian landscape in a nationalistic sense.

The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney, a novel by Henry Handel Richardson, published in 1930. This text is linked to Lawson through Australian themes of pessimism and tragedy.

Australia, a film directed by Baz Luhrmann, released in 2008. Set from 1939 to 1942 against a dramatised backdrop of events across northern Australia, including the bombing of Darwin during WWII.