
Teachers' Notes

BOOTS

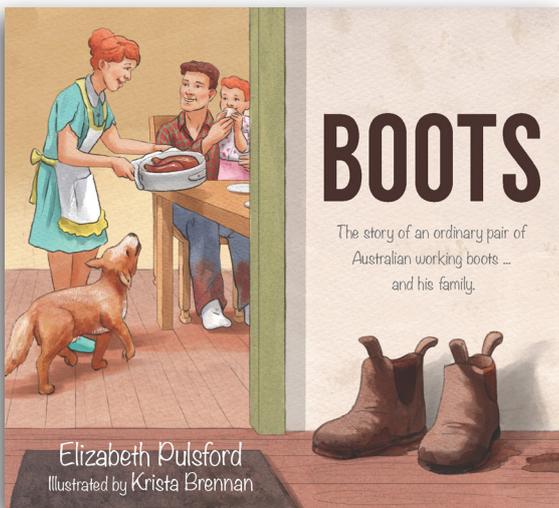
Elizabeth Pulsford / Krista Brennan

ISBN: 9781761111037

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Reading level: 5 to 8

BOOK SUMMARY



Boots was waiting ... waiting for his farmer. Boots will serve his family well.

Our lives are measured by the places we hold dear, the people we love and the paths we have trodden. So, who better to tell our stories than the shoes we wear? Through the endearing perspective of a beloved pair of working boots we see the life of a cattle farmer and his love of the Australian bush.

THEMES

Family • Love and Loss • Community • Connection • Adversity • Resilience • Emotions • Life Span • Purpose • Things we value • The natural world • Natural Disasters • Rural Australia

With themes of love, loss, old age, hardship and resilience, Boots provides a candid glimpse into the trials and tribulations of one man's life, and celebrates an unforgiving landscape that is intrinsic to the Australian identity.

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Elizabeth Pulsford is available for author talks and workshops.

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Boots Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Elizabeth Pulsford is a big fan of her 2-year-old daughter Harriet, overnight hiking and nachos (and not always in that order). She works as a high school English and Performing Arts teacher and spends far too much time correcting students' pronunciation of the word 'hyperbole.' Prior to teaching and motherhood, she worked for a variety of Children's Theatre Companies, locally and internationally, as an actor, script writer and director of Children's Theatre.

Elizabeth fostered her love of writing on long camping and caravanning trips with her family, which included a year-long adventure around Australia, when she was in primary school. She is the author of the picture book *But Why*, published with Ethicool Books, and a proud member of SCBWI and Book Links. She has four tattoos, a nasty mango allergy, and had an imaginary friend until she was seven years old.

AUTHOR NOTES

Boots is inspired by and pays tribute to my grandfather Roy Henderson and his family, and their colonial Australian roots. For most of his life, my grandfather owned the cattle and wheat property 'Coolamon,' located outside of the 'blink-and-you'll-miss-it' township of Dulacca in rural Queensland. My grandfather's life was rich and purposeful - he enlisted in the army in October 1942, aged 19 and served in the 2/5th Armed Regiment. He was a committee member of the Rural Fire Brigade and Miles and District Ambulance, the Local Controller of the Murilla Shire State Emergency Services, a Justice of the Peace, an elder of the Presbyterian Church and respected member of his community, receiving a citizenship award in 1993. He was a devoted husband, father of six, grandfather of sixteen and great-grandfather of thirty-three. Many of his descendants continue to remain in the Western Downs region, working on the land today.

Many of my happiest childhood memories were created in this unassuming part of the world, when my brothers and I would leave our sea-side home to spend school holidays with our extended family. I remember feeding cattle, hiding between hay bales, riding horses and four-wheelers, and playing 'Chicken' with the electric fence. I remember custard creams, and saying 'Grace' at dinner, solemn ANZAC services, and kindly visitors just 'dropping in to say hello.' But most clear in my memory, are my Grandpa's boots - faithfully sitting by the back screen door.

My grandfather was the model of humility, resilience, gratitude and kindness. *Boots* aims to preserve my memories, and honour both his legacy, and the legacy of a generation of hardworking men and women, their humble lifestyles and the unforgiving landscape they survived and thrived within.

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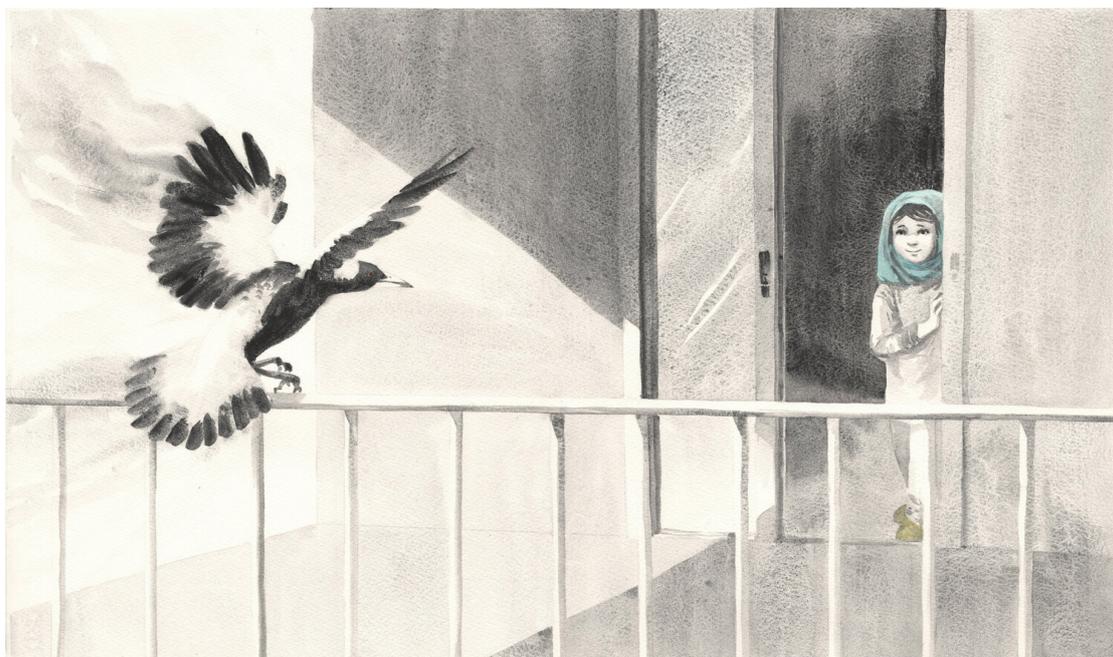
ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Krista is a freelance illustrator, fine artist and art teacher who lives in Sydney, Australia with her partner and mischievous cat. She primarily uses traditional methods for her art, including watercolour, ink and oils. Krista's art has been featured in books, card games, exhibitions and competitions, but she enjoys using her pictures to tell stories most of all.

Krista's other books with Wombat include *Amira's Magpie*, *Once*, and *Archie Appleby: The Terrible Case of the Creeps*.

If you would like to visit Krista online you can find her [here](#).



A page from the picture book *Amira's Magpie*

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

Boots is a book that provides strong insight into one facet of the Australian identity, and gives a voice to smaller and lesser known rural Australian communities. The story commemorates the rich history of these communities, and celebrates the sense of pride, belonging and community spirit underpinning rural Australian townships. It also works to shed light on some of the adversities that rural Australians continue to face, including things like droughts.

The story gives classrooms and parents an opportunity to discuss the nature and spectrum of human emotion. And space for conversations about World War II, the Rural Fire Brigade, weather events, and themes such as community, family, resilience, hardship, love and loss.

Ultimately, Boots captures a legacy that future generations of Australians might share and prosper from.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes.

FOUNDATION

English, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

ACELT1575	ACELA1429	ACELA1434	ACELY1653
ACELT1577	ACELA1430	ACELA1786	ACELY1646
ACELT1783	ACELA1432	ACELY1651	ACELT1578
ACELA1435	ACELY1652		
ACAVAM107	ACAVAM108		
ACHASSI005	ACHASSI001	ACHASSI009	

YEAR ONE

English, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1444	ACELA1451	ACELT1582	ACELY1656
ACELA1787	ACELA1452	ACELT1584	ACELY1788
ACELA1447	ACELA1458	ACELT1586	ACELY1660
ACELA1449	ACELT1581	ACELT1832	ACELA1454
ACHASSI022	ACHASSI018		
ACAVAM107	ACAVAM108		

YEAR TWO

English, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1461	ACELA1463	ACELT1833	
ACELA1462	ACELT1591	ACELY1665	
ACHASSI038	ACSHE035	ACHASSI034	ACHASSK044
ACAVAM107	ACAVAM108		

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TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask students if they can recognize the setting of this story from the cover image.

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students if anyone in the story resonates with them. Do they remind the student of someone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps?
2. How does the lives of the characters change over the course of the story?
3. What were some of the hardships faced throughout?
4. Ask students what they think of the story outcome. Do they agree with the ending?
5. What do you know about Rural Australia or the Outback? What are some stereotypes or things normally associated with those places? Did they show up in story?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

COMPREHENSION & CRITICAL THINKING

- What does the expression, 'walking in someone else's shoes' mean? What kinds of things might we learn?
- Why is the story told from the perspective of a pair of boots? Why are these symbolic?
- What symbol best captures you?
- Why is Boots waiting at the beginning and end of the story? Who or what is he waiting for?
- Find 3 examples of Boots being brave.
- Find 3 examples of Boots being kind.
- Draw a flow diagram of all the different feelings experienced by Boots.
- How does Boots change over the course of the story?
- Describe some times in your life when you have felt brave, frightened, proud, happy, sad, etc.
- Describe Boots' relationship with the animals in this story.
- Boots and Rusty (Roy's dog) share a very special relationship. Why do you think the expression 'a man's best friend' is often used to describe dogs?
- How do the natural elements affect the lives of those who live on the land? Find examples from the story.
- How do we know that Boots served in war?
- Do you find the ending: sad, confusing, predictable, a surprise, comforting, or a relief?
- Do you believe this story is a sad or happy one? Give reasons.
- Whom do you regard as the main character of the story? Who are the sub or secondary characters?
- Why are the sub characters important to the story?
- There are very few words in this picture book. Why does the author allow the illustrations to tell the story instead?
- What are the similarities and differences between country and city living?
- What are the similarities and difference between you and your grandparents' generations?
- In what way is Boots' life purposeful, even if he doesn't have much?
- What makes an ordinary life extraordinary?
- List some of the things that you value and which make your life meaningful?

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VOCABULARY

- Repetition – where and why is it used?
- How do certain adjectives link to the action sequences and emotions depicted in the illustrations?
- Encourage students to identify some of the adjectives used. Can they suggest other words or ways to describe Boot's bravery, fear, sadness, etc?
- The lines, 'It was a world which tugged at his soles' and 'now his weary soles could rest' feature a play on words. Explain.
- Unpack the meaning of popular idioms to do with boots – as tough as old boots, to pick yourself up by the bootstraps, too big for your boots, getting the boot, he died with his boots on, lick someone's boots, you bet your boots!

WRITING

- Explain how and why is imagery used at the beginning and end of the story? Now, use imagery to describe a place that is special to you.
- Identify whose point of view (POV) the story is written in, and attempt to write the story from a different POV: Roy's wife, daughter, Rusty the dog, even Roy.
- Get students to choose a scene and rewrite it using dialogue.
- Ask students to work in groups or pairs to create an Acrostic Poem using emotion words such as: HAPPY, FRIGHTENED, BRAVE, LOYAL, PATIENT. Share with the class and compare.
- Write a book review of the story.
- Interview a parent or grandparent and chronicle key moments from their lives in a written memoir. Alternatively, students could record a podcast.

VISUAL LITERACY

- Search for the visual clues the illustrator includes in the story to show a) the characters' emotions and b) the passing of time.
- How do the illustrations depict the personalities of the characters?
- How do certain colours make students feel? How can they apply these feelings to this story?
- Discuss the use of colours to project or symbolise emotion and a change of circumstances in this story.
- Ask students which page (spread) of the story they feel is the most dramatic or moving one and how it makes them feel?
- Which spread do they consider the saddest?
- Which do they deem is the happiest page?
- Show pictures of different types of shoes and ask students who they predict they might belong to and why – football boots, high heels, ballet slippers, loafers, brogues, etc.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Conduct research into key historical events or communities depicted or alluded to in the book: World War II, the Rural Fire Brigade, the Australia's beef industry, Queensland Farmers Federation, etc.
- Locate the township of Dulacca, in rural Queensland (which inspired the setting for 'Boots') on a map. Research the local area and create a tourism brochure encouraging visitors to the region.
- Conduct research into natural disasters in Australia, particularly bushfire, drought and flood, and how this affects Australian farmers.
- Speculate why natural disasters are increasing in frequency, and what this might mean for future generations.
- This story provides a single Australian perspective – the colonial experience. What other perspectives have shaped and frame our understanding of the Australian national identity? (Indigenous and multicultural perspectives)

ACTIVITIES

DRAW YOUR BOOTS

Draw a pair of shoes that best captures you and your personality! If you don't want to draw the shoes or boots by hand [here is something to get you started](#).

Create a whole class collage of the things that fill your life with meaning – perhaps this could be constructed in the shape of a boot!

PLANTING

Discuss as a group what kind of plants you like - perhaps it's a type of flower, a plant that gives fruit, or a cool looking fern.

Draw a picture of your favourite plant.

Choose a plant you might want to grow!

With the help of an adult come up with a list of how to take care of the plant you'd like to grow. You might need to look up how much sun it needs and how best to plant it.

Use an unusual vessel (like a boot) to plant your chosen plant in. [You can use this as inspiration!](#)

TIMELINES

Construct a chronological timeline of Boots' life. Or you can create a timeline of your life, a parent or a grandparent's.

Speculate on how much time elapses between each spread – opportunities for addition and subtraction.

If you don't know how to use timelines here are some resources and ideas. [One](#). [Two](#).

AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT

With the help of an adult look up pictures of the Australian environment. The nature in Australia changes across the continent - it's different in the state of Queensland to Northern Territory.

Pick one of the environments in Australia that interests you the most and describe it in your own words. Make a drawing to accompany your description. You can also add the kinds of animals that live in that environment.

Brainstorm what you might need to live there too. Think about the climate, the resources, and how it might feel to live there. Is there any difficulties that could come up? If you're near the beach you might experience storms that can flood, but if you're more inland you might get a drought.