

Teacher's Notes



Windy Hollow Books



Elizabeth is the story of Elizabeth Macarthur and her role in Australia's wool industry. From her childhood through to her death, Mark Wilson challenges the reader to see how life was for an enterprising woman in a male-dominated world.

Author's Notes

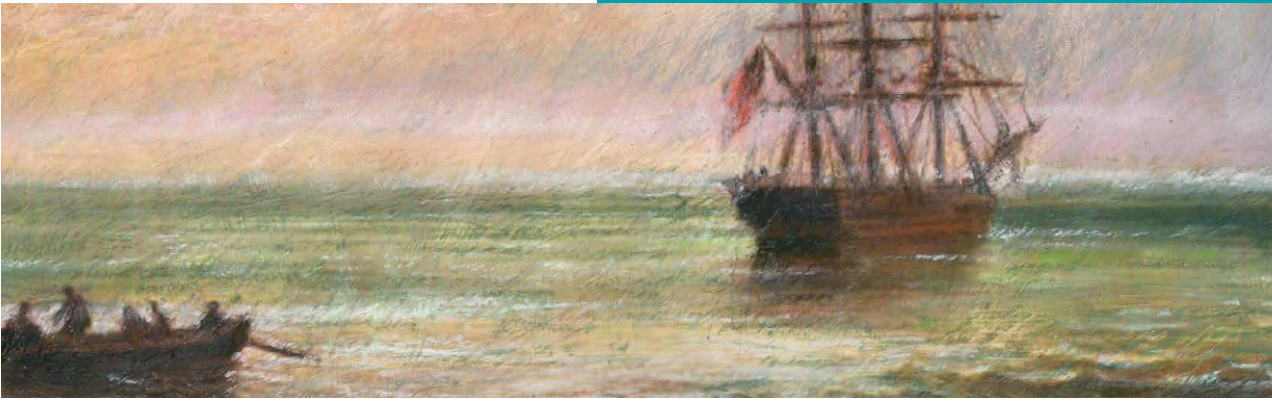
Elizabeth Macarthur enjoyed a happy early childhood on a farm in rural England. She studies hard but was moved from household to household after her sister, and then her father died - all of this before she was seven years old. She eventually married a soldier, John Macarthur in 1788, and a son named Edward was born when they moved to London. Then John was sent to Australia to join the NSW Corps, where Elizabeth settled into a rural life that included four more sons and three daughters.

The Macarthur's began breeding merino sheep for the quality of their wool, but Elizabeth's husband soon suffered from physical and mental illnesses that eventually made him aggressive, un-predictable and self-destructive. So as their family and their wealth grew, so her husband's behaviour deteriorated, to the point where Elizabeth took over all the workings of the farm and their other properties. This included the supervision of convicts and other labourers, as well as all the family business dealings.

She achieved this largely on her own, dealing with a convict uprising, a male dominated business world, three years of severe drought, bushfires, conflict with the traditional owners of the land, and educating her eight children. Elizabeth's fortitude and selflessness made her one of Australia's true pioneers, at a time when women were given no recognition or rights. Her determination would lead to the Macarthur's wool becoming some of the best and finest quality wool in the world.

Mark Wilson's luminous illustrations, often impressionistic in style, are interspersed with drawings, graphic novel techniques and pen and ink sketches. The book achieves an immersive experience and will thoroughly engage readers in the wide range of emotions explored.

Mark Wilson



Activities

Themes & Curriculum Topics

This book touches on the following themes in the National Curriculum for mid-upper primary levels, such as:

- Study of History, Society and Environment
- English Language and Literacy
- Visual Literacy
- Mathematics
- Creative Arts
- Learning Technologies

Discussion Points

Research and discuss the people that sailed with the second Fleet. Why did they come to Australia and where did they come from, and what were conditions like for those on board the ships?

Elizabeth Macarthur is best remembered for pioneering the wool industry in Australia. Research and discuss how she achieved this, and what part her husband played.

Read other books (fiction and non-fiction) about Elizabeth Macarthur and compare the information you discover in them. Are there any differing points of view to Mark Wilson's account? (See Bibliography).

Discuss what Elizabeth's first impressions of Sydney Cove were? (see p. 11).

Research & discuss the words & expressions used in the early 1800's (see Elizabeth's letters on pages 9, 11, 13 and 24)

Research the historical fiction of Mark Wilson and discuss the way he depicts women in his stories: Rachel's War, Beth, Caroline, Molly (Eureka!) and Elizabeth (The Little Wooden Horse). What are some of the traits they have in common?

Discuss how your students might have coped with some of the situations in which Elizabeth found herself?





Activities

Literacy

Research women's experiences in the early days of the Settlement at Sydney Cove and Parramatta. Write a short piece about the living conditions, food, care of children and difficulties they encountered.

What were the qualities Elizabeth had in childhood that gave her the strength to do what she did later in life? Write a short piece to profile her (See P. 2-3, 4-5).

Elizabeth's letters to friends and family reveal her attitude to her surroundings and the people she comes into contact with. Write a short piece on what these letters reveal.

Why did Elizabeth's husband leave Australia? Write a short piece on his reasons for leaving (on two occasions) and what Elizabeth achieved in his absence.

Write a short piece about typical farm life in Australia in 1810.

On page 30-31 of Elizabeth, Mark has written a timeline of Elizabeth Macarthur's life. Research one item on that list and write a short essay about what you find.

Mark Wilson's text is spare and suggestive. How has he created a sense of Elizabeth's character, and how/where in the text has he done this.

Ask students to write a letter as if penned by Elizabeth, about her feelings and how she coped with all the work while bringing up eight children.

Visual Literacy

Discuss how Mark Wilson conveys a strong sense of place and character in the illustrations (see P. 22-23 and 26-27).

On Pages 18-19, what is the painting in the background about, and it has nothing to do with the text or other pictures (the danger of bushfire).

Some illustrations are just pencil sketches. Discuss why Mark Wilson may have used this medium for particular illustrations, and your impression of them (see P. 30-31).

How do the colour themes on various pages affect your interpretation of this work? (see pages 2-3, 10-11, 17 and 30-31)

The cover inset of this book depicts Elizabeth as a child. What does the cover inset and background suggest about the story and the central theme in this book?

What effect does the 'photo-realism' of some of the illustrations convey to a reader?



Activities

Art Activities

A typical Australian farm is depicted in many different ways by various artists. Discuss Mark's acrylic painting technique, then ask students to create their own painting of an Australian farm in 1810, using this medium (refer to Literacy, question 5 above, and see p. 14, 17 and 25).

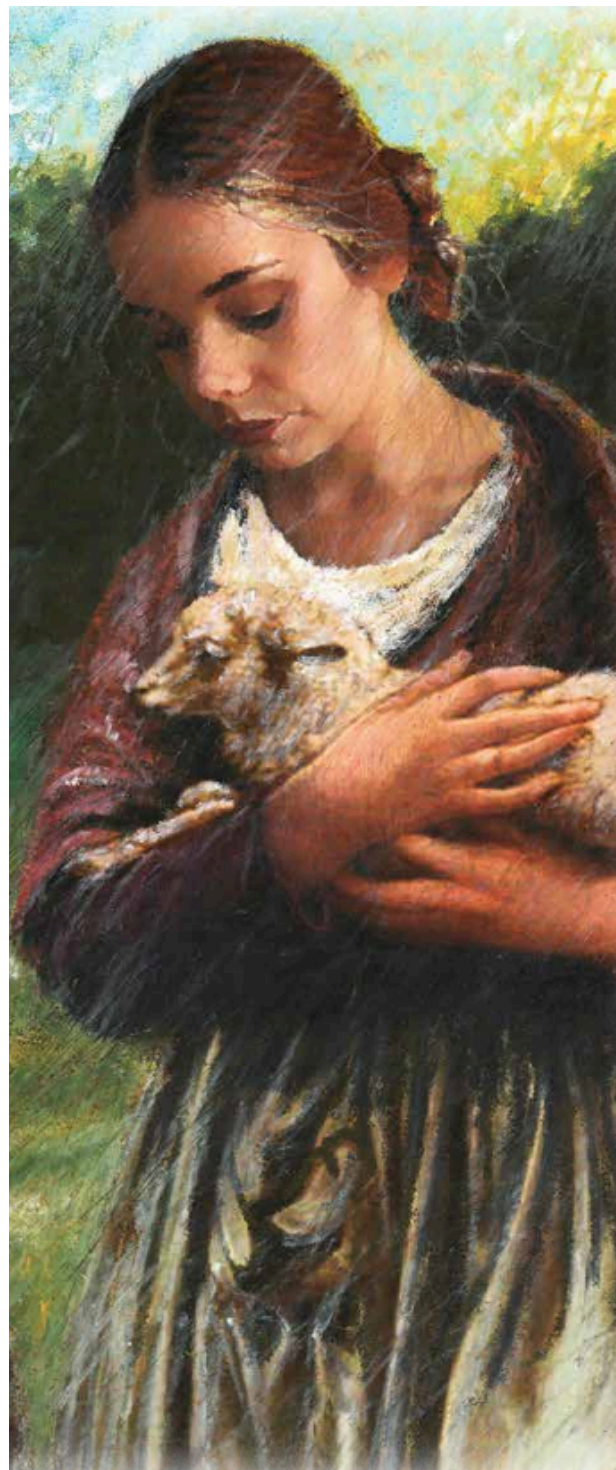
Invite students to use various Black and White techniques to create their own images of Elizabeth looking after her Merino sheep (charcoal drawing, scraperboard, pencil sketch, ink silhouette, etc.) (see p. 10 and 30-31).

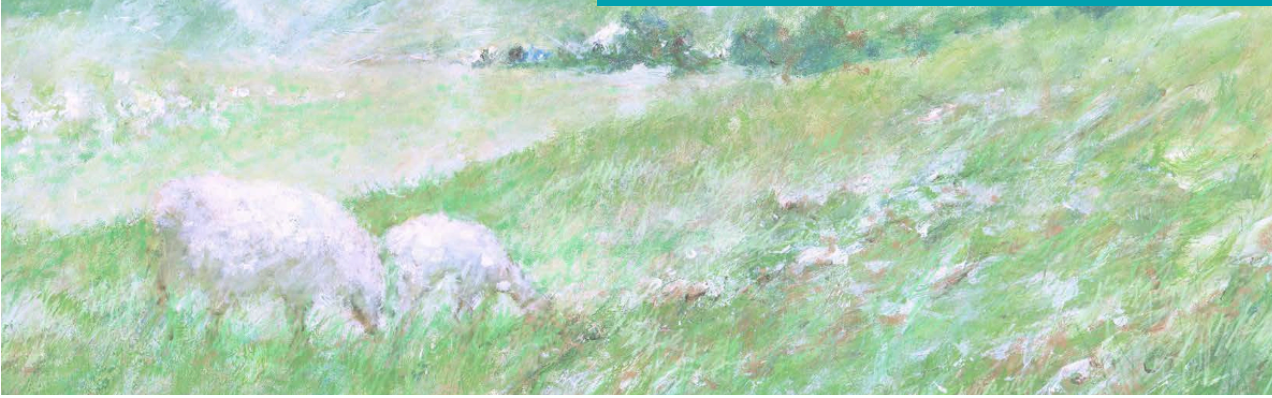
The other hero of the story is the majestic Marino sheep. Ask students to research the characteristics of the Merino and do a drawing of them. (See p. 18 - their Horns are different and the Merino tend to be smaller than other breeds of sheep, although their coats are nearly three times as thick).

Organise a classroom display or mural featuring the writing and illustrations that students have done for this unit. Include research notes, photographs, sketches, drawings, paintings and text, that they have researched individually or as a group.

On p. 10-11, several events are depicted in graphic novel format. Create a graphic novel/comic version of another scene in this book.

Design a poster and 'blurb' for this book that would be placed in a book shop window to encourage passers-by to come in and look at the book.





More about Mark Wilson

Mark Wilson is a multiple award-winning author/illustrator with 24 children's books in print worldwide, in 14 languages. Mark grew up with a love of comics, drawing, rock music, Australian history and endangered species - exploring most of these themes through his writing, illustrating, paintings and workshops.

Mark studied mural design and painting at the Caulfield Institute of Technology and did national service in the ADF, followed by a Diploma of Education. He then became a designer and illustrator for The Education Magazine and Pursuit Magazine. He also started illustrating for various publishers including Penguin, Rigby, Harper Collins, Brooks Waterloo, Lothian, Houghton/Mifflin and National Geographic USA.

He has won five Whitley Awards for children's literature, eleven CBCA Awards, four Wilderness Society Awards and the 3rd C.J. Picture Book International Award. Mark was also presented with the 2011 Dromkeen Medal for Services to Children's Literature. He recently won a 2024 CBCA Honor Book award for *Caroline* (also a Windy Hollow book), the 2023 CBCA Honor Book award for *Votes for Women! The Story of Nellie, Rose and Mary*, and the Colin Roderick Literary Award 2021 shortlist for *Eureka! A Story of the Goldfields* - the first picture book in the 60 year-long history of the awards to be selected.

He hopes his books and workshops encourage students to study not only their own family history, but also Australian history, as well as native species and conservation.

Conclusion

Elizabeth and its sister book *Caroline* highlight the important roles women have played in Australian history. They weren't just pioneers in the traditional sense, but also pioneers of the Women's Right's Movement that gained momentum later in the 1800's. In times when women had no rights, when they were actually owned (in Australian law) by their fathers or husbands. Many thrived in a predominately mans world, enduring centuries old prejudice's, and overcoming them to find their rightful places in our history. This book celebrates their courage and determination.





Glossary

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