



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary  
(ages 10 to 15 years)

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## THEMES

- Australian myths and mysteries
- Australian culture and history
- Critical thinking

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- English
- History
- Society and Culture
- Science

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Investigation of Australian myths and mysteries
- Appreciation of Australian historical and cultural identity
- Development of critical thinking skills
- High interest material to engage students

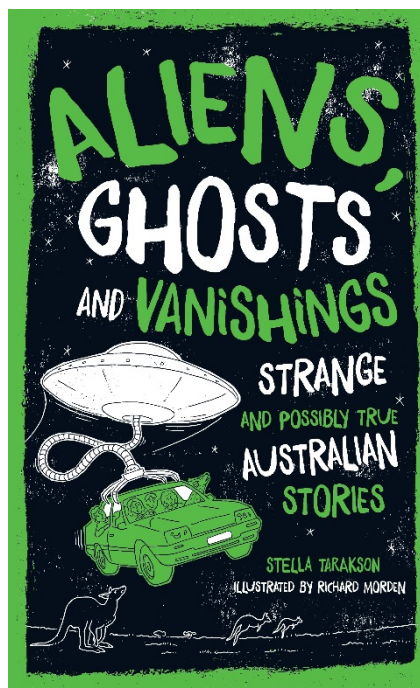
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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## Aliens, Ghosts and Vanishings: Strange and possibly true Australian stories Stella Tarakson

### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Have you heard the most bizarre tales from around Australia?**

Did a UFO really drag a family's car off the road deep in the outback? Are drop bears the vicious cousin of the koala, or a myth invented to tease tourists? Why have so many boats and planes disappeared around Bass Strait? And what became of the prime minister who went into the surf and was never seen again?

This book explores the strangest tales and creepiest urban legends in Australia's history. Read up on the investigations, study the photographs and weigh up the facts - do you believe the official explanations for these weird and wonderful events? Or is there more to these mysteries than meets the eye?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stella Tarakson started working life armed with a law degree, but it didn't take long for her to leave her sensible job and follow her passion to become a writer and researcher.

She is now the author of more than 30 non-fiction books, most of them aimed at young people. Her goal is to both educate and entertain, and she's delighted to have won several awards. She also runs school workshops. For details see [www.stellatarakson.com](http://www.stellatarakson.com)

So far she has not seen a UFO, vanished mysteriously, or inexplicably burst into flames (and hopes she never will). She has, however, seen a ghost standing on her doorstep. Yes – really!

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Stella loves writing about the things that interest, intrigue and excite her, especially creepy myths and mysteries. She is dedicated to encouraging children to think for themselves and not take things at face value.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Richard Morden is an illustrator based in Melbourne. He works in a range of styles and is fascinated by Australian culture, history, prehistory and natural sciences, gothic horror and science fiction.

## ILLUSTRATOR INTERVIEW

*1. Tell us a little about your research for this project.*

I looked up all the people, places and animals to make sure they looked just right. I also added accurate details that weren't necessarily in the text. The aim was not just to draw what was in the text, but to expand on it in a complementary way, helping to create an informative experience for the reader.

Some of the animal drawings were based on photos I have taken in museums and a lot of the landscapes were based on photos from my own reference library.

Interestingly, I met some of the witnesses of the Westall UFO sighting years ago at a talk promoting a documentary. I asked them what they experienced and their answers helped inform the Westall UFO illustration in this book: best reference ever.

*2. What was the most surprising thing you learned while researching the book?*

I loved the story of medieval African coins being found on the North coast of Australia. As well as being an exciting story of a chance discovery it hints at possible histories beyond the generally accepted accounts of Australia's past. It left me wondering what wonderful historical surprises yet await us.

*3. What was the most difficult part of this project?*

Some of the more serious topics covered in the book continue to have an effect on people's lives to this day. Stories such as the disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain required representation in a way that is informative and engaging yet respectful to those affected. Illustration concepts such as these need more consideration than others.

On a less serious note, what does a bunyip look like? Nobody really knows. How then to illustrate a bunyip? I struggled with this question, changing my mind several times. In the text is a suggestion that extinct megafauna could have been a real life basis for the legends of bunyips. Following this train of thought, I sketched a Zygomaturus, an extinct giant marsupial swamp cow, and decided it looked weird enough to fit the bill. What do you think a bunyip should look like?

*4. What was the most fun or rewarding part?*

Illustrating all the mysterious locations, situations and characters was a lot of fun, but by far the most rewarding aspect was all the learning involved. I was already familiar with some of the stories but many were new to me, and when researching the illustrations I learned even more. Behind the incredible stories is a backdrop of intriguing Australian personalities, culture and history; exactly the kind of subjects I enjoy learning about.

*5. What's the strangest or most mysterious experience you've ever had? What do you think explains it?*

In 1996 on a cool but sunny spring morning I saw three large black cylinders quietly floating over the western suburbs of Melbourne. I couldn't identify them so for me at least they were UFOs. Years later I searched on the internet for what I had seen, and found many pictures of floating black cylinders identical to what I remembered. They were real. I am pleased to say they were not aliens, they were solar balloons! Someone had been playing a prank. Look them up, they are strange looking things.



## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Someone claims to have seen a mysterious animal that scientists say doesn't exist. How would you react?
  - a. I'd believe it – after all, they said so!
  - b. They must be lying to get attention.
  - c. They might have made an honest mistake.
  - d. I want to know more before I decide.
2. Do you believe in ghosts? Why or why not? Write down your views and compare them with others in the class.
3. Many people state that they have seen a UFO. Make a list of possible reasons why people might make such claims.

## DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

### English

- Since ancient times, Indigenous Australians have told stories of mysterious creatures such as bunyips. How were these stories passed down? Why do you think people told them?
- Imagine you were to come face to face with a real live (or real dead!) ghost. Write a short narrative describing the experience.
- You are a journalist interviewing a man who claims to have been abducted by aliens. In groups, create a list of interview questions that you would ask him.
- Imagine you are either Harold Lasseter (pp 73–77) or Ludwig Leichhardt (pp 190–96). You set out on an expedition but got lost in the desert. Write a letter explaining your situation and asking for help. (You plan to attach the letter to a bird that will hopefully deliver it for you!)
- Study the illustrations in the book. Some are amusing, some are frightening: identify two of each. Do you think the illustrator's choices agree with the author's message in each case? Explain.

### History, Society and Culture

- Research the history of either Cockatoo Island or Sydney's Quarantine Station. Write a report on what you find.
- In groups, discuss how the treatment of prisoners or patients with mental disorders has changed since colonial days. Use examples from the book.
- The author notes that sightings of UFOs became more common in the mid-twentieth century. Why does she think this happened?
- Why do the Gosford Glyphs (pp 258–63) and the Ancient African Coins (pp 264–71) make some people rethink Australia's distant past?

### Science

- What is cryptozoology and how does it differ from zoology? (see pp 6–7).
- How are the problems faced by cryptozoologists and palaeontologists similar? (see p. 20).
- If aliens had our levels of technology, they would not be able to visit Earth because they are too far away. What types of problems would they need to overcome in order to travel such great distances?
- Explain the difference between a science and a pseudoscience. (see pp 234–35).

## KEY QUOTES

1. *'Both extremes [gullibility and absolute scepticism] have their dangers and the best path to tread is somewhere in the middle.'* (p. 4).

Do you agree? Why or why not?

2. *'Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.'* (p. 19)

What do you understand this to mean?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*Australia's Greatest Inventions and Innovations*  
by Christopher Cheng & Linsay Knight

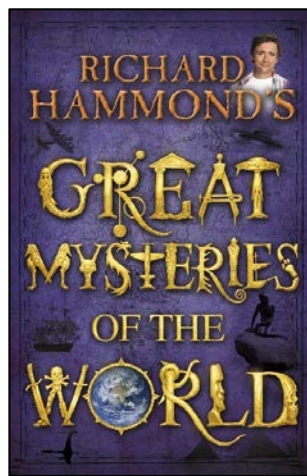
In conjunction with the Powerhouse Museum comes this comprehensive guide to Australia's most innovative inventions as well as their amazing creators.

Imagine a world without wi-fi or clothes lines or lawnmowers or Vegemite or dual-flush toilets or even mousetraps.

Weird, huh?

These are just a few of the many inventions that have been created by clever Australians to solve some of life's difficult problems.

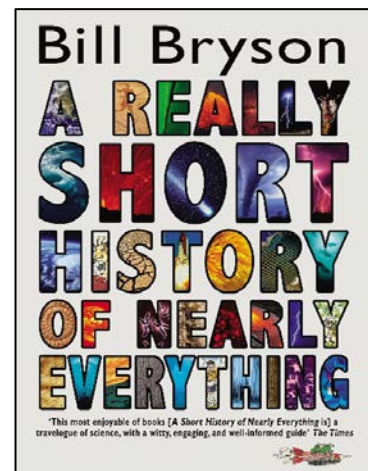
Be inspired!



*Richard Hammond's Great Mysteries of the World*  
by Richard Hammond

Richard Hammond – TV presenter and self-confessed mystery addict – invites you to journey with him to the planet's most puzzling places . . . Explore the ancient pyramids, Stonehenge and the Bermuda Triangle. Hunt for werewolves, vampires, aliens and the Abominable Snowman. You can gather clues, facts and interesting tales as you go (just try not to get too distracted by Richard's *unbelievable* jokes). Then it's up to you decide what's really going on.

Don't miss this incredible, fully illustrated gift book from Britain's best-loved TV personality. Explore the world's greatest mysteries – all from the comfort of your armchair!



*A Really Short History of Nearly Everything*  
by Bill Bryson

A new edition of Bill Bryson's worldwide bestseller *A Short History of Nearly Everything* abridged and adapted for children. With full colour illustrations and photographs.



## WORKSHEET 1: MYTHICAL MATCHUP

Part 1 of *Aliens, Ghosts and Vanishings* looks at mythical Australian creatures. How well do you know them? Draw lines to match the mysterious creature to its description.

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Bunyip                   | A. Like a koala – but it attacks tourists!              |
| 2. Yowie                    | B. It puts its tail in its mouth and rolls.             |
| 3. Drop bear                | C. A large man-like ape . . . or is it an ape-like man? |
| 4. Hawkesbury River monster | D. A real animal that might not be extinct after all.   |
| 5. Hoop snake               | E. A cousin of Scotland's Loss Ness monster.            |
| 6. Tasmanian tiger          | F. A swamp monster with a booming voice.                |



## WORKSHEET 2: WHAT HAPPENED WHERE?

Part 2 of *Aliens, Ghosts and Vanishings* describes some mysterious locations throughout Australia and looks at the very strange things that happened there. Read it to help you answer these creepy questions.

1. In which rural town were stones seen to fall from the sky?
2. The falling stones were probably caused by pranksters. True, false, or unknown?
3. Strange lights were seen near an outback pub called the \_\_\_\_\_, giving these lights their name.
4. Where was the novel *Picnic at Hanging Rock* set?
5. The novel was about the real-life disappearance of a group of schoolgirls. True or false?
6. The Devil's Pool is said to have caused the deaths of many:
  - a. Young women
  - b. Young men
  - c. Couples
  - d. Local people
7. The ancient legend connected to the Devil's Pool was told by the \_\_\_\_\_ people.
8. What did Harold Lasseter claim he had found in the desert?
9. Many boat and planes have mysteriously vanished in the Bass Strait. True or false?
10. Which famous 'triangle' off the US coast is the Bass Strait Triangle named after?



## WORKSHEET 3: GHOSTS GALORE!

The following places have tragic histories and they are all said to be haunted. You can find them in Part 3 of *Aliens, Ghosts and Vanishings*. Unscramble their names . . . but only if you're prepared to unleash the wrath of the restless spirits.

1. aockoco nilads \_\_\_\_\_
2. tefreaneml lcuatni yasmlu \_\_\_\_\_
3. otpr ratruh \_\_\_\_\_
4. cpsriens ttahere \_\_\_\_\_
5. dol eulbmoren olga \_\_\_\_\_
6. udnroton uhoes \_\_\_\_\_
7. uqaratinen tastino \_\_\_\_\_



## WORKSHEET 4: OUT OF THIS WORLD?

Part 4 of *Aliens, Ghosts and Vanishings* looks at UFO sightings and contact with aliens. The word search puzzle contains the UFO-busting words listed below. Can you find them in the puzzle?

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E | A | C | L | T | A | Y | Q | F | R |
| S | L | Y | O | Q | M | M | E | N | E |
| Y | I | C | T | V | E | C | O | W | T |
| J | E | H | R | M | E | I | G | L | N |
| Z | N | X | O | I | T | R | N | L | U |
| E | S | R | A | C | C | Z | U | M | O |
| A | Y | H | U | O | E | P | E | P | C |
| R | A | D | A | R | H | F | O | D | N |
| Q | B | B | Z | Y | J | T | T | R | E |
| A | W | I | T | N | E | S | S | J | C |

abduction

aliens

cover up

crop circle

encounter

hoax

memory

radar

witness





## WORKSHEET 5: WITHOUT A TRACE

Part 5 of *Aliens, Ghosts and Vanishings* looks at some mysterious disappearances that have occurred around Australia. It will help you answer the following questions. Read it before it vanishes too!

1. Before he disappeared, Ludwig Leichhardt wanted to:
  - a. have a Sydney suburb named after him
  - b. become a famous explorer
  - c. cross Australia from east to west
  - d. vanish mysteriously
2. Rumours surrounding Prime Minister Harold Holt's disappearance include:
  - a. he was abducted by aliens
  - b. he was a Chinese spy
  - c. he ran off with his girlfriend
  - d. all of the above
3. The *SS Waratah* was said to be cursed because:
  - a. of its name
  - b. it set sail on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>
  - c. it looked like the *Flying Dutchman*
  - d. it vanished
4. The *High Aim 6* was found abandoned at sea. It has been compared to:
  - a. The *Titanic*
  - b. The *Mary Celeste*
  - c. *MH370*
  - d. Atlantis
5. The disappearance of Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 was:
  - a. one of the greatest mysteries of modern day aviation
  - b. thoroughly investigated
  - c. the subject of many conspiracy theories
  - d. all of the above



## WORKSHEET 6: TRUE, FALSE OR SIMPLY STRANGE?

Part 6 of *Aliens, Ghosts and Vanishings* gathers all the tales that were just too weird to include anywhere else. It's a mashup of some of the strangest things ever to happen in Australia. Try not to shudder or shout as you read the book and answer the following questions.

1. Humans might be able to spontaneously burst into flames.

True    False    Who knows?

2. The racehorse Phar Lap was deliberately killed.

True    False    Who knows?

3. The Marree Man geoglyph is a fake.

True    False    Who knows?

4. The Gosford Glyphs prove ancient Egyptians visited Australia.

True    False    Who knows?

5. The ancient African coins were brought here by ancient Africans.

True    False    Who knows?



## WORKSHEET ANSWERS

### Mythical match-up

1. F; 2. C; 3. A; 4. E; 5. B; 6. D

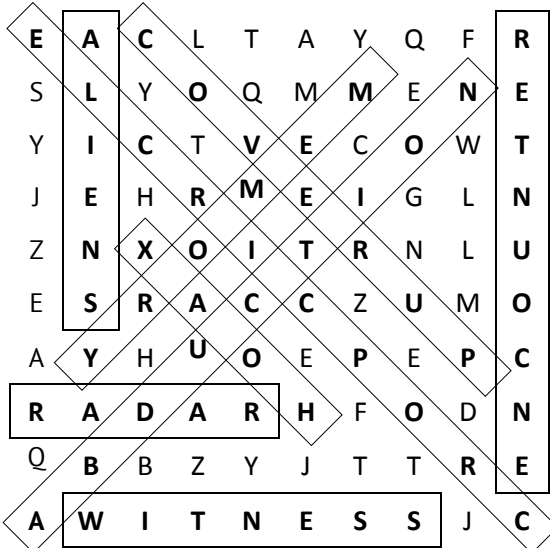
### What happened where?

1. Mayanup; 2. Unknown; 3. Min Min; 4. Hanging Rock in the Macedon Ranges north of Melbourne; 5. False; 6. B; 7. Yidinji; 8. Gold; 9. True; 10. Bermuda Triangle

### Ghosts galore

1. Cockatoo Island; 2. Freemantle Lunatic Asylum; 3. Port Arthur; 4. Princess Theatre; 5. Old Melbourne Gaol; 6. Duntroon House; 7. Quarantine Station

### Out of this world



### Without a trace

1. C; 2. D; 3. D; 4. A; 5. B; 6. D

### True, false or simply strange

1. Who knows; 2. Who knows; 3. Who knows; 4. False (there isn't proof); 5. Who knows



## ORDER FORM

| TITLE   | AUTHOR                       | ISBN                 | SCHOOL YEAR | RRP            | QUANTITY | TOTAL |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|----------|-------|
| <b>Aliens, Ghosts and Vanishings</b>                    | <b>Tarakson &amp; Morden</b> | <b>9781925324969</b> | <b>4-9</b>  | <b>\$27.99</b> |          |       |
| Richard Hammond's Great Mysteries of the World (bindup) | Richard Hammond              | 9780370332376        | 3-6         | \$42.99        |          |       |
| A Really Short History of Nearly Everything             | Bill Bryson                  | 9780552562966        | 3-7         | \$32.99        |          |       |
| Australia's Greatest Inventions and Innovations         | Cheng & Knight               | 9781742755649        | 6-8         | \$29.99        |          |       |
| Australia's Greatest People and their Achievements      | Linsay Knight                | 9780857980205        | 6-8         | \$24.99        |          |       |
| Australia's Greatest Landmarks and Locatins             | Virginia Grant               | 9780857983886        | 6-8         | \$24.99        |          |       |
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|---|--|

