



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower and upper primary

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** History, English, Literacy, Visual Literacy

THEMES

- Australian History
- World War II
- Courage, resilience, selflessness, ingenuity

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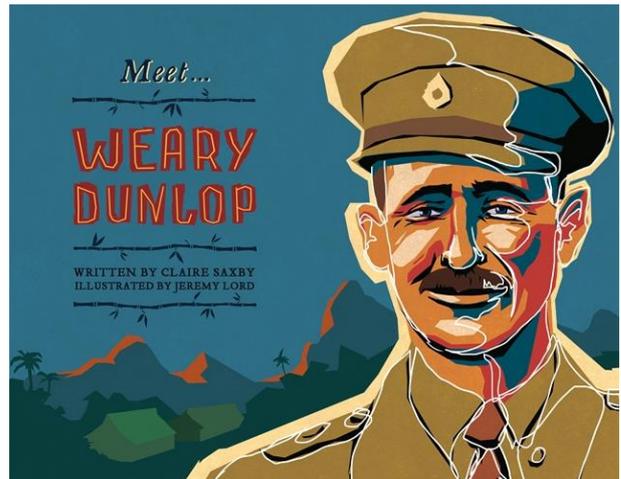
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Meet Weary Dunlop

Written by Claire Saxby

Illustrated by Jeremy Lord

PLOT SUMMARY

Ernest Edward Dunlop grew up on a farm in country Victoria. He studied pharmacy and then medicine in Melbourne, where he earned the nickname 'Weary', and enlisted in the medical corps of the army reserves. He continued his studies in London and became a surgeon. When WWII broke out, he enlisted again in the Australian Army Medical Corps and was posted in Gaza, Alexandria, Greece and Crete before transferring to Java.

When Java fell to Japanese troops and the Allied soldiers became prisoners of war, Weary was appointed Commander of the British and Australian POWs. The prisoners were transferred to Singapore and then Thailand, to work on the Thai–Burma Railway. The conditions were horrendous and the prisoners suffered greatly. Weary argued for better treatment and conditions for the POWs, at times endangering himself in the process. As well as providing medical care for the men, Weary inspired them to make the best of the resources they had, and worked hard to lift their spirits and their determination to survive.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Saxby writes fiction, non-fiction and poetry for children. She has nearly forty books in print with more in production. Her poetry appears in magazines, anthologies, on train walls and in museum resources. Claire has been writing for children for about 15 years. Before that, she was a podiatrist, and worked in community health. She has been inspired by her own children, memories of childhood and by the children around her. Claire lives in Melbourne with her husband, three very tall sons and a dog that often pretends to be a cat.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jeremy Lord is a French-Australian illustrator based in Sydney. With a master's degree in graphic design and illustration, Jeremy's work covers a range of styles and applications. His main inspirations, however, will always be the work of artists like Monet, Schiele and the more contemporary Saul Bass. He loves to draw everything and anything, and when not doing that, he'll probably be trying to catch a wave or two.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Can you tell us a little bit about your research for this project and the resources you used?

I started very broadly, reading books from the library and searching online. This broad search helps me get a general sense of what has been written about (and in this case by) Weary. I'd actually read his biography and his diaries previously but needed to reread both. I like the Australian Dictionary of Biography online as it gives both an overview and some sources for more reading.

Did your opinion of Weary Dunlop change or deepen as you wrote the book?

He was an amazing character, from childhood, early adulthood, time in the army and then beyond. I learned more about him. Funnily enough, I had to find his flaws, his humanity, before I could start writing. I think this is to do with finding a way to make him real. I don't think we do anyone any service by making them appear god-like.

Why did you choose to tell this particular part of Weary's story?

There are so many stories that I could have told – his childhood, his university antics, his sporting achievements, his post-war efforts on behalf of veterans, his medical work. But this series is about introducing notable Australians to a new generation of young readers, and Weary's time in Asia during WWII encapsulates so many of the attributes for which he is known. Also, the duration of the war gave me 'goalposts'. By planting snippets throughout of other parts of Weary's story, hopefully young readers will become curious and do their own research.

What was the most challenging part of the project?

The reading. There's so much written about Weary, with differing degrees of accuracy (some has the fogginess of myth) that I had to be careful in researching 'facts'. Also, although I focused on his war years, I needed to read about both his early and later years in order to represent him as accurately as I could.

What was the most rewarding part of the project?

The opportunity to learn more not just about Weary, who was truly remarkable, but also about a period in history that I had only a very shallow understanding of. I liked the almost socialist principles he insisted on in camp organisation – that each contributed what they could towards the common good. The innovation, quiet defiance, courage and endurance shown by Weary and the other prisoners held in dreadful conditions both physical and psychological was truly inspiring.

What do you think is Weary's greatest legacy?

Weary understood the need to let go of hatred at the end of the war, which must have been a very difficult thing to do. I think it's an important message – that the only person who really suffers if you hold on to anger and hatred, is you.



INTERVIEW WITH THE ILLUSTRATOR

You do illustration for lots of different media. What are the main differences between illustrating picture books and your other illustration work?

Most of the work that I do is commercial work for various branding or advertising agencies. These jobs are often very creatively restricted to meet the client's needs, and not always for a product or subject I feel emotionally invested in. This is in great part due to the fact that I'm not always the demographic of the product I'm working on. While illustrating picture books obviously still comes with a brief behind it, there's far more freedom on the illustrator's side. I'm often left to choose the content, composition, style and colours going onto each page. This, along with a story that truly connects with me on a personal level, makes illustrating for books a far more interesting and fun project to be involved with. And even if I might not be a 6-year-old schoolboy, everyone loves a good story . . .

This is a historical book, based on real people and their stories. Did you have to do a lot of research to get the historical details right, such as how people looked and what they wore?

Historical accuracy was a major part of this project. Making sure I had the right uniforms for each nation's soldiers, getting the POW camps right, even down to the weapons' smaller elements was essential. Random House provided me with a fair amount of research to begin with, which really helped with getting under way. Researching all these elements was a great way to get the context of this story – the behind-the-scenes side, if you will; little backstories and facts that aren't necessarily tied to the story but that helped make me feel more involved with the character.

What media did you use to create the art? Can you explain a little bit about your process?

The overall mood of this book required something a little more solid or sober, without necessarily being dark or too serious. I used Adobe Photoshop to build the straight lines and flat colours to achieve a slight nod to Art Deco. Getting the right colour scheme on each page and throughout the whole book was also a crucial part of this project for me, and doing this digitally also allowed for a lot of colour variations and control.

What was the most challenging part of the project?

I would say that portraying the Japanese soldiers was a big challenge for me. While they have the part of the 'baddies', we didn't want to show them as being evil in the same way you could with a fictional story, where you might give the villain horns or red eyes. It was the one element I kept changing over and over again. Another difficulty was deciding which elements of the story and text to include in each illustration. In a sense, this was the flip side of the creative freedom I was given.

What was the most rewarding part of the project?

Working on a project with a long timeline like this, it's easy to get lost in the details and lose sight of the end goal. The most rewarding aspect of this work for me happens when the work moves from the 'creating' phase to the 'making changes' phase. Seeing all the pages together – even if they're not finished yet – allows me to take a step back and look at the project as whole. I can then start making more creative decisions and apply any changes. This is always the best part of a project like this – taking an 80-per-cent-finished piece and tweaking it.

Did you know much about Weary Dunlop before the project? Did your opinion of him grow or change through the course of the project?

I had actually never heard of Dunlop before working on this project. Doing research for my illustrations and finding more and more about him was a real eye-opener into a genuine Aussie hero. This man was definitely one of those 'too good to be true' characters you generally only read about in fiction. Actually, if you wrote Weary Dunlop into a fictional story, people would probably tell you that he's too far-fetched and to tone it down a little!

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What does the front cover of *Meet Weary Dunlop* tell you about the book?

- Who is the subject of the book?
- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What clues are there about where the story is set?

2. Does the back cover give you more clues about the book?



- Does the blurb explain who Weary Dunlop is and what he is famous for?

3. What do you already know about Weary Dunlop or Australian prisoners of war (POWs) during World War II? Start a list and add to it as you read the book.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

English

Questions

1. Create a simple story map of the key elements in the narrative e.g. the setting; characters; beginning, middle and end. *See Worksheet 1.*
2. How is Weary portrayed as a boy and a young man? Does this signal what he will be like when he is an adult and a soldier?
3. Did the text and illustrations in the early pages hint that Weary might enter the army and travel as an adult?
4. Notice how the word 'enemy' is never used to describe the Japanese soldiers. Why do you think the author has chosen to avoid using such emotive language?
5. There is a timeline at the back of the book with facts about Weary's life and career. How is the language in this section different from the rest of the book?

Activities

1. Imagine you are a soldier that has been made a prisoner-of-war. Write a letter home to your family, then write a secret diary entry of what life is like in the POW camp. Consider what might be different between both accounts. *See Worksheet 2.*

History

Questions

1. Over 22,000 Australians became prisoners of war of the Japanese Army in south-east Asia. Why do you think people were made prisoners of war?
2. Weary believed the POWs should document their experience of the war. Why do you think this was important? Why do you think this needed to be done in secret?

3. Consider why particular people are remembered in history. Why do you think Weary Dunlop is so admired today?

Activity

1. Research the Thai–Burma Railway. What was the purpose of building it?

Visual Literacy

Questions

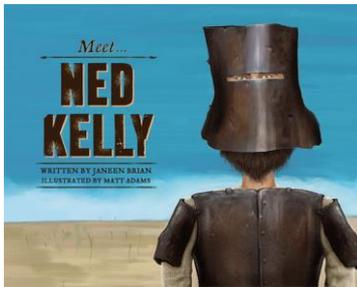
1. Illustrator Jeremy Lord has used a particular style of drawing in the book. What kind of style is it? Why do you think he chose this particular style for Weary's story? *See Worksheet 3.*
2. How does the first spread hint at the kinds of adventures Weary imagined or the types of games he played?
3. Consider the pages that depict the POWs working on the Thai–Burma Railway. Why did the illustrator choose the colours he did? For example, what is usually associated with the colour red?
4. Research what the Japanese flag and the Japanese military flag look like and compare them to the page with the map of Weary's army postings. Are there any similarities? Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to design the arrows in this way?
5. What do the red crosses on the tents symbolise?
6. Discuss how the illustrations work in conjunction with the text. Do they add more information than the text supplies?
7. Can you tell that the story is set in an older time just by looking at the illustrations? How has the illustrator created an impression of the 1920s–40s?

Activity

1. Choose one spread from the book to analyse. Make two columns. In one column write down everything the text tells you about the story on that page. In the other column, write down everything the illustration tells you about the story on that page. Does the illustration tell you extra things that are not in the text? *See Worksheet 4.*



THE MEET SERIES



Meet... Ned Kelly
Janeen Brian & Matt Adams
Australia's most famous bushranger



Meet... Mary MacKillop
Sally Murphy & Sonia Martinez
Australia's first saint



Meet... Captain Cook
Rae Murdie & Chris Nixon
Exploration and discovery



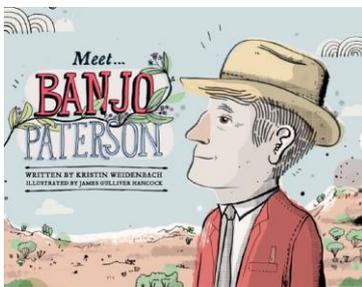
Meet... the Anzacs
Claire Saxby & Max Berry
How the Anzac legend began



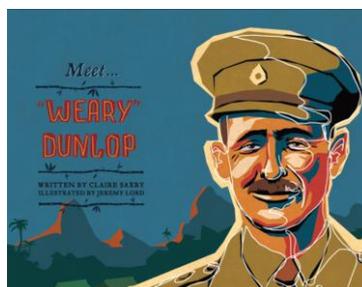
Meet... Douglas Mawson
Mike Dumbleton & Snp Green
Antarctic exploration and survival



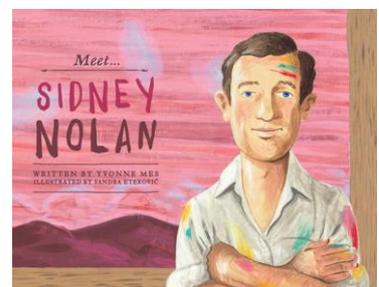
Meet... Nancy Bird Walton
Grace Atwood & Harry Slaghekke
A pioneer in the golden age of aviation



Meet... Banjo Paterson
Kristin Weidenbach & James Gulliver Hancock
Australia's most beloved poet



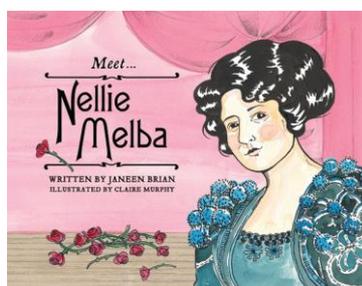
Meet... Weary Dunlop
Claire Saxby & Jeremy Lord
Wartime bravery and compassion



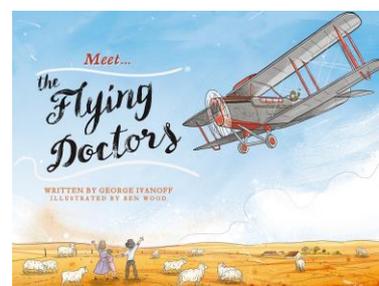
Meet... Sidney Nolan
Yvonne Mes & Sandra Eterović
A trailblazing artist



Meet... Don Bradman
Coral Vass & Brad Howe
A sporting legend and source of pride during hard times



Meet... Nellie Melba
Janeen Brian & Claire Murphy
Australia's first classical music star



Meet... the Flying Doctors
George Ivanoff & Ben Wood
Australia's outback medical service

Teachers' notes for each book are available from penguin.com.au/teachers



WORKSHEET 1: STORY MAP

Book title:

Author:

Illustrator:

Characters:

Setting:

| |
|------------------|
| Beginning |
| Middle |
| End |



WORKSHEET 3: EVOLUTION OF A DRAWING

Here is a step-by-step look at the evolution of an illustration by Jeremy Lord in *Meet Weary Dunlop*.

At the very beginning the illustrator is given the story (the words the author has written). The illustrator will then read over the text and workshop their ideas, taking into consideration such things as the colour palette for the book, the style of illustration and any visual themes that will be used.

For the section that we will examine, the text read as follows:

The guards sent Weary and other POWs from Indonesia to Thailand. There, the men were forced to build the Thai-Burma Railway so the Japanese could move their troops overland instead of by sea.

The prisoners worked long days with little to eat and very few tools. When guards threatened to provide full rations only to those who worked a full day, Weary argued that sick men needed more food – NOT less – if they were to get better.



This is an example of a first sketch. The illustrator, Jeremy Lord, has used a pencil and a sheet of paper. At this stage in the process, the illustrator is considering how the illustration will *add* to the text (instead of just showing exactly what the text says). The illustrator also thinks about how the illustration should be laid out on the page in a way that makes sense to the reader.

Questions

1. How would you have chosen to illustrate this page?
2. What do the sun and the railway tell you about the setting?
3. What are the men on the railway doing?
4. Where is the text going to go?
5. Do you think his illustration adds to the text? How?



Questions

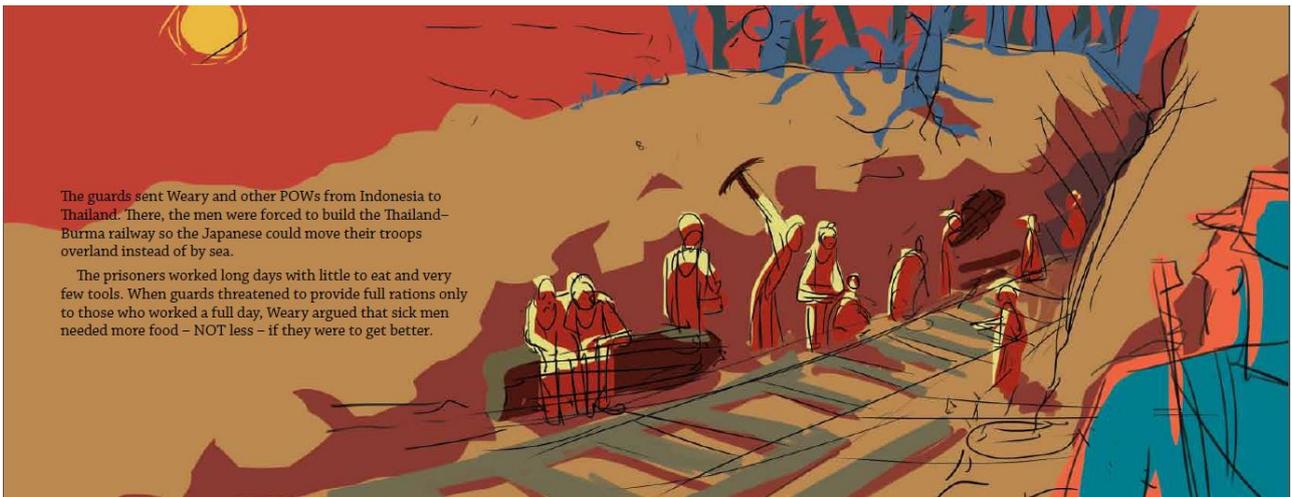
1. As you can see, the illustrator has redrawn this spread using a different perspective. Why do you think he has done this? Do you think this perspective works better than the first sketch?
2. What other changes have been made?
3. Why do you think he has positioned the Japanese guard in such a way that he is not facing the reader?
4. Where is the text going to go?



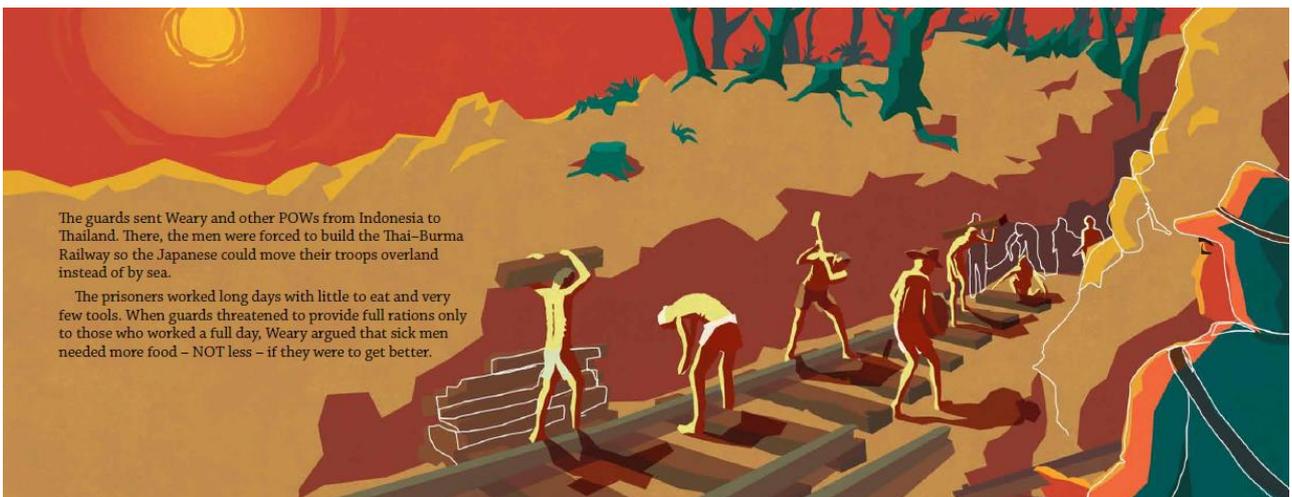
Questions

1. Why do you think the illustrator has changed the colour of the sky to red? How does this colour make you feel?
2. Why would an illustrator want to test out the colours at a sketch stage?





Sometimes adjustments need to be made. For example, here, the text wasn't readable enough because it didn't fall across one solid background colour. This can be distracting for the reader.



Once the background was adjusted to fit the text, the sketch was approved. It is then time for the illustrator to develop the illustration. As you can see, the lines are now clean and details have been added.

Questions

1. What details have been added?
2. How has the illustrator created a sense of movement? Is this important?
3. Why do you think this particular style of illustration was chosen?
4. Do you think the colours look good together? Do they suit the overall palette of the book?
5. Does the illustration work well with the text? What would you have done differently?

WORKSHEET 4: VISUAL LITERACY

Choose one spread from the book to analyse. Make two columns. In one column write down everything the text tells you about the story on that page. In the other column, write down everything the illustration tells you about the story on that page. Does the illustration tell you extra things that are not in the text and vice versa? Here is an example to get you started.

| <u>What the illustration tells me</u> | <u>What the text tells me</u> |
|--|--|
| <p>The axe, the shovel and the bucket show that there was work to do on the farm.</p> <p>The images in the sky are larger than life-size, towering over the homestead. These are figments of Weary's imagination which show that he favoured them over work on the farm.</p> <p>A boy is riding away from the homestead on a horse, into an open field. This tells me that Weary was an adventurer at heart, not afraid to venture into the unknown, and that he is destined for great things.</p> | <p>Weary grew up on a farm. He helped his family by doing chores and farmwork.</p> <p>Weary had an active imagination and loved tales of adventure.</p> <p>Weary imagined a world beyond life on the farm.</p> |

| <u>What the illustration tells me</u> | <u>What the text tells me</u> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | |



ORDER FORM

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| <i>Meet... the Anzacs</i> | Claire Saxby | 9780857981936 | K-4 | \$16.99 | | |
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