



Author: Jane Jolly
Illustrator: Liz Duthie
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Blurb

Ernst fumbled with his bassoon.

Johannes nervously held his tuba to his mouth.

Peter's moustache quivered as he raised his trombone.

Jacob picked up his flugelhorn with trembling hands.

A bushranger ambushes a travelling German band, taking their hard-earned money and demanding a concert! He plays his whistle and dances a jig as the men brrroo and oom pah pah on their instruments in fear. But this is the famed 'gentleman bushranger' Captain Thunderbolt, and this true story has a surprising ending!

About the Creators

Jane Jolly is a primary school teacher in Adelaide. She has written many award-winning picture books, including *Tea and Sugar Christmas* and *Radio Rescue* for NLA Publishing, *One Step at a Time* and *Papa Sky*.

Liz Duthie is an internationally published children's book illustrator and visual artist. Her first non-fiction children's book, *Wombat* by Christopher Cheng, won the CBCA Eve Pownall Award in 2022. Liz's hand-drawn style expresses humour, emotion and movement, using traditional mediums.

Captain Thunderbolt's Recital Teachers Notes

Recommended for: Grades K–3

Bushranging

Thunderbolt was known as the 'Gentleman bushranger' because he never killed or injured anyone. Ask your class to consider whether this was the norm. What other bushrangers do they know? How are these other bushrangers' stories similar to Thunderbolt's? How are they different?

Women Bushrangers

In the backmatter, author Jane Jolly references Thunderbolt's partner, Mary Ann Bugg, a figure worth exploring in her own right! Ask students to research female bushrangers and consider whether their motivations, challenges, crimes, reputations or punishment were different because of their gender. Small groups could present their female bushranger to the class.

End of Bushranging

As a group, using the backmatter as a starting point, consider the conditions that led to the era of the bushrangers and what changed to precipitate their disappearance from the Australian landscape.

Celebrity Bushrangers

Bushrangers enjoy a strange celebrity in Australia. Have your class reflect on Ned Kelly's reputation and how his story has been portrayed in film, art and literature. Ask students to consider what was happening in other countries, particularly those with similar colonial histories: what were bushrangers called in these countries? Did characters like Robin Hood and Jesse James enjoy the same popular reception as Ned Kelly?

Wirth's German Band

In the backmatter, Jane Jolly writes about Johannes Wirth and his brass band. As a group, investigate forms of entertainment in colonial Australia. Students could explore the National Library of Australia's [catalogue](#) and [Trove](#) to discover photos, advertisements, sheet music and more. Who were the headline acts of the period? Where did they perform? Who was in the audience of a Wirth's German Band performance?

Illustrating a Story

Ask students to look at the illustrations in the book. Liz Duthie has used watercolour and pencil, and has injected humour, personality and movement into her illustrations. Have students consider why she might have picked this medium. What information did Liz need to make her art both fun to look at and historically accurate?

Finding Historic Stories

Jane Jolly has published several books highlighting lesser-known characters and moments in Australian history. Ask your students to consider which stories from their own family history might be worthy of a picture book and which aspects of Australian history the story touches on. Students could ask their parents or grandparents to tell them a true story, which they could write down and illustrate as a simple picture book.

Being Robbed

Bushrangers are not unproblematic figures, romanticised in Australian folklore, but in reality criminals who left behind real victims. Ask your students to write the story of an encounter between a bushranger and his or her victim from both characters' perspectives. Students should consider both the bushranger's motivations and the effects on the victim. Alternatively, students could rewrite the story of Captain Thunderbolt from the perspective of the travelling German band members.

Writing Biography

As a group, search [Trove](#) for newspaper articles about Captain Thunderbolt. Create a timeline for his life and write a short biographical entry about him. Consider other characters associated with him, mentioned both in the story and in the backmatter.

Writing Stories

As a group, search [Trove](#) for newspaper articles about bushrangers. Ask students to come up with their own bushranger character. They should give their character a name, background story and modus operandi. Students could produce a WANTED poster for their bushranger or write a newspaper article about a specific crime committed by their bushranger (or the resulting court case), in the style of historical articles in Trove.

