

These notes are for:

- Year 3 through to Year 7
- Primary - Lower High school
- 7+ years

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- HSIE/SOSE
- Art

Example of:

- Picture Book
- Narrative Non-Fiction
- Biography

Experience of:

- Visual Literacy
- Cultural Diversity
- Convict History
- Australian History/Heritage

Values addressed:

- Freedom
- Cultural Heritage
- Integrity

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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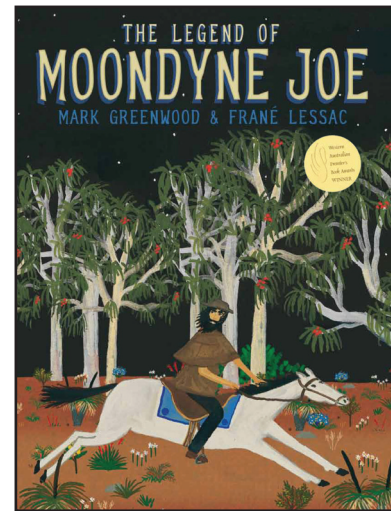
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The Legend of Moondyne Joe - Overview

The Legend of Moondyne Joe

By: Mark Greenwood
Illustrated by: Frané Lessac
ISBN: 9781921720123
ARRP: \$16.95
NZRRP: \$18.99
No. of pages: 40



Outline:

This is the story of the greatest escape artist of Australia's convict era – the legend of Moondyne Joe.

“They’ll not take my freedom away!” These are the words of Moondyne Joe, the beloved scoundrel and expert bushman of early Australian convict history. There wasn’t a cell built that could contain him. Joe often led the troopers on wild chases through the Moondyne Hills of Western Australia. This is the story of a colourful Australian legend from the award-winning team of Mark Greenwood and Frané Lessac.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Mark is a musician and award-winning children’s author. His books aim to foster a greater appreciation and understanding of Australian myths and legends. Mark enjoys working with students of all ages, inspiring and developing their natural curiosity about books and writing. He has twice won the Western Australian Premier’s Award for children’s books. *Simpson and His Donkey* was Honour Book in the Eve Pownall Book of the Year category in 2009 at the Children’s Book Council of Australia Awards. He is married to Frané Lessac and they live with their two children in Western Australia. For more information about Mark’s work, please visit his website: www.markgreenwood.com.au

Frané is originally from New Jersey and is an artist of international renown having exhibited in London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, and the Caribbean. Lessac has over 35 children’s books published throughout the world. Her work has won Australian and international awards and has been translated into numerous languages. In 2010 she was awarded the Muriel Barwell Award for Distinguished Service to Children’s Literature. For more information about her work, please visit her website: www.franelessac.com

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes were prepared by Mark Greenwood and Frané Lessac.

Suggestions for Classroom Activities

The Cover

Ask students to look closely at the front cover (without turning the book over to look at the back, and without opening the book to look inside). Have them write down their responses to the cover. What questions come to mind? What might the story be about? How do they feel about the dashing figure? Where is the story set?

Activities and Discussion questions

- Talk or write about life in the days of the convicts. Research one element in detail, such as transport, fashion, school days, kinds of work, home life and pastimes.
- Imagine you were suddenly transported back in time. What was life like in the Swan River Colony of Western Australia?
- Create a time line of the important dates and places in the story of Moondyne Joe.
- Look at the reasons why people were sent to Australia as convicts.
- Discuss how Moondyne Joe was different from other bushrangers.
- Design a wanted poster for an imaginary escaped convict.
- Imagine you are a convict – write a diary entry titled: “My first day working on the chain gang”.
- Newsflash! Write a front-page story about one of Moondyne Joe’s escapes. Design your own article with a catchy title, subheadings, text and illustrations.
- Write a song or poem about Moondyne Joe and/or the convict era.
- Using the end pages of the book as a guide, design a map showing positions of Perth and Fremantle, Moondyne Joe’s horse traps, the Newcastle Goal in Toodyay, the prison stables, Joe’s hideouts, the Avon River, his cell in Fremantle Prison, and Ferguson’s (Houghton’s) wine cellar.
- Describe the countryside where Moondyne Joe lived: the flora, fauna, landmarks, colours and country in the Avon Valley where Joe lived the bushman’s life.

The Story and its Themes

Discussion – Does an appreciation of our convict history give us a better understanding of ourselves and our culture?

Moondyne Joe was an outstanding bushman, rough and ready, willing to improvise and “give it a go”. Discuss the strength of spirit nurtured by life in a convict colony.

Why does Moondyne Joe’s simple way of life and his determination to be free have such an appeal? What did the settlers admire about him?

Discuss the themes of freedom and independence, and how important they are to the historical origins of other Australian stories and legends.

Further Reading for Teachers

Moondyne Joe: The Man and the Myth by Ian Elliot

The Life and Times of Moondyne Joe by WJ Edgar

Old Toodyay and Newcastle by Rica Erickson

Australian Bushranging by Bill Warren

Midnite: The Story of a Wild Colonial Boy by Randolph Stow

Unwilling Emigrants by Alexandra Hasluck

Convicts and Colonial Society, 1788–1868 edited by

Lloyd Evans & Paul Nicholls

Moondyne by John Boyle O’Reilly

Archives of the WA State Library (Battye Library), the WA Historical Society, the York Society, Fremantle Prison.

Websites

Moondyne Festival

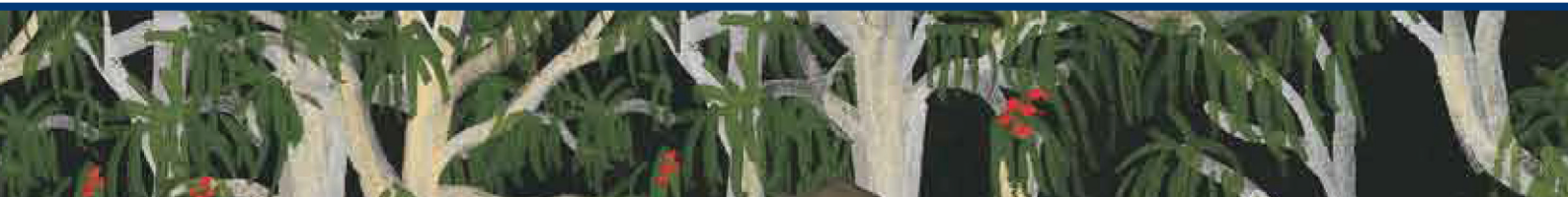
www.moodynefestival.com

Fremantle Prison

www.fremantleprison.com.au

Toodyay Visitor Centre

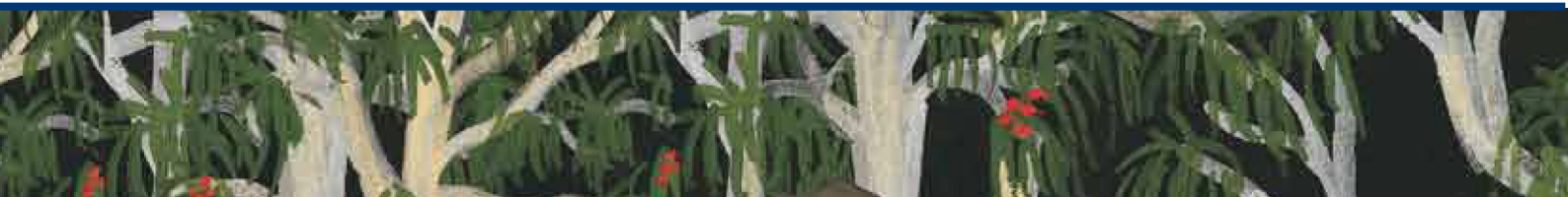
www.toodyay.com





Questions based on the Text and Glossary

- When did the first convict labour in Western Australia arrive?
- What made the patrolling policeman suspicious of Joseph Johns?
- Why was Moondyne Joe arrested?
- Where and when was he arrested?
- What was the length of his sentence?
- What was Moondyne Joe's real name?
- When was Moondyne Joe born?
- How long was Joe waiting in a crowded English gaol before he was herded aboard the convict ship?
- How long did a convict's sentence have to be before they could be transported?
- How did Moondyne Joe get to Australia?
- Describe what life may have been like on a convict ship.
- What was the name of the ship he arrived on?
- How long did the voyage take?
- How many convicts were on board?
- When Joe had his first glimpse of the bleak, windswept shores of the Swan River settlement, what was his attention drawn to?
- What year did Moondyne Joe arrive in Australia?
- What was Moondyne Joe's convict number?
- When did Moondyne Joe receive his ticket of leave?
- What was a ticket of leave?
- After serving how much of an original sentence could a prisoner receive a conditional pardon?
- When did Moondyne Joe receive his conditional pardon?
- What did the Governor of the colony do?
- What was a pensioner guard?
- Who could order punishment for convicts?
- What did Joe wear when his clothes became ragged and torn?
- When Moondyne Joe lived in the bush, where did he like to sleep and where did he take a shower?
- What did Joe construct around the freshwater springs to capture lost stock and wild brumbies that came to drink?
- What did "sawyers" and "teamsters" do in the new colony?
- While the warders dozed, how did Joe escape from his damp prison cell?
- Where did Joe hide in the prison stables?
- What did he "borrow" from the magistrate?
- Who did Joe mingle with at the Mahogany Creek Inn?
- What were Joe's mates named?
- How did Joe make his getaway from the Mahogany Creek Inn?
- When Joe was released from prison why did he get into trouble again?
- What was the length of Joe's sentence?
- What were leg irons?
- Why was Joe put in leg irons?
- Why did the early settlers like Moondyne Joe?
- The shrill call of what instrument raised the alarm when Joe escaped from the chain gang?
- How did Joe scale the wall of Fremantle Prison?
- What song, sung to a familiar tune, did children sing to tease the Governor?
- Where did Joe strike off his chains?
- What did Joe use to cross the turbulent Avon River?
- What was specially constructed for Joe at Fremantle Prison?
- What was the the Governor's promise to Joe?
- How did Joe use the rocks which the Governor ordered to be brought inside the prison, to make his escape?
- What was it that Joe had a fondness for that ultimately cost him his freedom?
- What did the new Governor do for Joe?
- Where did Joe go to find a new home?
- Was Moondyne Joe ever married?
- Where is Moondyne Joe's grave?
- Why is Moondyne Joe a legend?



Mark Greenwood on writing *The Legend of Moondyne Joe*:

My writing is occupied with well-known and little known slices of history – folklore, legends – stories about journeys, quests and challenges. I usually come across these stories by chance. The initial motivation to write can be generated by a character or a setting.

Living in Fremantle, a city surrounded by the remnants of our convict past, I always wanted to create a story that would bring to life a legend from this bygone era. The “spark” that drew me to this story was a visit to an old prison built by convict labour. Inside the Limestone Lodge (as Fremantle Prison was known to its inmates) I came upon a special cell – its walls lined with thick timber, pegged in with iron spikes – an extra steel plate criss-crossing the barred window.

The “escape proof” cage was built for Joseph Bolitho Johns, alias Moondyne Joe, a cheeky rascal, a scoundrel to some, a ticket-of-leave convict who won the affection of the early settlers and a place in bushranging folklore. Joe was rough and ready, and willing to “give it a go”. His ingenuity in making his escapes from apparently hopeless situations gained him many admirers who expressed the opinion that he had earned his freedom. Joe outwitted the establishment and kept the entire colony amused with his remarkable ability to escape every time he was placed behind bars.

Moondyne Joe was a perfect character to write about. Characters come to life when they are motivated by a goal. A story develops when we find out where a journey takes them and what challenges they might face. Through convict stories like Joe’s we get an understanding of opportunism, the ability to keep your nerve and the courage to endure. Daring, laced with bravado, was his defining characteristic.

Frané’s illustrations allow readers to meet the bold bushranger face to face, with a palette mixed with humour and authenticity. Her illustrations take us on a ride through the pages of history, through the wooded valleys and winding creeks at Moondyne Hills, into the confinement of a cold prison cell. Her art has given Moondyne Joe a strength of spirit that my words alone could not portray.

Moondyne Joe was not known for blazing gunfights or daring bank robberies. Wearing a kangaroo-skin cape and possum-skin slippers, he was harmless except to a few settlers whose horses had a “mysterious” way of straying. The underlying theme of the book – the quest for freedom – forms the origins of this Australian legend. On the granite stone covering Moondyne Joe’s grave is a carving of handcuffs with a broken chain. Underneath is the old Welsh word “Rhyddid”, which means freedom.



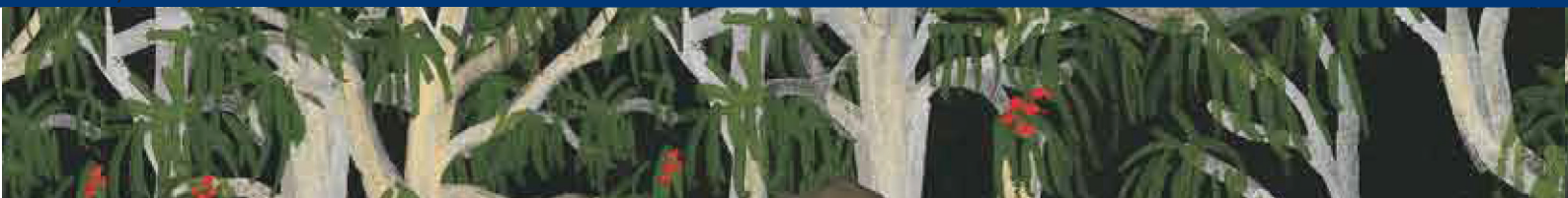
Frané Lessac on illustrating *The Legend of Moondyne Joe*:

When painting the art, I pictured Moondyne Joe as an escapologist, like Houdini. I hoped my naive style of illustration would balance the themes of the quest for freedom and the confinement of prison. I wanted readers to be acquainted with Joe through a palette mixed with colour, humour and historical authenticity.

By visiting the countryside where Joe lived his bushman’s life, I got a good sense of the flora, fauna, landmarks and country of the Moondyne Hills and Avon Valley. I travelled to many locations associated with Moondyne Joe’s life, including those of his various escapes. From the port where he first arrived in Australia, to his original horse traps and hide-outs in the bush. From his first jail cell, and the prison stables where he stole the magistrate’s horse and shiny new bridle, to the inn where he slid down the roof onto a horse and escaped into the night. I visited the turbulent river which he crossed on stilts made from fallen tree branches, and the prison containing the specially constructed escape-proof cell designed for Joe, and finally the winery that was the scene of his last capture. I found myself transported back in time and discovered what life was like in Australia during early settlement for a convict like Moondyne Joe.

While working on the art, I looked at many of the old prints and rare photos of the time from the numerous research books Mark had collected. This is a given bonus being married to the author.

Children across Australia love Moondyne Joe’s escapes. When they know that this is a true story based on a convict bushranger, it truly brings our history to life.



Q&A with Mark Greenwood

What is *The Legend of Moondyne Joe* about?

It's about the search for freedom, independence, and determination – themes that form the basis of the origins of Australian folklore. It's about courage, loneliness and the frontier qualities of the Australian bush, which also plays an important role in defining our past. On a trip to the old Fremantle Prison, I came upon an unusual prison cell. Reputedly constructed to be “escape proof”, its walls were lined with thick timber pegged in with iron spikes and an extra steel plate placed over the barred window. Immediately I was drawn to the story of a convict who became a bushranger. Moondyne Joe appealed to me because he was a rascal who won the fame and the affection of the early settlers for outwitting the establishment with remarkable escapes from custody on his never-ending quest for freedom.

Why will kids like it?

Kids will like it because Moondyne Joe was a cheeky rascal, yet he had many friends and admirers. He won a place in bushranging folklore for his remarkable ability to escape every time he was placed behind bars. After he had escaped numerous times, a special escape-proof cell was constructed at Fremantle Prison to hold him ... which presented him his greatest challenge!

Can you tell me about the main character and what you like/dislike about him/her?

Characters come to life when they are on a journey. I particularly liked researching and writing about this character because he was a legend that wasn't well known outside of Western Australia. He was an outstanding bushman and he left his mark on the character of our country. I thought his story was worthy of reaching a larger audience.

Is there something that sets this book apart from others?

Our knowledge of bushrangers usually concerns blazing gunfights or robbing banks. I was attracted to Moondyne Joe because he was different. Wearing a kangaroo-skin cape and possum-skin slippers, he became a skilled bushman and found freedom in the Moondyne Hills. Joe was harmless, except possibly to a few settlers whose horses went missing. When blamed for the disappearance of a farmer's prize stallion the authorities soon found out that there wasn't a jail that could hold him.

What did you enjoy most about writing this book?

The thing that I really enjoyed about this book was that it happened in my backyard. If I want, I can walk to the old Fremantle Prison which was the scene of many of Joe's escapes and the location with Moondyne Joe's escape-proof cell. I can drive for an hour and be at all the places featured in the book. I like that the events in this book are so close to my home.

What was the hardest thing about writing this book?

Giving life to a character is one of the most rewarding parts of being a writer and it is also one of the most difficult. Characters we can see in our mind's eye aren't created with the snap of a finger. They develop over many hours, days, weeks, months or sometimes years spent together. I often wondered what it would be like to travel back in time and meet the rascally bushranger face to face. Would I be confronted by a proud and defiant rebel or a cheeky rascal? Finding the right way to portray Moondyne Joe was an enjoyable challenge.

For more great books from Mark and Frané published by Walker Books see:

