

These notes are for:

- Years 2-7
- 7-12 year olds
- Primary

Key Learning Areas:

- English – Poetry/Verse
- HSIE/SOSE

Example of:

- Prose Poetry
- Junior Fiction
- First Person Narrative

Experience of:

- Adversity
- Hope
- Hardship

Values addressed:

- Doing Your Best
- Care & Compassion
- Working Together
- Understanding
- Togetherness

Themes:

- Drought
- Australia
- Farming
- Family

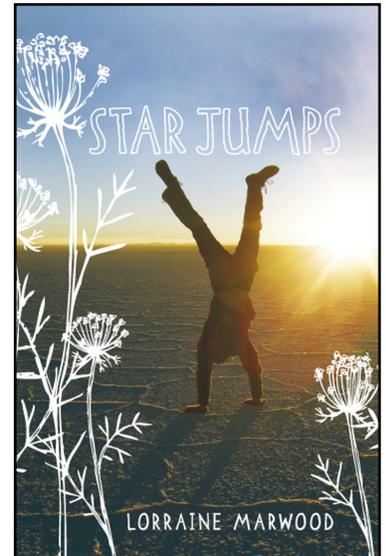
*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Star Jumps - Overview



Star Jumps

By: Lorraine Marwood
 ISBN: 9781921150722
 ARRP: \$14.95
 NZRRP: \$16.99
 No. of Pages: 128
 June 2009

Outline:

Star Jumps is a poignant verse novel depicting the joys and heartbreaks of a farming family as they struggle to cope with the devastating effects of long term drought. Told through the eyes of Ruby, day-to-day farm life involves playing in grassy paddocks with siblings, doing jobs, helping out and witnessing birth, death and sacrifice. The family are devastated when they have to sell off some of their herd, but in the spirit of hope, it is Ruby who tries in her own small way to help the family by making miniature bales of hay.

An insightful and touching story about the importance of hope and facing hardships together, told accessibly in verse.

Author Information:

Lorraine Marwood was born and raised in rural Victoria, Australia and has lived for most of her married life on a dairy farm with her husband and their six children. Lorraine is an award-winning poet who has been widely published in literary magazines across Australia, as well as magazines in the UK, USA, Canada and New Zealand. She has also published several children's novels and collections of poetry.

Lorraine writes poetry ideas and teaching plans for Literature Base and conducts workshops on poetry and story writing. She is a judge for many writing competitions, including the Dorothea MacKellar Poetry Awards.

How to use these notes:

These notes were prepared by Melissa Hamilton with additional poetry notes by Lorraine Marwood. This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.



Classroom Ideas for *Star Jumps*:

Before reading *Star Jumps*:

- View the front cover of *Star Jumps*? What do you think this story is about? Where do you think it is set? In groups discuss these questions.
- Read the blurb on the back cover of *Star Jumps*. Discuss in groups what a blurb is. Does the blurb give the story away? Does the blurb make you want to read the book? Discuss in groups who you think Ruby might be. Draw a picture of Ruby.
- View the imprint page. This is the page that tells you where and when a book was made. There is a small picture on this page of a kookaburra with some text next to it. Find out who May Gibbs was. You may have some of her books in your library. Make a display of Australian children's books in your classroom or library.

Guided Reading Activities:

- Ask students to read page 9. Ruby is describing her sister and brother. Who is the oldest and who is the youngest out of these three children?
- Read the rest of Chapter 1. The author has used descriptive language to introduce you to the characters and set the scene for the book. Ask students to create a picture that shows all of the characters mentioned in this chapter and try to include images that show the descriptions of their clothing, surroundings and how tall they would be (depending on their age).
- Read pages 20-25, the description of the children tunnelling through the marshmallow weed. Keely and Connor use sounds so that they don't knock into each other. Ask students to discuss how sound can tell us where someone is? You can test this in the classroom using the following game.

Draw a map of the classroom, a simple square or rectangle will suffice. Provide a copy for each student.

Ask a group of students to close their eyes, sit in the middle of the room and face in the same direction. Have another student stand in an area of the classroom and call 'cooee' and then sit back down.

Ask the five students who had their eyes closed to mark on their maps where they thought the sound came from with the number 1. Repeat this 5 for 6 times, with the student calling 'cooee' moving around the class. Each call should be marked on the map with a different number.

Ask students to compare their maps. Did they all hear the sounds coming from the same direction?
- On page 25 Ruby describes the heifer as not knowing "cowshed etiquette". What is etiquette? Ask students to make a list of things that they think are good etiquette and bad etiquette.
- Read the line on page 27. "I sit on the corner post and get a magpie's view". What is a magpie's view? Ask students to draw a magpie's view of your school.
- "So warm my bed
So cold the wind"
This line on page 35 contrasts the world around Ruby. Ask students to create similar lines about something in their world e.g. "So hot the sun, so cool the water", "So sour the lemon, so sweet the chocolate".
- "I see the outside light, like a small spinning ball", page 37. This is a simile. Ask students to think of other similes to describe the world around them? There are other similes used in *Star Jumps*, can they find any more?
- Read Chapter 3. This family comes together to help with the birthing of a calf. Ruby says that it is a Friesian breed. Ask students to research this breed and other breeds of cattle. They could create a short presentation using PowerPoint or give a verbal presentation to the class, aided with pictures. Extend this task by having different students (individually or in groups) create presentations on different farm animals.
- Read Chapter 4. Ask students to make a list of the different animals that drink milk when they are young? Discuss why it is important for Ruby to give the calf milk.
- "Drought. One word, DROUGHT," yells Keely. Don't you study it at school?" (page 69)
Read chapters 5-6.
This book is set in Australia. How has the drought affected farming in Australia? Ask students to visit the Australian Bureau of Meteorology; <http://www.bom.gov.au/> and research the last month's rainfall in Australia. They can then create their own map of Australia and colour the areas where rain has recently fallen.
- Keely, Connor and Ruby try to come up with some ways to help save the farm. Ask students to create a list of ways they can help, by conserving water at home and at school.

Classroom Ideas for *Star Jumps* cont... :

- “And we look at the flat-as-a-pizza country, with all of the extra topping eaten away.” (page 71) Ask students to discuss what this is representing?
- Read aloud page 100-101. Ruby personifies the drought. Ask students to imagine what they think ‘drought’ would look like if it were a person and then draw a picture of it.
- The marshmallow weed changes throughout the book. Ask students to research what ‘marshmallow weed’ is (there are some notes at the back of the book to help you). What does it symbolise in this story? e.g. the drought, hope. Discuss.
- Read aloud Chapter 7. Ruby has a positive attitude towards making the hay bales, but Connor does not. Ask students if they think Ruby has the right attitude? Do they think it is important to remain positive when you are faced with a problem? Discuss.
- The story finishes with Keely, Connor and Ruby doing star jumps. The children seem joyful even though the drought has not finished. Ask students if they think actions can be joyful. Can they think of any other actions that are joyful e.g. clapping, skipping.

After reading *Star Jumps*:

- After reading *Star Jumps* ask students to write a review of the book, paying special attention to the themes and issues that it raises. To extend their book report they can research the author.

Visit Lorraine Marwood’s website –

www.lorrainemarwood.com

Lorraine Marwood on writing *Star Jumps*:



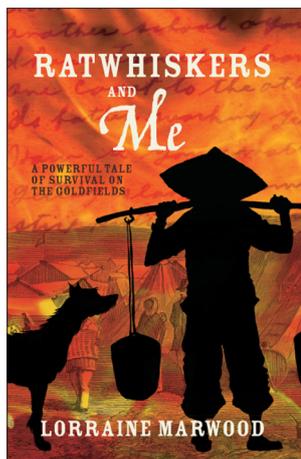
Ruby is a quietly feisty character. She is an amalgamation of my daughters and also myself when I was a child on a farm.

I love farm life, yet I know so much public knowledge of farm life is stereotyped. I wanted to put the reader right into the calving season, right there beside the stockyard as generations of a breeding herd was sold. I wanted to put the reader amongst the damp marshmallow weed and also to see the spectre of drought and its crushing effects on a farming family.

I also wanted to highlight that small actions might not defeat such a big foe as drought, but they put an emotional dint into the paralysing effects it can trigger.

These scenes are mined from my own life as a dairyfarmer. I dedicate them to my father and mother-in-law who were also dairy farmers, to my husband who knows so much about cows and to the farming communities still holding onto a way of life tied so much to the variances of weather.

Walker Books, accessible verse fiction

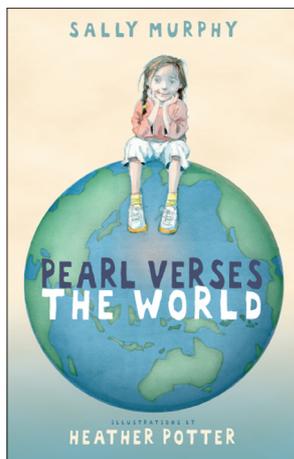


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Some tips from Lorraine Marwood on writing a prose poem:Introduction:

In *Star Jumps* Ruby loves the weekend. It's family time. A family game.

Here is an extract from page 19 –

*We crawl through the marshmallow weed
in different directions,
the wide leaves like little roofs,
squashing down juicy stalks
as our bodies carve tunnels.*

Setting the Scene:

Remember a time when you played a family game of make believe – it might be a cubby house or a tree house, or a game that your family made up.

1. Jot down phrases associated with that game:

- smells
- sounds
- sights – what was around
- taste
- touch – feel the texture

Our senses are very important in poetry and also prose poetry.

Building the Scene**2. Jot down specific words and actions.**

These words are the strong words of poetry and also prose poetry.

Fleshing the Scene Out**3. Write down times of emotion – how you felt – excitement, contentment, disappointment, loss**

This is putting the YOU into a poem and is important if it is going to resonate with the reader.

Here's an example from my childhood:

- dust and the protection of the stockyards
- long afternoons, the talk between my sister and myself – 'I'm having the red horse' (We were playing with small toy animals.)
- waiting all week to play this game, having my younger sister all to myself
- surrounded by a grassy paddock with a cow or calves grazing nearby
- and the constant cackling hum of hundreds of chooks in nearby pens
- the shade from the big gum tree over the next-door neighbour's fence.

4. Now have a go at writing a five lined stanza.

Dust, and the shade like safety bars
from the big tree over the fence.
That's mine, I say to Jess.
We sort the plastic farm animals
into mine and 'hers' piles.

Prose poetry makes the images sharp and easy to read and savour. Have fun!