

Teacher  
Notes

# THE HAPPINESS BOX

*a wartime book of hope*

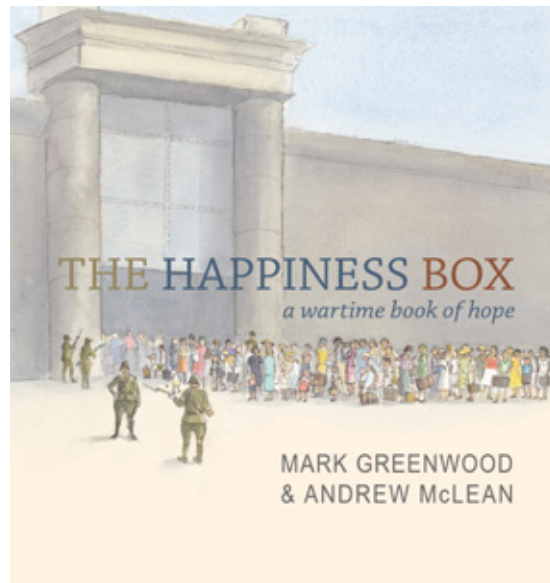
TEACHER NOTES



MARK GREENWOOD  
& ANDREW McLEAN

TEACHER NOTES BY DR ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT

# INTRODUCTION



ISBN 9781925081381  
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*“Now everyone can discover the secrets **The Happiness Box** contains.”*

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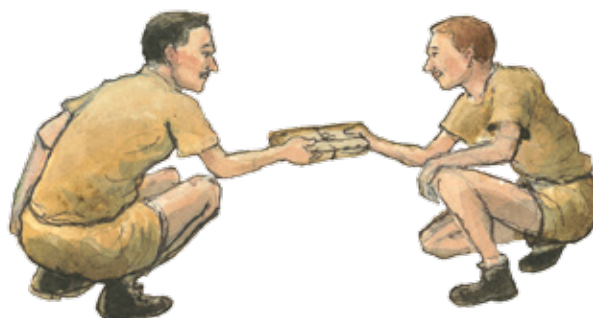
In 1942, after the fall of Singapore to the Japanese, Australian soldier Sergeant David “Griff” Griffin became a prisoner of war in a military compound outside the gates of the infamous Changi Prison, where women and children had also been interned. With Christmas approaching, it was suggested that POWs make wooden toys for the children cooped up nearby. The men and their captors agreed. But Griff had a special present in mind ... he had decided to write a book, which his mate, Captain Leslie Greener, would illustrate.

*The Happiness Box* was said to contain the secrets to happiness. But the enemy was suspicious when they read a reference to a character named “Winston”. The book was supposedly destroyed, only to be miraculously recovered after the war ended, and later published.

In this picture book, award-winning creators Mark Greenwood and Andrew McLean bring to life the inspirational true story of a book that became a National Treasure. “The original book was written to chase away fear and to give children hope, and contained the ‘secrets to happiness’ such as the importance of friendship, kindness, compassion, generosity, loyalty, faith, courage and hard work.”

*The Happiness Box* not only survived the war – it toured Australia along with Sir Don Bradman’s cricket bat and Ned Kelly’s helmet as part of the “National Treasures from Australia’s Great Libraries” exhibition. The book currently resides in the State Library of NSW.

This new book by Mark Greenwood and Andrew McLean is a tribute to this “national treasure” and the power of books to transcend circumstances – and offer hope and happiness.



## MARK GREENWOOD – AUTHOR

Mark Greenwood is an author with a passion for history. His books, *The Legend of Moondyne Joe* and *The Legend of Lasseter's Reef* have both won the West Australian Premier's Award. *Simpson and His Donkey* was a CBCA Honour Book. *Jandamarra*, illustrated by Terry Denton, was shortlisted for the CBCA Eve Pownall Award and the NSW Premier's Literary Awards for Children's Literature. Mark often teams with his wife, illustrator Frané Lessac, to produce award-winning books such as *Drummer Boy of John John*, *Magic Boomerang*, *Ned Kelly & The Green Sash* and *Midnight – the story of a light horse*. Mark's recent chapter book series delves into some of Australia's most baffling "History Mysteries". In 2018 he will celebrate the release of *The Happiness Box*, illustrated by Andrew McLean. Visit his website for further information: [www.markgreenwood.com.au](http://www.markgreenwood.com.au)

## ANDREW McLEAN – ILLUSTRATOR

Andrew McLean grew up in the Victorian country town of Bairnsdale. He trained as a painter and teacher, and taught in secondary schools before becoming a lecturer in painting and drawing at Caulfield Institute of Technology. He has been a full-time artist now for more than thirty years. Andrew and his wife Janet have created many picture books together, and Andrew also illustrates books written by other authors. Many of his books have been award winners: he has won the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award three times. *Bob the Railway Dog* (written by Corinne Fenton) was his first work with Walker. Visit the website he shares with his wife Janet Mclean: [www.mcleanpicturebooks.com/](http://www.mcleanpicturebooks.com/)

## DR ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT – TEACHER NOTES AUTHOR

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011, she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the Queensland Writer's Centre's Johnno Award.



## A. Critical Literacy: Before and After Reading the Book

- What do your students know about World War II events in Singapore?
- What does the cover of this book suggest to them?
- What did they learn about World War II from reading this book? Make a list of facts and impressions.

## B. Themes & Curriculum Topics

These Teachers' Notes are aimed at primary school teachers of students in years 2–5 and written to the Australian National Curriculum <[www.australiancurriculum.edu.au](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au)> Topics relevant to specific curriculum areas are listed below. The following are general themes or values to be explored with students.

- Happiness
- Hope
- Friendship
- Kindness and compassion
- Generosity
- Loyalty
- Faith
- Courage
- Hard work

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Choose any one of the values above and discuss in relation to this picture book. What other values are shown in this book?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What are the secrets to happiness? Discuss the fact that these “secrets” are different for each person. Would those secrets change if you were a prisoner of war?

### • The Importance of Books and Reading

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Mark Greenwood writes: “*The Happiness Box* is a book about a book – a story about a story. It shows that books can also be a secret to happiness. In the original *The Happiness Box* book, when the characters dig up the box, what they find inside are books ... So for Griff, reading was a key ingredient in the secret to happiness.” How can stories help people to transcend circumstances?

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Where did the books come from that Griff wanted the soldiers to read? Mark Greenwood writes: “Books were donated from the kitbags and some were trucked in after being looted from Singapore. ‘Books are the answer,’ as Colonel put it to the Japanese commandant, ‘to prevent thoughts of escape.’ Within days, a convoy of trucks arrived and the contents of the Singapore Library were loaded in: History, poetry, biography and a great many subjects both academic and practical to engage and educate the men. On steamy nights, Sgt. Griffin slept on the floor between cases of books. The library was his lighthouse. Within its walls his thoughts were free. He studied the characters in books. He stored their voices in his heart and wove them into his own words.”

**ACTIVITY:** Research the original book, *The Happiness Box*, and the prisoners who influenced Griff’s (animal) characters.

## C. Humanities & Social Sciences

### • World War II

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What were the causes of World War II and how did it escalate from a conflict in Europe to the Asian region?

**ACTIVITY:** Singapore was one of the “jewels in the crown” of the British Empire. Described as the “Gibraltar of the East” for its presumed impregnability, it served as a major shipping and trading hub, and a centre for growing British interests in South-East Asia. Research its history.

**ACTIVITY:** Lieutenant-General Arthur Ernest Percival, CB, DSO & Bar, OBE, MC, OStJ, DL (26 December 1887–31 January 1966) was in charge of British Commonwealth forces during the Malayan campaign and surrendered Singapore to General Yamashita on 15 February 1942. This was the beginning of a protracted period of people being interned while war continued to rage around them. Some regard the surrender as one of the greatest military disasters in British history. Research this topic and Percival’s role in the conflict further.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** When Singapore fell, few could have predicted what was to become of those who were captured. Read this quote:

*“The wave of Japanese victories ending with the capture of Java in March 1942 left in its wake a mass of Allied prisoners, including many Australians. The largest number of Australians (14,972) had been captured at Singapore; other principal Australian groups were in Java (2,736); Timor (1,137); Ambon (1,075) and New Britain (1,049). After the capitulation at Singapore on 15th February there were more than 50,000 British troops on Singapore Island, including the Australians. At the outset the Japanese were quite friendly, refrained from looting, gave cigarettes to their prisoners, and appeared to be under perfect control. Only picquets entered Singapore on 16th February. Next day the real entry began. A constant stream of trucks, lorries, limbers, cars, motor - cycles and bicycles flowed along Bukit Timah road towards the town. Every vehicle flew small Japanese flags, and every driver who had a horn kept on blowing it. ‘The noise was fierce but cheerful,’ wrote an observer; in fact there was a holiday spirit about the whole affair.”*

(Sweeting, 1968, p 511)

How did this deceptively boisterous scene fail to warn against the later hardships endured by prisoners of war?

### • Prisoners of War (POWs)

**ACTIVITY:** Research the definition of, and rights of, prisoners of war in sites such as The Australian War Memorial <[www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)>

**ACTIVITY:** Research prison camps and the treatment of prisoners of war during World War II by all countries involved in the conflict.

- **Changi Prison Camp**

**ACTIVITY:** This book is set in the Changi POW Camp. Research the history of this camp and its inmates. Visit The Changi Museum website and take a virtual tour of the facilities and archives <[www.changimuseum.sg/](http://www.changimuseum.sg/)>. Use the archive to research the prison's history. Many artefacts are included, such as: a hand-carved chess set <[www.changimuseum.sg/archives-search/changi-shop/product-chessset.html](http://www.changimuseum.sg/archives-search/changi-shop/product-chessset.html)>, a sketchbook by Harold Young <[www.changimuseum.sg/archives-search/changi-shop/sketches-young1.html](http://www.changimuseum.sg/archives-search/changi-shop/sketches-young1.html)> and The Christmas Book created for children. <[www.changimuseum.sg/archives-search/the-christmas-book.html](http://www.changimuseum.sg/archives-search/the-christmas-book.html)>.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Why did the enemy imprison women and children, as well as soldiers?

**ACTIVITY:** Investigate aspects of life in Changi such as work, educational programs, health, food, religion and leisure pursuits. [See specific points below.]

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Research the facilities at Changi in relation to this quote:

*“On 17th February the prisoners were moved by route march to Changi, which was to be Prisoner-of-War Headquarters on Singapore Island for the rest of the war. Changi, situated on the north-eastern tip of the island, was formerly occupied by the British peacetime garrison, and included a collection of large and airy barrack buildings, three storeys high, each storey built to house a company of the regiment in occupation; together with a large number of bungalows and offices for married soldiers and the administrative staffs. Parade grounds and surroundings were well laid out, and lawns and trees gave a pleasant suburban atmosphere to the area.*

*The A.I.F. area of Changi until June 1944 was the Selarang Barracks, though for a time in 1943 only portion of the barracks square was occupied by the A.I.F. Quarters generally were good, but for long periods they were gravely overcrowded. Many buildings had been bombed and had to be repaired before use. The climate alone saved troops from the worst results of overcrowding, as many slept in the open, either from choice or of necessity. With the ability possessed by Australian troops to make themselves comfortable in the worst of circumstances, many built wood and wire stretchers to lift themselves from the concrete floors.”*

(Sweeting, 1968, p 512)

Compare this description to the images in the picture book. Discuss the conditions endured by these prisoners.

**ACTIVITY:** Research the poor food available in the Changi camp, described in this picture book, and also in this quote:

*“The dismay, the bitterness of disappointment which followed the first efforts of army cooks to cope with rice defy description. It appeared on the plate as a tight ball of greyish, gelatinous substance, nauseous in its lack of flavour and utterly repulsive. The fish, when it came, which was not often, proclaimed its arrival by an overpowering stench and massed squadrons of flies. To gaze on a sack of rotting shrimps moving slowly under*

*the impulse of a million maggots was a poor prelude to the meals which followed, meals which were nothing but a series of gastronomical disasters.”*

(Sweeting, 1968, p 513)

**ACTIVITY:** Due to the poor conditions, lack of sanitation, overcrowding and inadequate food available, diseases such as dysentery and malaria were rife. Research the health of these prisoners and the treatment they received.

**ACTIVITY:** Research the lives of Sir David Griffin CBE (8 July 1915–25 March 2004) who set up the Changi Literary Society, and Captain (Herbert) Leslie Greener (13 February 1900–8 December 1974), who managed the Changi Education Centre – the two men who wrote and illustrated the original *The Happiness Box*.

**ACTIVITY:** Study the lives of any other famous figures who fought in this conflict. For example, Colonel Sir Ernest Edward “Weary” Dunlop, AC, CMG, OBE (12 July 1907–2 July 1993) was a surgeon who was captured by the Japanese and was renowned for his leadership qualities while working on the Burma–Thailand railway. John George Glyn (9 April 1909–2 November 1987) was another physician tasked with transporting British and Australian wounded from Singapore hospitals to Changi prison and Indians to Bidadari Island. Writer and broadcaster, Russell Braddon (25 January 1921 – 20 March 1995) was a POW and wrote *The Naked Island* (1952) about those experiences.

**ACTIVITY:** Research the life of Sir Frederick Gallagher Galleghan (11 January 1897–20 April 1971) known as “Black Jack” who was Commander of the 2/30th Battalion and “became a prisoner of war when the British surrendered on 15 February. With the removal of senior officers from Singapore in August, he assumed command of the AIF; from March 1944 he was deputy commander of all allied prisoners in Malaya. It was for his role at Changi that he was to achieve lasting fame.” (Griffin, 1996) Murray Griffin painted a portrait of him, which is available in the Australian War Memorial Collection online, as are photos.

**ACTIVITY:** Read the postcards written from Changi and Thailand by Keith Sheerim, 2/19th Battalion, AIF Archive number: 2191 Preferred name: Smiler. Date interviewed: 06 July, 2004 ‘Australians at War Film Archive’ UNSW Canberra <[australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/2191-keith-shearim](http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/2191-keith-shearim)> Invite students to write their own postcards.

**ACTIVITY:** Captain Greener commanded the Changi Education Centre. “Lectures and classes on a wide range of subjects were organised and a library was maintained.” (Sweeting, 1968, p 517) What subjects were taught there?

**ACTIVITY:** David Griffin and other poets were all members of the Changi Literary Group, 1942–45, formed out of the A.I.F. Education Centre, originally established at Selarang POW camp by Brigadier H.B. Taylor. Sir David Griffin arranged the first performance of a selection of these poems at the Selarang Barracks, Singapore, on 13 February 1992, to mark the 50th anniversary of the fall of Singapore. They were later presented in Australia and London and are included in “Poems from Changi prisoner-of-war camp”, Published 1942–1947. Manuscript reference no.: NLA MS 9164’ National

Library of Australia. <[trove.nla.gov.au/work/7380016?q&versionId=8494086](http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/7380016?q&versionId=8494086)>

A selection of the poems was published as *Changi Days: The Prisoner as Poet* edited by Sir David Griffin (1992). [See also English Language & Literacy below.] These poems reflect the trauma the prisoners faced and how poetry helped them overcome it:

“You’re often asked, did anybody escape from Changi? And the answer of course is no in one way. But the people who had the ability to express themselves, particularly the poets, they did effect an escape because they were able to ... by recollection, your recollections of your previous life become so vivid and so sharp that somehow they took precedence over your normal surroundings and you were able to sort of escape on the wings of poetry I suppose, or poetic imagination.” (David Griffin, Quoted in Doogue 2003)

They also reflect their fears when they were released, having spent so many years away from their loved ones, for example:

**“The Guns of Peace” by D. Griffin**

*Now I must march again,  
And join the new battle  
And brave the guns of peace.  
Ah, Soldier, there is no surrender there,  
No hasty truce at hand to still that strife,  
No stretcher-bearers gathering our dead hopes,  
No prayers to offer for our little deaths in life.  
The earth is quiet now,  
And the sun and sky  
Beckon unchanging to the sunless,  
Must we emerge? Aye, soldier, aye,  
There at the gates of freedom,  
Here stand I*

(Poem quoted in Doogue 2003)

**ACTIVITY:** Research artists imprisoned at Changi, such as the famous British illustrator Ronald William Fordham Searle, CBE, RDI (3 March 1920–30 December 2011) and others such as Australian (Vaughan) Murray Griffin (11 November 1903–1 January 1992) who had been an official Australian war artist in Malaya, and who taught art at Changi; he later exhibited paintings of his time there at the Australian War Memorial in 1946.

**ACTIVITY:** Visit the website: The Changi POW Artwork of Des Bettany <[changipowart.com](http://changipowart.com)>, which offers a humorous visual insight into the experiences of POWs at Changi.

**ACTIVITY:** Research Stanley Warren’s “Changi Murals” Wikipedia <[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Changi\\_Murals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Changi_Murals)> These five paintings were painted on the walls of St Luke’s Chapel in Changi Prison.

**ACTIVITY:** Visit the images on the National Library of Australia’s TROVE site: “Walter Andrew Sarkies (1923–2012) Collection” TROVE <[trove.nla.gov.au/picture/result?q=text%3A%22Walter+Andrew+Sarkies+collection.%22](http://trove.nla.gov.au/picture/result?q=text%3A%22Walter+Andrew+Sarkies+collection.%22)> He was a member of the 2/29th Infantry Battalion interned at Changi where he began to draw and paint. What insights into prison life do his images give you?

**ACTIVITY:** Read about British couple Isobel and Donald Grist (Enoch, 2012) who were imprisoned in Changi and who left letters and paintings (done by Isobel) as a record.

**ACTIVITY:** Research the plays that were performed at Changi by the AIF Concert Party. Clifford Frank aka Slim De Grey (20 May 1918–16 March 2007), Australian comedian, actor and writer who appeared in and wrote many AIF Concert Party performances, later appeared in this news item: “The Changi P.O.W. Souvenir Song Book Published” Don Dorrigio Gazette and Guy Fawkes Advocate 15 November 1946, p 4. <[trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/17313449](http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/17313449)> It contained over a hundred songs by him and Ray Tullinan. Much later Slim wrote a book, *Changi: The Funny Side* (1991).

**ACTIVITY:** Prisoners also produced two camp newspapers, *The Changi Guardian* and *Changi Chimes*, which contained writing and images (Nichols and French, 2015). Invite students to use the Bibliography to discover excerpts from these papers.

**ACTIVITY:** Visit the websites of the 2/29th Battalion A.I.F. Association <[www.229battalion.org.au](http://www.229battalion.org.au)> and the 2/30th Battalion A.I.F. Association <[www.230battalion.org.au/index.htm](http://www.230battalion.org.au/index.htm)> whose members became prisoners of war.

**ACTIVITY:** Prisoners played sport to occupy themselves and as relief from work. Research, for example, the “Changi Brownlow” – the medal awarded to the best football player at Changi.

**ACTIVITY:** Read about the role of the clergy at Changi, and of Army Chaplain Eric Cordingley and Staff Sergeant Harry Stogden’s legacy on the website The Changi Cross <[thechangicross.co.uk/](http://thechangicross.co.uk/)>

- **Australians in World War II**

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Australians fought in many regions during World War II. Research their involvement in the events before and after the fall of Singapore.

**ACTIVITY:** Research your family history to discover whether any of your great-grandparents or grandparents fought in World War II or were involved in the events described in this book.

**ACTIVITY:** Listen to some of the interviews in the “Australians at War Film Archive” UNSW Canberra <[australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au](http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au)> and discuss some of the facts you discover.

- **Australia’s relationship with other countries, particularly Asian countries**

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Australia is made up of Indigenous people as its first inhabitants and of those from many other cultures. We tend to identify with our European antecedents but actually have a long history of immigration by people from Asian cultures residing here. Research Australia’s links with Asian countries via immigration, diplomacy and foreign policies, and foreign trade.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Japanese culture was not very well-known in Australia prior to World War II, although Japanese people had been coming in small numbers to Australia as pearl divers, or to work in the cane industry, since the 1880s. The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 severely limited the entry of people of Asian backgrounds. During World War II, some Japanese people were interned in Australia. Since World War II, there has been a growth in Asian immigration, and the lifting of the so-called “White Australia Policy” in 1973 further encouraged such immigration. Research Japanese history and culture, and Japan’s ties with Australia.

- **Japanese in World War II**

**DISCUSSION POINT:** This book details the experiences of Australian prisoners of war, at the hands of their Japanese captors. Discuss other World War II events in which Japanese people were victims, too, notably the dropping of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki by allied forces.

**DISCUSSION POINT:** Many Japanese residents were also interned in countries such as the US and Australia during the war. Read some of these accounts with students. For example, discuss what happened to Japanese people living in Australia at the outbreak of war in Broome, WA. [See Bibliography.]

- **Nationhood and National Treasures**

**DISCUSSION POINT:** What defines a “national treasure”?

**ACTIVITY:** The original *The Happiness Box* toured with “National Treasures from Australia’s Great Libraries” <nationaltreasures.nla.gov.au/> Research some of the items and themes included in that exhibition, e.g. “War and Loss” <nationaltreasures.nla.gov.au/index/Treasures/theme/war\_and\_incarceration> examines the effect of conflict on Australia, from the horror of World War I including Gallipoli <www.nla.gov.au/gallipolidespatches> to 1940s prisoner of war camps and Japanese bombing raids in northern Australia, which brought war to the home territory for the first time. It also demonstrates the ingenuity of POWs in recording their experiences and making use of whatever was at hand. The POWs who created *The Happiness Box* for the children of Changi Jail, and Margaret Gordon, who cared for her fellow lifeboat passengers after their ship was torpedoed, exhibited the indomitable Australian spirit that focuses on others in times of crisis and does not dwell on personal misery. Why do you think the original *The Happiness Box* is considered a National Treasure?

**ACTIVITY:** Every country has national treasures. Research, for example, the national treasures of Japan, or of Singapore.

## D. English Language & Literacy

- **Plot & Structure**

**ACTIVITY:** This is a simple chronological narrative. It comes to a turning point when the book is lost, presumably destroyed, and is resolved by the book’s discovery. Imagine another possible ending for this story.

- **Voice**

**ACTIVITY:** This story is told in third person from Griff’s perspective. Rewrite a section in first person to discover how differently the book would read.

- **Style and Use of Language**

**ACTIVITY:** Examples of personification (“hardship lurked”), alliteration (“dollop of slop”) and simile (“worked like slaves”) appear in this text. Rewrite one of the scenes using these or other devices, such as metaphor.

- **Writing Exercises**

**ACTIVITY:** Write a diary entry as if penned by David Griffin about the rejection of his book by General Saitō.

**ACTIVITY:** Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the word “Happiness”.

**ACTIVITY:** Haiku is a Japanese form of poem. It consists of 3 lines; the first and last lines have 5 syllables and the middle line has 7 syllables. (The lines rarely rhyme.) Invite students to write a poem on the theme of feelings.

**ACTIVITY:** A tetractys is a five-line poem with 1, 2, 3, 4, 10 syllables in each line. Invite students to write a tetractys on the theme of war. [Use **WORKSHEET 4** for these poetry exercises]

**ACTIVITY:** Write a story about an incident that might have occurred in Changi. Then make a handmade book by folding paper and illustrating the words you have written. You might then staple or stitch the spine, or simply tie a ribbon around the spine to hold it together. [See websites listed in Bibliography for instructions on making hand-made books.] Design an eye-catching cover for your “book” as well.

- **Comprehension**

**ACTIVITY:** Since the background to this story is likely to be unfamiliar to students, test their comprehension by asking them basic questions about the text. [See also **WORKSHEET 3**]

- **Further Reading Ideas for Class Discussion**

**ACTIVITY:** Read other picture books and novels about World War II and discuss and compare to this book. [See Bibliography.]

**ACTIVITY:** Encourage students to conduct an online search on TROVE <trove.nla.gov.au> to discover primary sources in newspapers and other digital materials about Changi Prison.

## E. Visual Literacy & Visual Arts Activities

- **Cover**

**ACTIVITY:** Examine the cover of this book, which depicts the entrance gates of Changi Prison with lines of prisoners waiting to be taken inside. Create your own interpretation of this image. Then view this photo of prisoners cheering as they leave

the prison: “1945, English, Photograph edition: Great moment arrives when cheering, happy British prisoners leave the huge iron gates of Changi prison behind [picture].”

<trove.nla.gov.au/work/156496611?q=changi+prison&c=picture&versionId=182152226>

- **Medium**

**ACTIVITY:** The medium used by Andrew McLean in this picture book is his distinctive pen and watercolour in subtle pastel hues. Captain Greener (in the story) makes his art “with colour collected from flowers, leaves and clay”. Experiment with students in making watercolours in this way.

- **Re-Imagine a Scene**

**ACTIVITY:** Invite students to choose a scene in this book to reinterpret in their own style and medium. Create a classroom display of the students’ responses.

- **Critical Literacy**

**ACTIVITY:** Critical Literacy may be encouraged by inviting students to examine the visual text carefully. For example, in the image of the men performing on stage, each of the five characters holds a letter that spells what word? (Answer: SMILE.) And what two words appear on the mat on the stage? (Answer: CARRY ON.) [See also **WORKSHEET 2**]

- **Graphic Images and Cartoons**

**ACTIVITY:** Cartoons were used by some Changi prison inmates such as Ronald Searle to explore a lighter side to their experiences. Create a cartoon illustrating some aspect of life in Changi.

## F. Creative Arts

**ACTIVITY:** What would you put in a happiness box if you had one? Invite each student to share something that means a lot to them and create a box of happy things.

**ACTIVITY:** Create a book trailer for this book.

**ACTIVITY:** Act out a scene from the book, e.g. When the men are making gifts for the children, write a script of how they might have spoken to each other.

**ACTIVITY:** Research the songs of the 1940s which the prisoners might have performed in their concerts, e.g. “Chattanooga Choo Choo” (Glenn Miller and His Orchestra with Tex Beneke and the Four Modernaires); “White Christmas” (Bing Crosby with the Ken Derby Singers and Jon Scott Thomas and his Orchestra); “That Old Black Magic” (Glenn Miller and His Orchestra with Skip Nelson and the Modernaires); “Don’t Fence Me In” (Bing Crosby and The Andrews Sisters); “Sentimental Journey” (Les Brown and His Orchestra). Practise singing one of them as a classroom activity.

**ACTIVITY:** Create a model theatre like the one that the Australian soldiers make for the children. Use a box as your framework; decorate with curtains; and add a peaked roof to the stage, like the one in this book. Create figures dressed like

the men who appear on stage in this book, as well.

**ACTIVITY:** Make a simple toy like those the soldiers created. [See **WORKSHEET 1**]

## G. Geography

**ACTIVITY:** Investigate a map of Singapore, where the events described in this book took place during World War II.

## H. Further Ideas Using Technology

**ACTIVITY:** Research any of the topics above online.

## Conclusion

This is an inspiring work about fortitude in overcoming adversity; about care and compassion. It’s about the travails of war and how faith and hope have helped people to survive starvation, torture, disease and the most unimaginable horrors experienced during military conflicts. It’s about the power of books, reading and storytelling to overcome even the direst of circumstances and to create happiness, joy and hope.

## Worksheet Answers

### WORKSHEET 1

Answers: 1. Truck. 2. Tops. 3. Horse. 4. Train. 5. Plane. 6. Car. 7. Dolls. 8. Blocks.

### WORKSHEET 2

Answers: 1. Purple flowers. 2. Typewriter. 3. Japanese flag. 4. Paintbrush. 5. Tank. 6. Pick axe. 7. Palm tree. 8. Pen and ink

### WORKSHEET 3

Answers: 1. 1942. 2. Singapore is surrendered to the Japanese by the British and their allies. 3. The Japanese flag. 4. On the eastern tip of the island of Singapore. 5. Sergeant “Griff” David Griffin. 6. They played football, staged concerts, wrote poetry and participated in education programs. 7. Winston the lizard, Martin the monkey and Wobbly the frog. 8. General Saitō. 9. They were trucked out to work building railways and bridges. 10. In the head of a broom. 11. In a box buried in the barracks’ garden. 12. 1945.

*Bibliography available from [www.classroom.walkerbooks.com.au/thehappinessbox](http://www.classroom.walkerbooks.com.au/thehappinessbox)*



## WORKSHEET 1 - *Critical Literacy: Identify the Hand-made Toys*

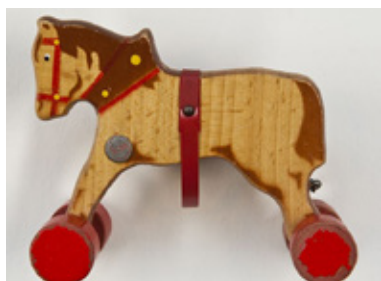
These images are of hand-made wooden toys, like those created by the soldiers in Changi. Identify each of them.



1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_



5. \_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_



7. \_\_\_\_\_



8. \_\_\_\_\_

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## WORKSHEET 2 - *Critical Literacy: Identify the Image*

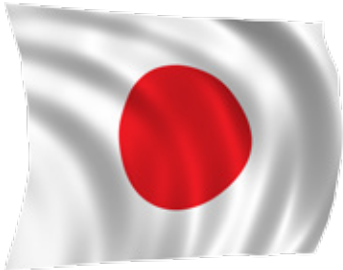
Identify the images below, and find examples of them in this book.



1. \_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_



5. \_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_



7. \_\_\_\_\_



8. \_\_\_\_\_

## WORKSHEET 3 - *The Happiness Box Quiz*

1. In what year does this story open?

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2. What 'falls' in the opening pages of this book?

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3. What flag can you see in the second double page spread?

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4. Where is Changi Prison camp?

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5. What is Griff's full name?

---

6. What pastimes which the men enjoyed are mentioned in this book?

---

7. What are the names of the three characters in Griff's book?

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8. Who forbade Griff to distribute his book and the presents?

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9. What happened to many of the men in the camp in the later years of the war?

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10. Where did the prisoners hide their radio?

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11. Where was The Happiness Box discovered after the war?

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12. In what year did World War II end?

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## WORKSHEET 4 - *Poetry Exercises*

### ACROSTIC POEM

H

A

P

P

I

N

E

S

S

### HAIKU POEM

*Feelings*

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### TETRACTYS POEM

*War*

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