Task for *The ABC Book of Australian Poetry*

Bush ballad

Close Study of 'Clancy of the Overflow' by Banjo Paterson

The poem is based on a character of the Australian outback – Clancy of The Overflow. (The Overflow is an area near Nymagee in NSW). The poem has a recurring ABCB rhyme scheme and each line is of very similar length between 14 and 16 syllables. The main purpose of the poem is to contrast Paterson's perspectives on city life and droving in the outback. Paterson has a nostalgic tone for the life of the drover in the beauty of the Australian bush.

Understanding the narrative nature of ballads

1. Students can
    a. create a storyboard for each stanza using the template below
    b. identify the two characters with different colours
    c. rewrite the poem as a story without the rhyme.

Copy the stanza
Create an image – this can be a collage
Rewrite the poem in a narrative form

Understanding narrative structure

Like a narrative, this poem has flashback and offers a backstory. Students can explain (with examples) how the poem is structured moving between past, distant past and present and between different characters and points of view.

Understanding imagery and tone

2. Students find:
    a. phrases that contain images of the Australian outback or bush
    b. words that describe Clancy and his interactions with the bush, for example, 'the bush has friends to meet him.'
        i. What sense do you get of life in the Australian bush/outback from these lines?
        ii. What impression do we get of Clancy as a character?
3. Paterson changes his tone when depicting the city.
    a. What contrasting words does he use to describe the people and life in the city? Students can answer this by ruling two columns and contrasting the words on either side.
    b. They can then complete the following table:

	Outback	City
	Outback	**City**
Person	Clancy	Author
Description of the scene		
Activities associated with this place		
Positive words used in the description		
Negative words used in the description		
Author's attitude to the place		

Understanding rhyme and rhythm

4. Students can
    a. highlight the rhyme scheme, using the same colour to identify words that rhyme at the end of the poetic lines
    b. identify any alliteration, assonance, repetition and meter and consider if these devices help with the rhythm of the poem
    c. look at the punctuation and consider: how do commas and other forms punctuate the poem and affect the pace and rhythm?

Assessing the poem

Students can debate: Why is this poem so important?

- Is it the style? How does Lawson make this poem interesting through his word choices?
- Is it the subject matter? What is Lawson saying about Australian life? Is it still relevant?
- Anything else?

Discuss whether Clancy can still embody the spirit of an Australian today.

(ACELA1547), (ACELT1619) , (ACELT1626), (ACELT1806), (ACELT1620), (ACELT1621), (ACELT1630), (ACELY1733)

Creative writing

Creative writing task 1:

Write a letter back in time coming from Clancy. You might want to take the time to explain what you love about the Australian outback or you might want to have fun with it and have Clancy wishing he lived in the city and had an office job. In your letter, work on describing the country or the city in rich detail, expressing your feelings about why you love either one.

Technique focus: Tone – as you write, underline the adjectives and adverbs that you are using to describe the places. These are the words that have a significant impact on tone.

Creative writing task 2:

Sometimes a fun activity is taking a famous character from literature and putting them in a different context, to more fully examine their significance. Imagine Clancy is visiting one of our capital cities today. Write a short story of his visit. Consider how he would feel with the shock of the historical, cultural, technological and social changes. (See "The Man from Ironbark" p. 134 for Paterson's original playful approach to this idea).

(ACELA1547), (ACELT1625), (ACELT1632), (ACELT1768), (ACELT1805) , (ACELY1725)