

Task for *The Drover's Wife*

'The Drover's Wife' by Henry Lawson

Henry Lawson's 'The Drover's Wife' is a dramatic short story that depicts an outback woman, left alone with her four children while her husband is droving (moving sheep from one area to another). It was first published in *The Bulletin* magazine on 23 July, 1892.

In this reading, you will be delving into the original short story, responding to questions and conducting evidence-based analysis.

Remember a short story usually has a single focus. With a partner, consider the following questions:

- What do you think the single focus of this story is?
- What stands out to you?
- What is your reaction to/impression of this story?
- Is a particular mood/feeling evoked?
- What is it like, living in the Australian bush landscape?
- How is the setting depicted?
- How is the Drover's Wife characterised?
- What is Lawson's focus/purpose?

Then, in your notes, individually answer the following questions, using integrated quotes from the story to support your response.

1. Lawson gives detailed descriptions designed to convey a clear visual image to the reader of the isolation of the Australian bush.
2. Pick three quotes from the story that convey a clear visual image to the reader and record these along with their respective page numbers. In each quote, highlight or underline the words that you believe are most effective in conveying a visual image to the reader.
3. Explain what Lawson meant when he wrote of the Drover's Wife that, 'As a girl she built the usual castles in the air; but all her girlish hopes and aspirations have long been dead.'
4. When 'The Drover's Wife' was published, the main character was criticised for being unrealistic – critics suggested that she was too strong and independent in solving problems. Do you think the Drover's Wife is an unrealistic character? Use at least three quotes from the story within your own sentences (integrated quotes) to support your answer.
5. Why do you think the narrator says of Alligator, 'They cannot afford to lose him'?
6. Why do you think Lawson has chosen to give Alligator a name, yet the Drover's Wife remains nameless?