The development of Australian literature in the 19th century.

[The contribution of Dorothy Rhodes to the development of this course is gratefully acknowledged.]

When the first colony was established in Botany Bay, the earliest writing was that of reports, letters, journals and memoirs. Among the most literary of these were by Lieutenant Watkin Tench, a British Marine officer. In "A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay" and his subsequent work "A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson", Tench provides a first hand account of the voyage and then goes on to describe the subsequent settlement in Botany Bay. In A Narrative…….. he meticulously records the composition of the First Fleet:

“…… His Majesty's ships Sirius, Hyena, and Supply, three Victualers with two years stores and provisions on board for the Settlement, and six Transports, with troops and convicts. In the transports were embarked four captains, twelve subalterns, twenty-four serjeants and corporals, eight drummers, and one hundred and sixty private marines, making the whole of the military force, including the Major Commandant and Staff on board the Sirius, to consist of two hundred and twelve persons, of whom two hundred and ten were volunteers. The number of convicts was five hundred and sixty-five men, one hundred and ninety-two women, and eighteen children; the major part of the prisoners were mechanics and husbandmen, selected on purpose by order of Government."
Over the next four years Tench was to record life in the colony, detailing the natural environment of Port Jackson and its environs; the efforts to establish food production; the exploratory trips into the hinterland; and, most interestingly, the first interaction between Europeans and the Australian Aborigines. In his writing he refers to an aborigine named Baneelon, for whom a brick house was built on a particular point of land overlooking the Harbour. Today we call it Benelong Point. Tench was a perceptive, humane man interested in every one and everything around him. His two books can justifiably be called the first examples of Australian literature.

John White (c 1756-1832)

John White, botanist and Surgeon-General to the First Fleet, wrote a *Journal of a Voyage to Botany Bay* in which he describes the voyage from England and the arrival of the Fleet in Port Jackson. He recorded his first impressions of this new land.

"26 January, 1788. At ten o’clock the *Sirius*, with all the ships, weighed, and in the evening anchored in Port Jackson, with a few trifling damages done to some of them who had run foul of each other in working out of Botany Bay. Port Jackson I believe to be, without exception, the finest and most extensive harbour in the universe and at the same time the most secure, being safe from all the winds that blow. It is divided into a great number of coves, to which his Excellency has given different names. That on which the town is to be built is
called Sydney Cove. It is one of the smallest in the harbour but the most convenient, as ships of the greatest burden can of ease go into it and heave out close to the shore. Trincomalé, (Ceylon) acknowledged to be one of the best harbours in the world is by no means to be compared to it. In a word, Port Jackson would afford sufficient and safe anchorage for all the navies of Europe.

The Supply had arrived the day before and the governor, with every person that could be spared from the ship, were on shore, clearing the ground for the encampment. In the evening, when all the ships had anchored, the English colours were displayed; and at the foot of the flagstaff his Majesty’s health, and success to the settlement, was drank by the governor, many of the principal officers and private men who were present upon the occasion.”

An engraved plate from White's book

White’s Journal of a Voyage to Botany Bay, published in 1790, was accompanied by sixty-five engravings illustrating the natural history and products of the colony, drawn in England from specimens sent by White, with descriptions by English specialists. He also sent drawings and possibly specimens for The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay (written by Phillip himself and published in London in 1789). White’s own book was a great success. A German edition followed, and later translations into Swedish and French.

The work of both Tench and White was published in England even though Governor Phillip had brought a printing press out with him. However, there was no one in the colony able to use it until 1796 and even then the only printing
done was that of reports, government gazettes etc. Anything else had to be sent to England.

Anna Maria Bunn (1808-1899)

Maria came to Australia on the *Elizabeth* with her widower father who had retired from the army in 1827. They went to live at Erskine Park near Penrith, west of Sydney, on a property leased by her father from the widow of his former commanding officer. There she met Captain George Bunn, the agent for the property, and in 1828 they were married. On her husband’s death in 1838 she commenced writing, her first novel being a Gothic romance titled *The Guardian: a tale*. While it was the first Australian novel to be printed and published in mainland Australia and the first Australian novel written by a woman it was set in Ireland and England, not Australia. Anna died in Pyrmont, Sydney, in 1899.

Henry Savery (1791-1842)

*Quintus Servinton: A Tale founded upon Incidents of Real Occurrence* has been called Australia’s first novel. It was written and published in Tasmania in 1831 by the convicted English forger Henry Savery and published anonymously, though the author was later to become a public servant. It is regarded as a thinly disguised autobiography designed to demonstrate how his fictional equivalent was different from the general convict population.

James Tucker (1803-1866)

James Tucker is alleged to have written three works (using different nom de plumes each time): *Jemmy Green in Australia, a comedy in three acts*, *The Grahames' Vengeance*, an historical drama in three acts and the best known *Ralph Rashleigh or the Life of an Exile*, written in 1845. The manuscripts of these works were first noted publicly in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 1892, the author
being described as "a convict, an architect by profession ... who had been transported for forgery".

Though the authorship of these works remains in doubt, the works attributed to Tucker occupy a significant place in the history of Australian literature. In particular Ralph Rashleigh is the first book to focus on Australia’s unique combination of prison life, aborigines and bushrangers and of considerable importance both for its intrinsic literary merit and for its value as a social document.

**Annabella Boswell (1826-1916)**

Annabella Boswell’s diary did write of life in Australia – in Port Macquarie in the 1840’s. Annabella, diarist and gentlewoman, was born at Yarrows, Bathurst Plains, New South Wales, elder daughter of George Innes, a landholder, and his wife Georgianna Lorn Moorshead, both Scottish born. In 1839, hoping to improve his health, her father took his family to stay at Port Macquarie with his brother Major Archibald Innes. Annabella found much to write about the nearby settlement and life at Lake Innes House which was a fashionable establishment, visited frequently by the governor and other luminaries. Annabella wrote of lively events, fashions worn, foods consumed and the personal quirks of visitors and of life in the surrounding area, making her diary a valuable source of social history.
The early poets

**Charles Harpur** (1813-1868)

*Image courtesy of the National Library of Australia.*

Charles Harpur, poet and critic, was born on 23 January 1813, at Windsor on the Hawkesbury - one of the first of Australia’s native-born poets. From the time he began writing in the 1820s till his death in 1868, he was concerned with celebrating the beauty of the Australian landscape, and actively attempting to improve the intellectual life of his fellows. Current scholarship has reassessed the intrinsic worth of his writing and increased his reputation.

Harpur wrote of the solitude and grandeur of a landscape that dwarfs its people. He was also a fervent advocate of republican ideas, strongly opposed to transportation, the arrogation of power by a landed elite and privilege of all kinds. His writings provide important insights into contemporary attitudes towards national identity, faith, Aborigines, women and education. He was close friend of and mentor to a young Henry Kendall.

Charles Harpur died on 10 June, 1968, following a long respiratory illness. Some twenty-five manuscript volumes of his written works are held by the Mitchell Library, Sydney. While not universally recognised in his own time, current literary opinion leans towards him being one of the most significant of the colonial poets.

**Adam Lindsay Gordon** (1833-70)

Adam Lindsay Gordon, poet and politician, was born in the Azores of English parents. Of his youth it will suffice to say that it was wild, aimless and debt-ridden, so much so that he was shipped out to the colony to make a fresh start. In 1853 he joined the mounted Police in
South Australia. However, even his election as a member of parliament and marriage in 1862 to a wife with what a friend called “practical good sense” did nothing to limit his financial imprudence and a deepening depression which eventually led him to take his own life.

His poems are predominantly poems of action and it is accepted that Gordon was the first Australian poet to be read by the ordinary man. The “riding rhymes” of Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes (e.g. as in The Sick Stockrider) were an important factor in the creation of the Australian ballad by Paterson and others.

**Henry Kendall** (1839-1882)

Henry Kendall, poet, was born near Ulladulla, on the south coast of New South Wales and brought up among the mountains and forests of the south coast of New South Wales. He was the first Australian to write lyric poetry, which A.G Stephens (editor of The Bulletin from 1850 to 1857) called “wonderfully evocative tributes to the Australian bush.” Few Australians will not at some time, for example, have heard or spoken lines from Bell Birds, so evocative of the cool, dim blue and green of the Australian mountain country.

By channels of coolness the echoes are calling,
And down the dim gorges I hear the creek falling;
It lives in the mountain where moss and the sedges
ouch with their beauty the banks and the ledges.
Through breaks of the cedar and sycamore bowers
Struggles the light that is love to the flowers;
And, softer than slumber, and sweeter than singing,
The notes of the bell-birds are running and ringing.
In 1862 Kendall had several poems published in London and in the same year his first volume *Poems and Songs* was published in Sydney. It was well received and the entire run of 500 copies sold.

Kendall’s personal life, however, was a disaster. As close friend Gordon McCrae said, Kendall “made the worst of everything, including himself.” However while his life was unfortunate he was fortunate in his friends, among whom was Henry Parkes. Many attempts were made to help him cope with a life which continued to spin out of control and his health, never strong, broke down, Kendall caught a severe chill, developed consumption, and died at Sydney on 1 August 1882. He was buried in Waverley cemetery.

He left Australia and Australians a literary legacy in his collections of verse, especially *Poems and Songs, Leaves from Australian Forests* and *Songs from the Mountains*.

### The birth of newspapers

In November 1800, *The Royal Admiral* docked in the colony carrying a transported convict, George Howe, who arrived with printing experience from the West Indies and London. These valuable skills were quickly put to work at the government press, and the colony’s first locally published book, a compilation of government orders, was produced in 1802. (Howe had been charged with shoplifting and sentenced to death, but this was commuted to seven years transportation to New South Wales.)
George Howe was also permitted to print Australia's first newspaper from a humble shed located at the rear of Government House. From 5 March 1803, the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* was on sale as a weekly edition with four portfolio pages of official material and a limited number of private notices. In early editions of the paper, a colonist could find shipping news, auction results, crime reports and agricultural notices as well as poems, literature and religious advice. To collect local news, the editor hung a 'slip box' in front of the store where the paper was issued. News from abroad arrived on the clipper ships and was usually ten to fourteen weeks out-of-date by the time it was published.

The *Sydney Gazette* was the only newspaper circulated in the colony until the appearance of William Charles Wentworth's paper, *The Australian*, in 1824. The tone of the early issues of the *Sydney Gazette* has been described as 'moral to the point of priggishness, patriotic to the point of servility, pompous in a stiff, eighteenth century fashion'. However, government censorship was lifted in 1824 and within two years, two competing papers had emerged.

By the mid-thirties, New South Wales had seven papers, South Australia had five weekly papers by 1841 and Tasmania had eleven papers by 1854. By 1886, records show there were at least 48 daily papers circulating in Australian states, however many of these papers only appeared for a short period.

Growth in the circulation and size of newspapers continued through global conflict and urban development at the end of the 19th century. Australians began to read newspapers regularly and consulted more than one source to satisfy their increasing desire for news. Significantly, the telegraph connected Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane in 1861, and Britain was linked to Australia in 1872. Alongside the telephone's emergence in the 1880s, telegraphic transfer helped journalists rapidly receive and send news across greater distances.
Cheaper wood pulp, improvements in printing technology, railways and streamlined news services all enabled a more efficient and influential newspaper industry. The passing of legislation making education compulsory for children over the age of six years, such as the Education Act 1872 (Vic) and the Public Instruction Act of 1880 (NSW), led to increases in literacy as more of the population learnt to read and write.

Variety was introduced within the text of newspapers through a more artistic use of white space and sub-headings, cartoons, and later photographs. Reports were shortened and the front page was increasingly given over to a topical 'leading article'. The Sydney *Sun* was the first daily paper to carry a news story on its front page in 1910 and Melbourne's *Sun News-Pictorial* was the first daily pictorial tabloid (newspaper with pictures) in 1922.

Four prominent dailies emerged during this period: *The Age, The Argus, The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Competition was keen, and the reporters at the *Argus* once handed telegraph operators a copy of the Bible in an attempt to take over the wires and prevent other newspapers from sending their stories. Clashes with government were not unusual, and newspapers increasingly expressed anti-authoritarian opinions. *The Age* was launched in 1854, during the turmoil of Victoria's gold rush era and prided itself on voicing a radical viewpoint, including support for the miners at Ballarat, the eight-hour working day and reform of land laws.

Newspapers frequently published fierce attacks on their rivals, for example *The South Australian Register* launched the following assault on *The Southern Australian* in 1838:
“Though we think it scarcely necessary to pollute our columns with examples of the trash doled out by the persons who club their wits to rake together a weekly sixpence worth of scum, still, as a friend, blessed with a stomach not easily turned, has ventured to gather a few specimens out of the nauseous and disgusting puddle, we print these lies with a running commentary.”

Historians of newspapers have pointed out that from their birth, newspapers have shown 'cannibalistic' tendencies: they are constantly swallowing rivals through processes of take-overs, mergers and commercial failure.

Australian historian Clive Turnbull proposes that the era of modern journalism began in the 1920s as companies took over control of newspapers and the popularity of a news story became increasingly important.

Early popular works tended to be of the 'ripping yarn' variety, telling tales of derring-do against the new frontier of the Australian outback. Writers such as Rolf Boldrewood, Marcus Clarke and Joseph Furphy (more of these later) embodied these ideals in their tales with Boldrewood trying to accurately record the vernacular language of the common Australian. These novelists also gave valuable insights into the penal colonies which helped form the country and also the early rural settlements.
However, it was to be almost a century after the convicts first arrived before they received their due with the publication in 1874 of Marcus Clarke’s *For the Term of his Natural Life*.

*Ruins of the penal colony at Port Arthur*

**Marcus Clarke** (1846-81)

Marcus Clarke was born in London on 24 April 1846 the only son of William Hislop Clarke. He emigrated to Australia, where his uncle, James Langton Clarke, was a county court judge.

He was already writing stories for the *Australian Magazine*, when in 1867 he joined the staff of the *Melbourne Argus*. The work for which he is best known, *For the Term of His Natural Life* was published in book form in 1874, having originally appeared in serial form in a Melbourne paper. It is a classic account of life in a penal colony based on research by the author as well as a visit to the penal settlement of Port Arthur, Tasmania.

At times relying on seemingly implausible coincidences, the story follows the fortunes of Rufus Dawes, a young man transported for a murder which he did not commit. Typical of Victorian-era convict novels, Rufus Dawes, is a wrongfully convicted gentleman. (Under the prevailing morality of the time, a murderer would have been inappropriate for a hero in popular fiction.) It is a powerful narrative; with no attempt made to soften the truth of degradation and cruelty of convict existence, yet the novel is filled with life and peopled with
unforgettable characters: Frere, the magnificent barbarian; the vital Sara Purfoy, attracting men as moths to light; John Rex, the consummate villain and Sylvia, the innocent child who loves the luckless Rufus Dawes.

Among other dramatic events in the novel that are based on true events, a group of convicts escapes from the Port Arthur penitentiary. Lost in the wilderness, lacking survival skills and running out of food supplies, the men begin to starve and end up cannibalising each other. The last one remaining, Gabbett, is found on a beach by the crew of a whaling vessel, with the half-eaten arm of one of his comrades hanging out of his swag. (*An escaped convict, Alexander Pearce, the notorious "Pieman", ate his companions during two different escape attempts from the Macquarie Harbour Penal Settlement on the West Coast, Tasmania.)

The Australian Dictionary of Biography, (published by the Australian National University), has this to say about Clarke’s novel and its significance: “A novel in the grand tradition, it places him (Clarke) with Charles Reade, Victor Hugo and Dostoevsky among the great nineteenth-century visionaries who found in the problems of crime and punishment a new insight, especially relevant in the convict-founded Australian colonies, into the foundations of human worth.”

Rolf Boldrewood
Rolf Boldrewood was the nom de plume of Thomas Alexander Browne (1826–1915), failed squatter in colonial Victoria and New South Wales, then police magistrate, goldfields commissioner and part-time writer of serialised novels. Ultimately the author of sixteen novels, two collections of short stories and
two small books on farm management, *Robbery Under Arms* was the work that earned him an enduring reputation.

A quintessential bushranging adventure tale, it pioneered the use of the Australian vernacular. Earlier writers had produced some journalistic sketches in this style, but Boldrewood appears to have been the first to attempt a long narrative in the voice of an uneducated Australian bushman.

The *Sydney Mail*, published it as a weekly serial, from 1 July 1882 to 11 August 1883. Browne wrote the opening chapters, sent them to the journal, and then kept a chapter or two ahead of his weekly instalments. The tale's stirring adventures of cattle duffing and bushranging aroused keen interest, and when published in London in 1888 it achieved wide popularity in England, America and other English-speaking countries.

**Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin** (1879-1954)

Miles Franklin, the eldest child of John Maurice Franklin and Margaret Susannah Helena, nee Lampe, was educated first at home and after 1889 at Thornford Public School. After working as a governess in 1897, Miles Franklin, completed her first novel *My Brilliant Career* in 1899. The heroine, Sybylla, a headstrong girl growing up in early 20th century Australia, has the opportunity of marriage to a wealthy young man whom she loves, but rejects it in order to maintain her independence, preferring to take a job as governess/housekeeper to the family of an illiterate neighbor to whom
her father owes money. The novel was published in London in 1901 after being rejected for publication in Australia.

Writing was Miles’ Franklin’s key to independence. She left for the United States of America in 1906 and spent nine years working in Chicago for the National Women's Trade Union League with fellow Australian Alice Henry while continuing to pursue her writing career. Moving to London in 1915, she worked briefly at a number of jobs in England and on the Continent. She remained in London until 1927, mainly because it was easier to obtain publishers there, but made frequent trips back home to Australia, finally settling permanently in Australia in 1932 after her father's death. During this period she wrote under the pseudonym 'Brent of Bin Bin'.

Miles Franklin’s place in Australian literary history was assured when on her death in 1954 she made provision for an award for Australian literature – the prestigious Miles Franklin Award.

**Barbara Janet Ainsleigh Baynton (1857 – 1929)**

Barbara Baynton was was born in 1857 at Scone, Hunter River district, New South Wales, the daughter of Irish "bounty immigrants", although she claimed to be born in 1862 to Penelope Ewart and Captain Robert Kilpatrick, of the Bengal Light Cavalry. This fiction gave her entrée to polite circles as a governess and, in 1880, she married Alexander Frater, the son of her employers. In 1887 Alexander ran off with a servant, Sarah Glover. Barbara moved to Sydney and commenced divorce proceedings. A decree absolute was granted 4 March 1890.
On 5 March 1890 she married Dr Thomas Baynton, a retired surgeon aged 70. A
She began contributing short stories to the *Bulletin* in retaliation to what she saw
as a romanticised image of the Australan bush in the works of Henry Lawson.
Six of these stories were published under the title of *Bush Studies*. She did not
romanticise bush life and showed a savage revulsion against its loneliness and
harshness, especially for women. *The Chosen Vessel* and *Squeaker's Mate* both
show a male dominated society with more regard for their dog and horse than
their women. Her view of life in “the Bush” and of those who inhabit it is in
stark contrast to that of both Paterson and Lawson.

Alfred Stephens, editor of the *Bulletin* and close friend of Baynton, on reviewing
the book in the *Bulletin* wrote of her work as being “... so precise, so complete, with
such insight into detail and such force of statement ...” Another literary critic of the
time, however, wrote that the stories were “... lacking humorous relief,” tending
“to give a distorted view of life in the back-blocks.”

In 1921 she married her third husband, Baron Headley and assumed the title
Lady Headley. She died in Melbourne on 28 May 1929

**The Bulletin** (“The Bushman’s Bible”)

On Wednesday 24 January, 2008, *The Bulletin* was
issued for the last time. *The Bulletin*, a weekly
magazine, published in Sydney from 1880-2008 and
was immensely influential in Australian literature
and politics from about 1890 until World War I.
Founded by J F Archibald and John Haynes, the
fiery weekly delivered Australian thought, passion
and spirit at a time when the nation was at the crossroads of great economic, political and social change.

*The Bulletin* helped to define Australian identity and values. From the time of its establishment in 1880, it reflected and helped shape the erupting Australianism of the day. In it, writers came forward to interpret Australians to themselves rather than to English readers. The movement had its roots in the back-country, where social tensions sprang from the sheep raisers' legal struggle to hold their estates against homesteading and, more immediately, from prolonged strikes involving rural work.

Here, under the pen name Tom Collins, Joseph Furphy contributed regularly to the *Bulletin*, a weekly established in 1880 which reflected (and helped shape) the erupting Australianism of the day. In it, writers came forward to interpret Australians to themselves rather than to English readers. The movement had its roots in the back-country, where social tensions sprang from the sheep raisers' legal struggle to hold their estates against homesteading and, more immediately, from prolonged strikes involving rural work.

The bush was in turmoil in the 1880s and although the bulk of the population lived and worked in the country, the cities were also growing and flexing their muscles. Rural workers, especially shearers, were rolling up their shirtsleeves in preparation for a struggle with the landowners and station managers who had kept them down for far too long. The shearing huts and cattle camps buzzed with talk of unprecedented rebellion and strike action. *The Bulletin* fanned these fires with cartoons, poetry, editorial and sly comment that no doubt prompted many a worker's campsite discussion. In fact for its first 35 years it was affectionately known as “the bushman’s bible”.

The Bulletin's appeal to its city readers, and it had many, came from its political coverage, especially in the federation debates, its biting social and entertainment
reporting and in its fiercely anti-imperialism stance. This was an era of unprecedented free thought and, more importantly, free speech. Australia was getting ready to shed its colonial ties.

But above all, it was The Bulletin's publication of Australian writers that cemented its role as the “voice” of an emerging Australia. It often took a chance on writers, encouraged and supported them, publishing prose and verse writers such as Henry Lawson, 'Banjo' Paterson, Henry Kendall, Joseph Furphy, to name only a few. Leading up to Federation, thanks to The Bulletin and especially one of its editors, A. G. Stephens, there was a steady stream of literature that helped identify and shape the Australian identity – legendary Australian values and characteristics such as mateship, a “fair go”, “giving it a go”.

The Bulletin is an integral part of the political, social and cultural history of Australia. Without it we could well have lost the works of Paterson of Furphy and certainly of Lawson. Australian literature without them is almost incomprehensible.

Joseph Furphy (1843-1912)

Joseph Furphy (using the nom de plume Tom Collins) was a well published Australian author. He was, however, well known under his own name, so much so that "furphy" became a word in everyday Australian speech, signifying a rumour without foundation. He was born at Yering Station in Yering, Victoria. His father, Samuel Furphy, originally a tenant farmer from Tanderagee, County Armagh,
Ireland had emigrated to Australia in 1840 and taken up their post of head gardener at the Station.

Furphy’s best known work, *Such is Life* is a fictional account of the life of rural dwellers, including bullock drivers, squatters and itinerant travellers in southern New South Wales and Victoria, during the 1880s. The title is said to come from Ned Kelly's last words.

The book purports to be a series of random extracts from the diary of a minor bureaucrat moving pointlessly around the Riverina. It comprises a series of loosely interwoven stories of the various people encountered by the narrator as he travels about the countryside. At times the prose is difficult to understand because of the use of Australian vernacular and Furphy’s attempt to convey the accents of Scottish and Chinese personalities. This novel nevertheless provides an insight into the character of rural dwellers in Australia in the latter half of the 19th century.

Furphy had an unfailing belief in and affection for the common man. In *Such is Life* he developed a kind of comic stoicism, which has become the stock in trade of Australia's most searching humour. He is the forerunner of H.G. and Roy, even of Dame Edna, having pioneered their kind of intellectual anti-intellectualism - they always create the illusion that the joke is on them. It’s that Australian sense of humour that many non-Australians find it difficult to understand – laconic, self-mocking, dry and to the point, taking a slightly cynical look at the world and what it has to offer.

Furphy blends wit, shrewd observation and a delicious, larrikin humour to give an illuminating picture of humanity and of Australia, reflecting the emerging
Australian national character and customs in colonial Australia’s “age of gusto” - the 1890’s

Andrew Barton "Banjo" Paterson (1864-1941)

Banjo Paterson, poet, journalist, lawyer, jockey, soldier, farmer was born at Narrambla, near Orange, New South Wales. From the age of five he lived on the family property near Yass. It was close to the main route between Melbourne and Sydney, bullock teams and Cobb & Co. coaches and drovers were familiar sights. He also saw horsemen from the Murrumbidgee River and Snowy Mountains country taking part in picnic races and polo matches which led to his fondness for horses and inspired his writing. He attended Sydney Grammar School and Matriculated at 16. He became an articled clerk in a law firm and in 1886 was admitted as a solicitor.

The year 1895 saw two milestones for Paterson. His first work, *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses* was published by a new publishing firm - Angus and Robertson (marking the emergence of yet another Australian icon). It sold out within a week. Over more than 100 years it has consistently outsold any other collection of Australian poetry.

The second milestone was the creation of Waltzing Matilda. Over the years there has been much argument about exactly how/where it came into being. The most widely accepted story is probably as set out flows During a visit to Dagworth Station, near Winton in Queensland, after dinner one evening Christina McPherson, the sister of the station owner was playing an old Scottish tune on the autoharp. To fill in time (and perhaps impress a young lady) Paterson decided to write words to accompany it. It is said that he had only that day
visited a billabong on the property, had been told the local legend of the ghostly swagman and heard the term “waltzing matilda” for the first time. The rest, as they say, is history – Australian history.

What did the swagman mean when he said he’d go “Waltzing Matilda”? He was referring to the act of carrying a “swag” - a bundle containing personal belongings, usually draped over his shoulder and wrapped around his chest. (an alternate colloquial term is ‘humping the bluey’). ‘Matilda’ at the time was a slang term meaning a de-facto wife. In the Australian bush a man’s swag was regarded as a kind of de facto wife, hence his ‘Matilda’.

Could this be the original billabong? Photo taken at the Combo waterhole, Outback Queensland, not far from Dagworth Station.

“There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around
That the colt from Old Regret had got away,.......”

There wouldn’t be many Aussies who would have failed to recognise the a opening lines to Paterson’s ballad The Man from Snowy River – quite a few could no doubt add a few more lines! There are other titles that stir the memory – In the Drovers Days, Shearing at Castlereagh, Clancy of the Overflow, The Saltbush Bill series, the hilarious Mulga Bill’s Bicycle, The Bush Christening, The Man from Ironbark, The Geebung Polo Club .... in fact its extremely difficult to make a brief selection from Paterson’s prolific works. If
you haven’t dipped in to them recently, why not do so in the near future? Here’s one of his humorous poems for starters!

**The Man from Ironbark.**

It was the man from Ironbark who struck the Sydney town,
He wandered over street and park, he wandered up and down.
He loitered here, he loitered there, till he was like to drop,
Until at last in sheer despair he sought a barber's shop.
`Ere! shave my beard and whiskers off, I'll be a man of mark,
I'll go and do the Sydney toff up home in Ironbark.'

The barber man was small and flash, as barbers mostly are,
He wore a strike-your-fancy sash, he smoked a huge cigar:
He was a humorist of note and keen at repartee,
He laid the odds and kept a `tote', whatever that may be,
And when he saw our friend arrive, he whispered `Here's a lark!
Just watch me catch him all alive, this man from Ironbark.'

There were some gilded youths that sat along the barber's wall,
Their eyes were dull, their heads were flat, they had no brains at all;
To them the barber passed the wink, his dexter eyelid shut,
`I'll make this bloomin' yokel think his bloomin' throat is cut.'
And as he soaped and rubbed it in he made a rude remark:
`I s'pose the flats is pretty green up there in Ironbark.'

A grunt was all reply he got; he shaved the bushman's chin,
Then made the water boiling hot and dipped the razor in.
He raised his hand, his brow grew black, he paused awhile to gloat,
Then slashed the red-hot razor-back across his victim's throat;
Upon the newly shaven skin it made a livid mark --
No doubt it fairly took him in -- the man from Ironbark.

He fetched a wild up-country yell might wake the dead to hear,
And though his throat, he knew full well, was cut from ear to ear,
He struggled gamely to his feet, and faced the murd'rous foe:
`You've done for me! you dog, I'm beat! one hit before I go!
I only wish I had a knife, you blessed murdering shark!
But you'll remember all your life, the man from Ironbark.'

He lifted up his hairy paw, with one tremendous clout
He landed on the barber's jaw, and knocked the barber out.
He set to work with tooth and nail, he made the place a wreck;
He grabbed the nearest gilded youth, and tried to break his neck.
And all the while his throat he held to save his vital spark,
And `Murder! Bloody Murder!' yelled the man from Ironbark.

A peeler man who heard the din came in to see the show;
He tried to run the bushman in, but he refused to go.
And when at last the barber spoke, and said, "Twas all in fun --
'Twas just a little harmless joke, a trifle overdone."
'A joke!' he cried, 'By George, that's fine; a lively sort of lark;
I'd like to catch that murdering swine some night in Ironbark.'

And now while round the shearing floor the list'ning shearers gape,
He tells the story o'er and o'er, and brags of his escape.
`Them barber chaps what keeps a tote, By George, I've had enough,
One tried to cut my bloomin' throat, but thank the Lord it's tough.'
And whether he's believed or no, there's one thing to remark,
That flowing beards are all the go way up in Ironbark.

Paterson became a war correspondent for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*
during the Second Boer War and was also a correspondent during the Boxer Rebellion,
He tried unsuccessfully to become a correspondent covering the fighting in Flanders, but
did become an ambulance driver with the Australian Voluntary Hospital,
Wimereux, France. He returned to Australia early in 1915 and, as an honorary
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1915.
Paterson also produced quite a volume of prose works. He wrote two novels; *An Outback Marriage* (1906) and *The Shearer's Colt* (1936), and many short stories as well as a book based on his experiences as a war reporter. He also wrote a book for children *The Animals Noah Forgot*, which was illustrated by the famous (and at the time controversial) Norman Lindsay.

Paterson died of a heart attack in Sydney on 5 February 1941. He was buried in the Northern Suburbs Memorial Gardens and Crematorium, Sydney. His image appears on the (Australian $10 note), along with an illustration inspired by *The Man From Snowy River* and, as part of the copy-protection microprint, the text of the poem itself.

The Banjo left a valuable heritage. His love for the bush and the colourful characters to be met there meant that his writing was sympathetic to the landscape and its people. His depiction of the resourcefulness of the bushmen is written with a true knowledge of the bush and its people. It’s easy to believe that Paterson, working at the time in Sydney, spoke from the heart when he penned these lines:

I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between the houses tall,
And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city
Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all

And in place of lowing cattle, I can hear the fiendish rattle
Of the tramways and the ‘buses making hurry down the street,
And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting,
Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet.

And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me
As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,
With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,  
For townsfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.

And I somehow rather fancy that I’d like to change with Clancy,  
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,  
While he faced the round eternal of the cash-book and the journal–  
But I doubt he’d suit the office, Clancy, of ‘The Overflow’.

“... written with a thumb-nail dipped in tar....”

Henry Lawson (1867-1922)

Henry Lawson, writer and poet, was, along with his contemporary Banjo Paterson, among the best-known Australian poets and fiction writers of the colonial period.

Lawson was born in a town on the Grenfell goldfields of New South Wales. His mother was Louisa Lawson, who was later to become a prominent suffragist and owner/editor of The Dawn journal which was partly responsible for Australia becoming one of the first countries to introduce adult female suffrage. His father was Niels Herzberg Larsen, a Norwegian-born miner who went to sea at 21, arrived in Melbourne, jumped ship in 1855 and joined the gold rush. On Henry’s birth, the family
surname was anglicised and Niels became Peter Lawson. The newly-married couple were to have an unhappy marriage.

In childhood Lawson suffered an ear infection and by the age of fourteen he was totally deaf. Reading became a major source of his education because, due to his deafness, he had trouble learning in the classroom. In 1833 his parent’s marriage broke up and Lawson joined his mother in Sydney at her request. She encouraged him to sit for his matriculation but he failed.

His first published poem was *A Song of the Republic*, which appeared in *The Bulletin, 1 October 1887*, the opening stanza of which is:

Sons of the South, awake! arise!
Sons of the South, and do.
Banish from under your bonny skies
Those old-world errors and wrongs and lies.
Making a hell in a Paradise
That belongs to your sons and you.

It was, one suspects, influenced by his mother’s radical views (and frioends). This was the time before Federation. Lawson was arguably the first Australian-born writer who really looked at Australia with Australian eyes, not influenced by loyalty to England. He was also perhaps, along with Paterson, the first to offer an interpretation of an 'Australian' character.’

Although most Australians lived in cities and towns in the 19th century, it was the bush that somehow grabbed the imagination - perhaps because of the stark contrast between it and urban life. Lawson was from the bush, had lived on a selection, had been brought up in bush poverty, had suffered hardship and unemployment. He knew the characters and lifestyles he wrote about, and wrote with an integrity readers recognised.
It’s perhaps best if we allow Lawson’s poetry to speak for itself. Here are just a few samples from a long list. Only the opening lines, of course, but why not get hold of a collection of his poetry and read them in their entirety?

Below are the opening lines of some of his better-known poems.

Andy’s Gone with Cattle

Our Andy’s gone to battle now
‘Gainst Drought, the red marauder;
Our Andy’s gone with cattle now
Across the Queensland border

The Teams

A cloud of dust on the long white road,
And the teams go creeping on
Inch by inch with the weary load;
And by the power of the greenhide goad
The distant goal is won.

The Never-Never Country

By homestead, hut, and shearing-shed,
By railroad, coach, and track –
By lonely graves of our brave dead,
Up-Country and Out-Back:
To where ’neath glorious clustered stars
The dreamy plains expand –
My home lies wide a thousand miles
In the Never-Never Land.

Out Back

The old year went, and the new returned, in the withering weeks of drought,
The cheque was spent that the shearer earned, and the sheds were all cut out;
The publican's words were short and few, and the publican's looks were black –
And the time had come, as the shearer knew, to carry his swag Out Back.

For time means tucker, and tramp you must, where the scrubs and plains are wide,
With seldom a track that a man can trust, or a mountain peak to guide;
All day long in the dust and heat – when summer is on the track –
With stinted stomachs and blistered feet, they carry their swags Out Back.

When the Bush Begins to Speak

They know us not in England yet, their pens are overbold;
We're seen in fancy pictures that are fifty years too old.
They think we are a careless race - a childish race, and weak;
They'll know us yet in England, when the bush begins to speak;
When the bush begins to speak,

Waratah and Wattle

Though poor and in trouble I wander alone,
With a rebel cockade in my hat;
Though friends may desert me, and kindred disown,
My country will never do that!
You may sing of the Shamrock, the Thistle, and Rose,
Or the three in a bunch if you will;
But I know of a country that gathered all those,
And I love the great land where the Waratah grows,
And the Wattle bough blooms on the hill.

And of course, that most poignant of all:

Faces in the Street

They lie, the men who tell us in a loud decisive tone
That want is here a stranger, and that misery’s unknown;
For where the nearest suburb and the city proper meet
My window-sill is level with the faces in the street —
   Drifting past, drifting past,
   To the beat of weary feet —
While I sorrow for the owners of those faces in the street.

However, while Lawson is best known for his poetry, many would claim that he
is a better writer of prose. Once again, only a few of his short stories can be
mentioned here: the evocative Echo from the Old Bark School; the humorous The
Bush Undertaker, The Chinaman’s Ghost, The Loaded Dog and Bill, the Ventriloquial
Rooster; plus In a Dry Season, Jo Wilson’s Courtship (from the Jo Wilson series of stories)

Above all there is The Drover’s Wife. A drover is forced to leave his wife and four children in a ‘shanty on the main road’. The poem tells of the hardships forced on the drover's wife (who is symbolic of all women in this position) and children who are left to cope with geographical isolation and the natural elements of the environment. It is, quite simply, a brilliant piece of writing. Here is an extract:

“She has few pleasures to think of as she sits here alone by the fire, on guard against a snake. All days are much the same for her; but on Sunday afternoon she dresses herself, tidies the children, smartens up baby, and goes for a lonely walk along the bush-track, pushing an old perambulator in front of her. She does this every Sunday. She takes as much care to make herself and the children look smart as she would if she were going to do the block in the city. There is nothing to see, however, and not a soul to meet. You might walk for twenty miles along this track without being able to fix a point in your mind, unless you are a bushman. This is because of the everlasting, maddening sameness of the stunted trees - that monotony which makes a man long to break away and travel as far as trains can go, and sail as far as ship can sail - and farther.”

Yet for all his talent, Henry Lawson’s life was tragic. He married Bertha Bredt in 1896, and they had two children, but it was not a happy relationship and they separated in 1903. He drank heavily and spent periods of time in institutions for his alcoholism, and in gaol for failing to support his family. During his later life,
the alcohol-addicted writer was probably Australia’s best-known celebrity. At the same time, he was also a frequent beggar on the streets of Sydney, notably at the Circular Quay ferry turnstiles. Colin Roderick, who published a biography of Lawson titled *Henry Lawson: a life* in 1991, suggests that Lawson suffered from manic depression (we’d now call it bipolar disorder) and sought refuge from his mood swings in alcohol. The eminent historian Manning Clark wrote of him in *Henry Lawson: the Man and the Legend* (published 1995):

“Henry Lawson was a deeply divided man. He was a soul burdened with an insatiable craving for love, a combative spirit with impossible hopes that mankind might sort itself our. Yet, he openly loathed huge sections of humanity and sang the blessings of war” Manning Clark intimately reconstructs Lawson's agonising, and ultimately unsuccessful search for fulfilment of genius and happiness. “The great irony is’, he wrote, “that Lawson's poetry inspired the feeling that life was worth living”.

On his death in Abbotsford, Sydney in 1922, Lawson was given a state funeral, attended by the Prime Minister W. M. Hughes and the Premier of New South Wales Jack Lang, as well as thousands of citizens. He is buried at Waverley Cemetery. Henry Lawson was featured on the first (paper) Australian ten dollar note issued in 1966 when decimal currency was first introduced into Australia. This note has since been replaced by a polymer note.

“The City or the Bush” - *The Bulletin* debate

*The Bulletin Debate* – dubbed “the City or the Bush” - was a famous “dispute” in *The Bulletin* magazine from 1892-93 between Lawson and Paterson. In 1892, Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson, his friend and co-contributor to *The Bulletin*, decided to have a little fun, and to stir up a controversy in their poems. Henry
Lawson set out to criticise the optimistic picture The Banjo painted of the bush, and Paterson in turn railed against the doom and gloom of Lawson’s outlook.

In 1939, Banjo Paterson was to recall how and why the debate came about:

"Henry Lawson was a man of remarkable insight in some things and of extraordinary simplicity in others. We were both looking for the same reef, if you get what I mean; but I had done my prospecting on horseback with my meals cooked for me, while Lawson has done his prospecting on foot and had had to cook for himself. Nobody realized this better than Lawson; and one day he suggested that we should write against each other, he putting the bush from his point of view, and I putting it from mine.

"We ought to do pretty well out of it," he said, "we ought to be able to get in three or four sets of verses before they stop us."

This suited me all right, for we were working on space, and the pay was very small . . . so we slam-banged away at each other for weeks and weeks; not until they stopped us, but until we ran out of material.”

Lawson launched the opening salvo with his poem *Up the Country*, in which he criticised the typical "romanticised" view of bush life which he accused Paterson of presenting in his poetry. It commences:

I am back from up the country — very sorry that I went —
Seeking for the Southern poets’ land whereon to pitch my tent;
I have lost a lot of idols, which were broken on the track,
Burnt a lot of fancy verses, and I’m glad that I am back.
Further out may be the pleasant scenes of which our poets boast,
But I think the country’s rather more inviting round the coast. Anyway, I’ll stay at present at a boarding-house in town, Drinking beer and lemon-squashes, taking baths and cooling down.

Paterson countered by claiming that Lawson’s view of the bushlife was full of doom and gloom. He wrote *In Defence of the Bush*:

So you're back from up the country, Mister Lawson, where you went, And you're cursing all the business in a bitter discontent; Well, we grieve to disappoint you, and it makes us sad to hear That it wasn't cool and shady -- and there wasn't plenty beer, And the loony bullock snorted when you first came into view; Well, you know it's not so often that he sees a swell like you; And the roads were hot and dusty, and the plains were burnt and brown, And no doubt you're better suited drinking lemon-squash in town.

and closes with the lines:

You had better stick to Sydney and make merry with the "push", For the bush will never suit you, and you'll never suit the bush.

Other poets became willing participants in the interchange. There was, of course never any clear "winner" to this debate and it did the sales of both Lawson’s and Paterson’s work no harm at all!

In conclusion it is interesting ans somewhat strange to note that, despite their vastly differing perspectives on Australian bush life, both Lawson and Paterson are often mentioned alongside each other as Australia's most iconic and influential writers.

This is as far as we will go in this course. By the end of the 19th century Australia had become a nation and was starting to understand itself – to adopt a national identity. The writers we have so far met made a major contribution to this as indeed they should. Writers have the power not only to reflect the society in which they live, but also help to shape it. By 1900, writers has done just this. Australian literature was established in its own right. Its future was bright.