

Farm life in Australia

English texts for secondary students

Year 7, 8 & 9

Bookmark days / Scot Gardner (2009)

'I've been driving the ute and the tractor since I was eleven. I get to sleep under the stars, help lambs into the world and ride my horse whenever I want.'

Avril Stanton lives in the country and thrives on it. But she has never been in love - until she meets Nathaniel, the boy from the farm next door.

Killer Mackenzie / Eve Martyn (2007)

Alex is on her way to spend three months in the country with a father she hasn't seen for four years and a stepmother she's never met.

Chicken Stu / Nathan Luff (2010)

Stu is a wuss. A weakling. A soft city kid. A chicken. His cousins are tough. Daredevils. Farm kids who look like they sprinkle steroids on their Weet-Bix. When Stu is packed off to the country for the summer, he has to face the dangers that lurk behind every tree: demonic lambs, yabby-infested tanks, raging creeks and, worst of all, his cousins.

Pieces of blue/ Kerry McGinnis. (2000)

At the age of six, Kerry McGinnis loses her mother. Her father, left with four young children to raise, gathers up his family and leaves the city to go droving. For the next fifteen years, the McGinnis clan travels the continent, droving, horse breaking and living off the land. Kerry grows up in the harsh outback, and the animals that inhabit the land are her closest friends.

Heart Country / Kerry Mc Ginnis (2001)

Continuing on from Pieces of Blue.

Wildhorse Creek / Kerry McGinnis (2010)

Young Billy Martin runs from home, burying his past in the quest for a future. He finds it in Queensland's spectacular Gulf Country, on the sprawling cattle runs. The Gulf breeds tough men, and Billy is quickly drawn to the excitement and adventure of working with the fiery cattleman and ex-con, Blake Reilly, and his daughter, Jo.

Stony heart country / David Metzenthien (1999)

'You see, out here in the country, ' Bernie Tolliver tells Aaron Knott, 'things are complicated. 'Dangerously complicated, Aaron discovers - and that's before he's met Rose, the haunted young woman wandering the wild paddocks. Aaron's father is a city consultant brought in to sack country workers. Aaron Knott is the city kid taken along for the ride. And the ride in the Rocky Rises is always rough.

Head over heels / Bailey, Sam & Bailey, Jenny (2006)

Sam Bailey wanted a life on the land just like his father. He had it all planned - he'd finish his education, have a few years in the big wide world, and then return home to take the reins from his dad, get married and raise a family. His own version of the Australian dream. But when the car Sam was travelling in overturned on a lonely country road one Sunday afternoon, leaving him a quadriplegic, Sam discovered that in a split second your life can change forever, in ways that you had never imagined.

Big sky / Melaina Aranda (2009)

When her dad breaks his leg, Skye has to lead the muster on her family's cattle station in the Kimberley. She's never been the boss on a muster before and her job gets harder with the surprise arrival of her high-maintenance fashionista best friend from boarding school. On the upside there is the very handsome Dan, a young jackaroo.

A fortunate Life A.B. Face (1981)

This is the extraordinary life of an ordinary man. It is the story of Albert Face, who lived with simple honesty, compassion and courage. A parentless boy who started work at eight on the rough West Australian frontier, he struggled as an itinerant rural worker, survived the gore of Gallipoli, the loss of his farm in the Depression, the death of his son in World War II and that of his beloved wife after sixty devoted years - yet he felt that his life was fortunate.

I can jump puddles / Alan Marshall (1956)

As a boy, Alan Marshall had big dreams – but he also had polio. This is the true story of his struggles and triumphs; of bushmen, horses and crutches, and the places we can go if we have the courage.

A waltz for Matilda / Jackie French. (2010)

'Once a jolly swagman camped by a Billabong Under the shade of a Coolibah tree And he sang as he watched and waited till his Billy boiled You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me...' In 1894, twelve-year-old Matilda flees the city slums to find her unknown father and his farm. But drought grips the land, and the shearers are on strike. Her father has turned swaggie and he's wanted by the troopers. In front of his terrified daughter, he makes a stand against them, defiant to the last. 'You'll never catch me alive, said he...' Set against a backdrop of bushfire, flood, war and jubilation, this is the story of one girl's journey towards independence.

The girl from Snowy River / Jackie French. (2012)

The year is 1919. Thirty years have passed since the man from Snowy River made his famous ride. But World War I still casts its shadow across a valley in the heart of Australia, particularly for orphaned sixteen-year-old Flinty McAlpine, who lost a brother when the Snowy River men marched away to war. Why has the man Flinty loves returned from the war so changed and distant? Why has her brother Andy 'gone with cattle', leaving Flinty in charge of their younger brother and sister and with the threat of eviction from the farm she loves so dearly? A brumby muster held under the watchful eye of the legendary Clancy of the Overflow offers hope. Now Flinty must ride to save her farm, her family and the valley she loves. Set among the landscapes of the great poems of Australia, this book is a love song to the Snowy Mountains and a tribute to Australia's poets who immortalised so much of our land. The Girl from Snowy River combines passion, heartbreak, history and an enduring love and rich understanding of our land.

Rabbit-proof fence / Doris Pilkington (2002)

Three mixed-race Australian girls, having been taken from their Aboriginal families, escape and return home on foot, without supplies or gear, while trying to evade recapture, in an account based on a true story.

Outback: The diary of Jimmy Porter, Central Australia, 1927 - 1928 / Harris, Christine (2005)

So far we'd seen emus, birds, rabbits, kangaroos, flies, even a few mosquitoes, but no humans since we left Beltana. I was beginning to feel as though this whole country was empty of human life, except for me and Chip. Jimmy Porter has moved to the middle of nowhere. His uncle's family live in a wattle-and-daub hut, days' walk away from even the nearest neighbour. Life in 1927 in the outback is tough-but the people who live there can cope with just about anything. But when disaster strikes, how can they get help?

By the sandhills of Yamboorah / Reginald Ottley (2003)

Outside, he sniffed the smells that hung in the quiet stillness – the bitter-sweet peppercorns and the tangy saltbush... Even the dust had a scent of far-off places, as if it had drifted miles. It made you think of warm, red earth being blown along by the wind.

In this timeless story, a boy struggles to come to terms with the loneliness of the Australian outback and the ruthlessness of living and working on a remote property.

With Brolga the cattle dog and her pup Rags as his only companions, the boy begins a journey of self-discovery. It is a journey that will take him outside the confines of the Yamboorah cattle station, and into the vast, unrelenting sandhills beyond.

Years 10, 11 & 12

Chasing Charlie Duskin / Cath Crowley (2005)

Charlie lives in the city, with her dad. Her mum died when she was nine, and her dad has been mourning her ever since ... and ignoring Charlie in the process. At school, Charlie is a gutless wonder. She's always a step out of beat, uncoordinated and all too willing to let people walk all over her. Her best friend, Dahlia, is just starting to figure this out – and, as a result, her and Charlie's friendship is crashing and burning over the summer holidays.

Every Christmas Charlie and her dad return to his childhood town where he and Charlie's mother fell in love. This time of year should be full of pine trees and celebration.

On the Jellicoe Road / Melina Marchetta

The story is set around the life of Taylor Lily Markham, the 17-year-old leader of the boarding school on the Jellicoe Road (country NSW/ACT). Taylor was abandoned at the 7/11 on the Jellicoe Road by her mother when she was 11, and her only recollection of her father is a brief memory of standing on her father's shoulders, which were revealed to be Jude's shoulders later in the story. The only adult influence in her life is her mentor/guardian Hannah, who lives in the unfinished house by the river, and writes stories about five kids who lived there in the 1980s and who has suddenly vanished into thin air at a time when Taylor really needs her.

To top all of Taylor's problems off, there is a territory war going on between the boarders, the Townies (kids from the Jellicoe Town) and the Cadets (Sydney boys who come for a six-week training exercise every year to Jellicoe). The leader of the cadets this year happens to be the very boy who Taylor ran away with when she was 14 in search of her mother. The one who betrayed her trust and she never wants to see again.

Bereft / Chris Womersley (2011)

It is 1919. The Great War has ended, but the Spanish flu epidemic is raging across Australia. Schools are closed, state borders are guarded by armed men, and train travel is severely restricted. There are rumours it is the end of the world. In the NSW town of Flint, Quinn Walker returns to the home he fled ten years earlier when he was accused of an unspeakable crime. Aware that his father and uncle would surely hang him, Quinn hides in the hills surrounding Flint. There, he meets the orphan Sadie Fox - a mysterious young girl who seems to know more about the crime than she should.

Foal's bread / Gillian Mears (2011)

The sound of horses' hooves turns hollow on the farms west of Wirri. If a man can still ride, if he hasn't totally lost the use of his legs, if he hasn't died to the part of his heart that understands such things, then he should go for a gallop. At the very least he should stand at the road by the river imagining that he's pushing a horse up the steep hill that leads to the house on the farm once known as One Tree.

Eucalyptus / Murray Bail (1998)

The gruff widower Holland has two possessions he cherishes above all others: his sprawling property of eucalyptus trees and his ravishingly beautiful daughter, Ellen. When Ellen turns nineteen Holland makes an announcement: she may marry only the man who can correctly name the species of each of the hundreds of gum trees on his property.

Ellen is uninterested in the many suitors who arrive from around the world, until one afternoon she chances on a strange, handsome young man resting under a Coolibah tree. In the days that follow, he spins dozens of tales set in cities, deserts, and faraway countries. As the contest draws to a close, Ellen and the stranger's meetings become more erotic, the stories more urgent.

The Pages / Murray Bail (2008)

On a family sheep station in the interior of Australia, a brother and sister work the property while their reclusive brother Wesley Antill, spends years toiling away in one of the sheds, writing a philosophy. Now he has died.

Erica, a philosopher, is sent from Sydney to appraise his work. Accompanying her is Sophie who needs a distraction from a string of failed relationships. Her field is psychoanalysis. These two women, each with a different view of the world, meet a situation they have not experienced before — with surprising results.

The girl in the steel-capped boots / Loretta Hill (2012)

Let me burst your city bubble for you. This is the Pilbara. And it's the Pilbara that makes the rules'

Lena Todd is a city girl who thrives on cocktails and cappuccinos. So when her boss announces he's sending her to the outback to join a construction team, her world is turned upside down.

The road from Coorain / Conway, Jill Ker (1989)

One women's journey from a childhood in Australia's outback to adulthood as a successful American career woman. The Road from Coorain is about Everywoman, for it is about childhood loneliness, anguished parent-child relationships, dawning sensibility, discovering a vocation, and finding one's own sense of self.

Heart of the dreaming / Di Morrissey. (1991)

At twenty-one, Queenie Hanlon has the world at her feet and the love of handsome bushman TR Hamilton. Beautiful, wealthy and intelligent, she is the only daughter of Tingulla Station, the famed outback property in the wilds of western Queensland.

Cold comfort farm / Gibbons, Stella (1938)

A funny portrait of British rural life in the 1930s. Flora Poste, a recently orphaned socialite, moves in with her country relatives, the gloomy Starkadders of Cold Comfort Farm, and becomes enmeshed in a web of violent emotions, despair, and scheming, until Flora manages to set things right.

Barra Creek / Di Morrissey. (2004)

An outback family saga set in New Zealand in the 1960s. The Mitchell family has run a prosperous sheep farm for generations and the youngest daughter, Sally, has just turned 20. She rides to the hounds and leads an indulged life.

The white earth / Andrew McGahan. (2004)

After his father's death, young William is cast upon the charity of an unknown great-uncle, John Mclvor. The old man was brought up expecting to marry the heiress to Kuran Station—a grand estate in the Australian Outback—only to be disappointed by his rejection and the selling off of the land. He has devoted his life to putting the estate back together and has moved into the once-elegant mansion.

Mclvor tries to imbue William with his obsession, but his hold on the land is threatened by laws entitling the Aborigines to reclaim sacred sites. William's mother desperately wants her son to become John Mclvor's heir, but no one realizes that William is ill and his condition is worsening.

We of the Never-Never / Gunn, Aeneas (1908)

We of the Never-Never has long been regarded as a classic of Australian literature. Newly married, 'The Little Missus' accompanies her husband to the huge cattle station, 'The Elsey', in the Northern Territory, some three hundred miles from the nearest town. The presence of a white woman in such surroundings is unusual and is at first resented by the stockmen, but they are soon captured by the warmth and spirit of 'The Little Missus'.

Here is the real Australia, lonely but beautiful, peopled by real Australians. As fresh today as when it was first written.

Jillaroo / Rachael Treasure (2002)

After a terrible argument with her father over their family property, 'Waters Meeting', Rebecca Saunders throws her swag in the ute and heads north with her three dogs. A job as a jillaroo takes her into the rowdy world of B&S balls, Bundy rum and boys. When she at last settles down to a bit of study at agricultural college, her life is turned upside down by the very handsome but very drunken party animal Charlie Lewis . . .

Will she choose a life of wheat farming on vast open plains with Charlie? Or will she return to the mountains, to fight for the land and the river that runs through her soul?

The rouseabout / Rachael Treasure (2007)

Kate Webster is a loveable larrikin who likes to play hard now and worry about the consequences later. She can't help mucking up the opportunities life gives her. Rocked by the death of her mother, she takes on a dare at one of Australia's wildest rural social events - a Bachelors & Spinsters ball - to 'scalp' gorgeous farm boy Nick McDonnell. It's a dare that changes everything. For just as Kate is ready to start her new life, away from her grieving father and the pressures of the family farm, she discovers she is pregnant. Now, several years later, with toddler Nell by her side, it's time for Kate to come home to face the music - and the father of her child.

The cattleman's daughter / Rachael Treasure (2010)

Born on the rugged Dargo High Plains and raised by her cattleman father, Emily Flanagan has lost her way in life. Locked in an unhappy marriage in the suburbs, Emily misses the high country with a fierce ache. To make matters worse, her heritage is under threat. A government bill to evict the mountain cattlemen is about to be passed, and the Flanagan's could be banned from the mountains their family has looked after for generations.

When a terrible accident brings Emily to the brink of death, she realises she must return to the high country to seek a way forward in life; healing herself, her daughters and her land.

The stockmen / Rachael Treasure (2005)

Rosie Highgrove-Jones grows up hating her double-barrelled name. She dreams of riding out over the wide plains of the family property, working on the land. Instead she's stuck writing the social pages of the local paper.

Then a terrible tragedy sparks a series of shocking revelations for Rosie and her family. As she tries to put her life back together, Rosie throws herself into researching the haunting true story of a 19th century Irish stockman who came to Australia and risked his all for a tiny pup and a wild dream. Is it just coincidence when Rosie meets a sexy Irish stockman of her own? And will Jim help her realise her deepest ambitions – or will he break her heart?

Drylands / Thea Astley (2000)

In her flat above Drylands' newsagency, Janet Deakin is writing a book for the world's last reader. Little has changed here in 50 years. Loneliness is almost a religion, and still everyone knows your business. The town is being outmanoeuvred by drought and begins to empty, pouring itself out like water into sand. Small minds shrink even smaller in the vastness of the land. One man is forced out by council rates and bigotry; another sells his property, risking the lot to build his dream. And all of them are shadowed by violence of some sort – these people whose only victory over the town is in leaving it.

Journey To The Stone Country / Alex Miller (2003)

"Betrayed by her husband, Annabelle Beck retreats from Melbourne to her old family home in tropical North Queensland where she meets Bo Rennie, one of the Jangga tribe. Intrigued by Bo's claim that he holds the key to her future, Annabelle sets out with him on a path of recovery that leads back to her childhood and into the Jangga's ancient heartland, where their grandparents' lives begin to yield secrets that will challenge the possibility of their happiness together.

Wattle Creek / Fiona McCallum (2012)

Damien McAllister is a man on the brink. Spending long, hard days on a farm he has no affection for, and nights ignoring the criticisms of his mother, Damien can no longer remember what he's living for. But in a small town like Wattle Creek, there are few people to turn to - and Damien learned long ago to keep his problems to himself. Until Jacqueline Havelock, a young psychologist escaping her own issues, arrives fresh from the city and makes Damien question everything he has known about himself...also igniting a spark in his lonely heart.

North Star / Karly Lane (2012)

Since her divorce a year ago, Kate Thurston feels like she's lurched from one disaster to another. But when she receives news that her grandfather has bequeathed her North Star, the vast property that has been in her family for generations, it feels like the perfect opportunity to flee the hectic pace of city life for a calmer rural existence.

The call of the high country / Parsons, Tony (1999)

In the heart of Australia's rugged high country, three generations of the MacLeod family battle to make a living on the land. As a young married couple, Andrew and Anne work together to make the very best of their property, High Peaks, but at what cost to their happiness? In time, the property will pass to their son, David. Handsome and hardworking, David is determined to become the best sheepdog handler in the land. Nothing is going to stand in his way-not even the beautiful Catriona Campbell, daughter of the wealthy graziers next door. The Call Of The High Country is an inspiring and heartwarming saga of a family battling through hard times, of a love that defies all odds, and of dreams that won't be broken.

Stillwater Creek (2010) and Indigo Sky (2012) / Alison Booth

It is 1957, and recently widowed Ilona Talivaldis and her ten-year old daughter Zidra move to the small town of Jingera on the south coast of New South Wales. Ilona struggles to establish herself as a piano teacher and finds a place in her new community. Zidra's challenge is to carve out a niche for herself in her small school with its tightly knit groups. Her greatest empathy is with Lorna Hunter, an Aboriginal girl of her own age; and with Jim Cadwaller the slightly older butcher's son.

Heart of the outback / Lynne Wilding. (1998)

A woman's journey to find a special place in the world. Fiery and ambitious, brilliant architect Francey Spinetti is a young woman on her way to the top. When wealthy magnate CJ Ambrose introduces her to his vast North Queensland business empire and a career-scarred local cop, Steve Parish - everything seems to be falling into place, including her love life. But the harsh outback landscape holds more secrets than Francey could possibly have imagined, and more enemies too. CJ's family seem determined to eliminate Francey from the picture - whatever the cost. As CJ's cattle empire becomes embroiled in murder, and Steve puts his life on the line to clear the name of the woman he loves, Francey will need to call on all her strength and determination to survive ... Lynne Wilding captures the bold beauty of the Australian landscape and the strength of its people in Heart of the Outback.

Jessica / Bryce Courtney (1998)

Jessica is based on the inspiring true story of a young girl's fight for justice against tremendous odds. A tomboy, Jessica is the pride of her father, as they work together on the struggling family farm. One quiet day, the peace of the bush is devastated by a terrible murder. Only Jessica is able to save the killer from the lynch mob – but will justice prevail in the courts?

Nine months later, a baby is born ... with Jessica determined to guard the secret of the father's identity. The rivalry of Jessica and her beautiful sister for the love of the same man will echo throughout their lives – until finally the truth must be told.

Set in the harsh Australian bush against the outbreak of World War I, this novel is heartbreaking in its innocence, and shattering in its brutality.

The Mary Smokes Boys / Patrick Holland (2010)

Grey's mother dies giving birth to his sister Irene and the tragedy haunts his life in the small town of Mary Smokes. Grey prays that his mother will be returned to him in some form, so he might protect her from the world as his father did not. This prayer, Grey believes is answered in his sister Irene. He becomes obsessed with protecting her purity and innocence.

The story of Tom Brennan / J.C. Burke (2006)

For seventeen-year-old Tom, life is about rugby, his mates and his family, who are well respected in their small country town. But a night of celebration changes his life forever. Tom's older brother, Daniel, starts a fight at the 'sudden death' pre-final party - then, worse, Daniel is involved in a car accident on the way home.

CONTACT

Dianne Fullelove

Coordinator South Region

gateway schools to **agribusiness**

Mobile: 0413 101 646

Email: diannefullelove@optusnet.com.au

PO Box 913

Kenmore QLD 4069