

Teacher
Notes

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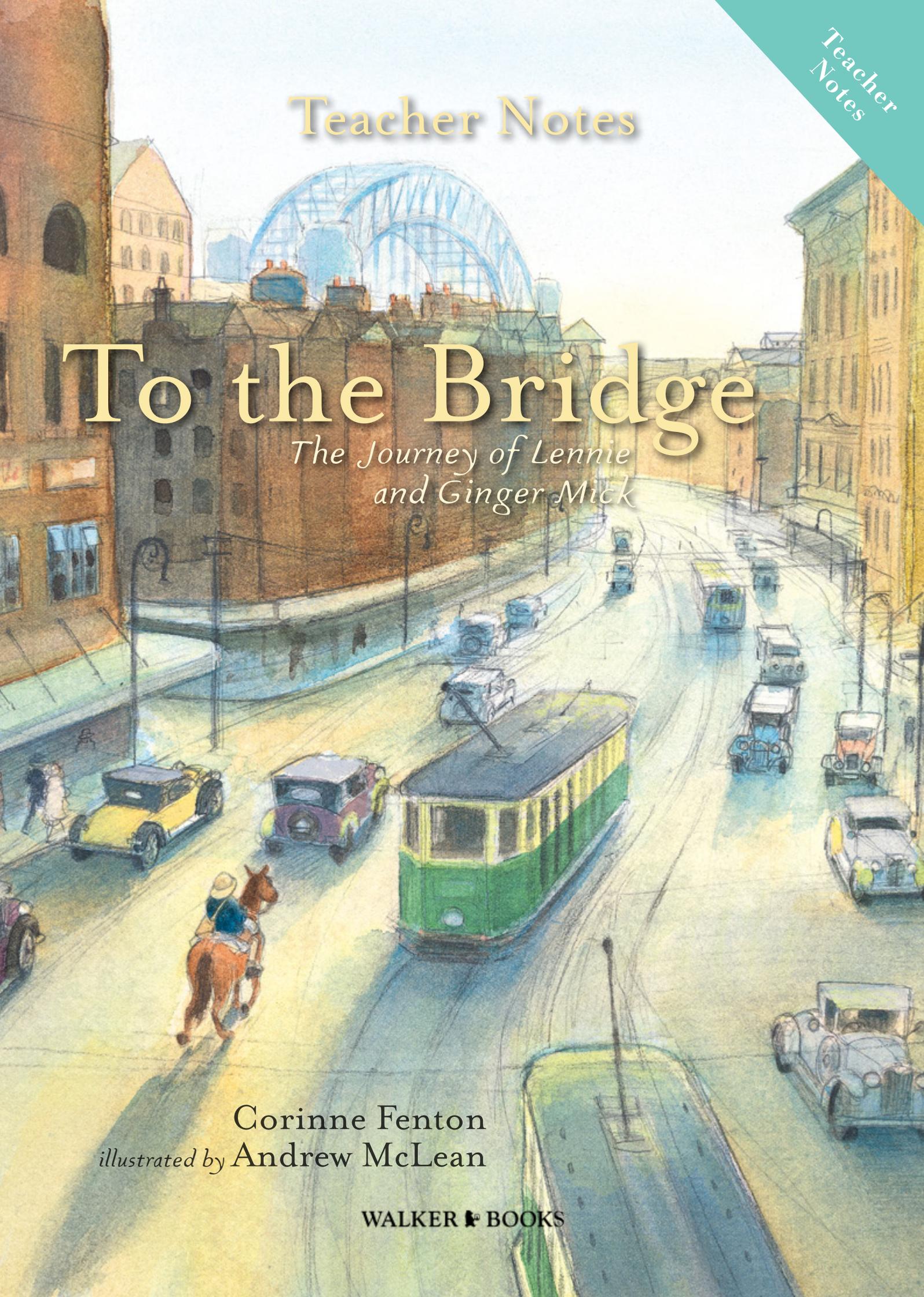
To the Bridge

*The Journey of Lennie
and Ginger Mick*

Corinne Fenton

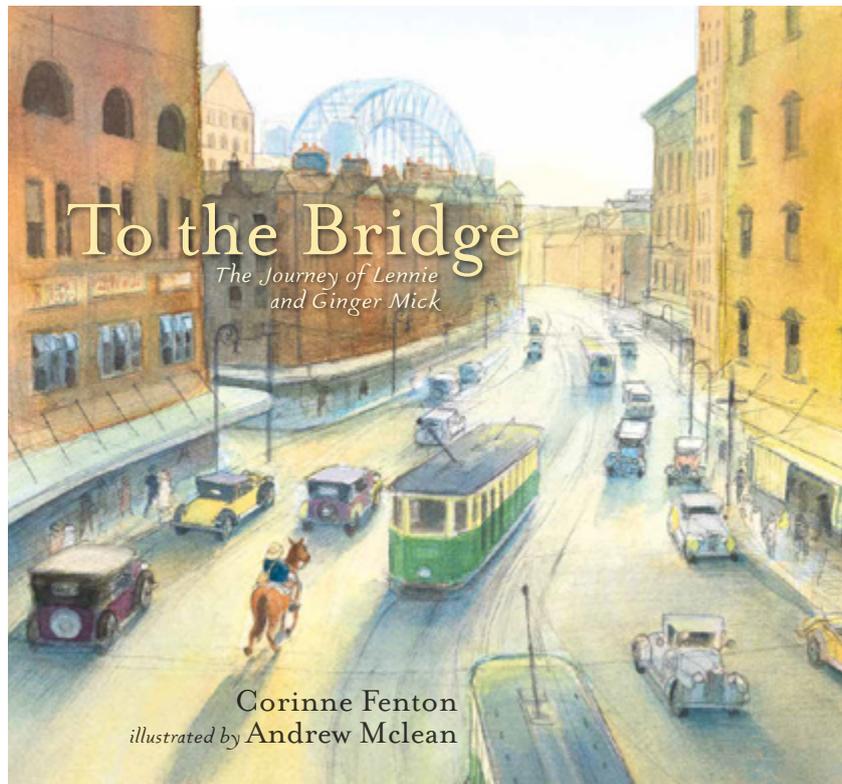
illustrated by Andrew McLean

WALKER BOOKS





To the Bridge



To The Bridge

By Corinne Fenton

Illustrated by Andrew McLean

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The award-winning team of Corinne Fenton and Andrew McLean tell the story of Lennie Gwyther and Ginger Mick, a boy and his pony who crossed Sydney's Harbour Bridge on 19th of March, 1932 and marched into history.

Nine-year-old Lennie Gwyther dreamed of seeing the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. With his father's blessing, he rode his pony Ginger Mick over one thousand kilometres from Leongatha in Victoria to Sydney, inspiring crowds of supporters to greet him in cities along the way. Through rugged bushland, fires and storms, Lennie and Ginger Mick finally arrived to see the bridge that had captivated his imagination and inspired his brave journey. It was then that he and Ginger Mick became a legend.

Q&A with Corinne Fenton

When did you first hear about Lennie and Ginger Mick, and what made you decide to tell their story?

I first heard about Lennie and Ginger Mick from a friend who sent me a newspaper clipping and said 'This is your kind of story, Corinne.' She went on to say that Lennie was a distant relative of hers. That newspaper clipping sat around on my desk in the pile of 'things to do' for quite a while.

What research was involved in the preparation for writing this book?

There was a lot of research involved with this book including several trips to Leongatha to visit the library and to meet the family at Fleurs, the farm where Lennie and his family grew up and where Ginger Mick is buried. The family were all extremely helpful and made me feel welcome. I also travelled to Ballarat to meet another family member and to Queensland to meet Lennie's sister, Beryl Ferrier who shared the story and her memories with me.

With this book being set so long ago, the home life depicted may be completely foreign to young readers. Do you think it is important for young people to have an understanding of our history?

I think it is vitally important for young readers of today to have an idea and an appreciation of what it was like living in long ago times. It's partly why I love writing non-fiction picture books.



Many of your books – like *Bob the Railway Dog*, *The Dog on the Tuckerbox* and *To The Bridge* – are based on the true lives of animals who have a special place in Australian history. What draws you to their stories, and why do you think it's important to tell them?

I am naturally drawn to true stories about animals and even my fiction stories written so far always have an animal as the main character. I can't really explain why that happens except to say that I love animals and I believe animals know much more than we think they do. I have to love my characters before I even begin to write. I believe it's important to write these stories as they tell us snippets of our history and where we've come from.

What do you hope readers take away from *To the Bridge*?

Their story is a remarkable one of determination, loyalty and strength of character. Their bond could not be broken and their trust for each other had no boundaries. I hope readers come to love Lennie and Ginger Mick as much as I do.

Exploring the Story

From the front and back cover what information can you learn about the book? What do you think this book is about? What information do you think will be covered in this book? What type of book is this and where would you expect to find it in your library?

When is this book set? What clues are there in the text and illustrations to show the reader the date and location of the setting?

Examine several spreads to compare and contrast the home and lifestyles of the characters in *To The Bridge* with students' home life. Some spreads and things to consider:

- Spread 2 “One winter’s afternoon...”
- The chores Lennie does
- The clothing style of the family
- The oil lamp
- Spread 3 “Then he harnessed the horses.”
- Lennie’s bedroom: the style of the room, the items on his bedside table
- Spread 5 “Lennie knew that if he travelled..”
- The items Lennie packs
- The map
- Clothes and hairstyles

Choose several spreads and discuss how you think each character is feeling based on the text and their facial expression and body language in the illustration. For example, the family eating dinner after Lennie’s dad’s accident, when Lennie is asking his dad for his reward, Lennie meeting the travelers and schoolchildren.

This story is narrative non-fiction. What does that mean? How could the book be different if it was purely non-fiction or fiction?

In small groups, discuss how Lennie exhibits the following character traits in *To the Bridge*:

- Resourcefulness
- Courage
- Resilience

“Lennie’s heart was pounding and he knew Ginger’s was too, but the trust they shared allowed Lennie to urge him on.” Write a short paragraph about the friendship between Lennie and Ginger Mick. What makes it special and why?

Exploring the Illustrations

Examine several of the spreads and have a class discussion about the following:

- What is the composition (i.e. where are the key elements placed)? Are the characters large or small? In the foreground or background? Do they seem powerful or weak; happy or sad; scared or confident, etc?
- What are the characters on this page doing and where are they looking? Why are they doing this? What effect does this have?
- Is the illustration framed or does it take up the whole page? Why do you think Andrew McLean illustrated it this way?
- Do the colours change from spread to spread? Make a list of the colours used in each area (this is called the colour palette). Why do you think he chose these colour palettes? Do the colours help invoke the era or location?

What research might Andrew McLean have done in preparation for illustrating this book? Imagine you were an illustrator given the job of illustrating this book. Make a list of all the things you think you would do to complete your task.

Some spreads have full-bleed illustrations, while others are circular, and bordered with white space. How does this design help to draw your eye or highlight certain parts of the illustrations?

The illustrations not only interpret the text, but extend the story by giving the reader more information. Choose a spread and discuss what information is in the illustrations that is not in the text.

What can you see in the art that make the illustrations look distinctly Australian, and why? You could consider trees, plants, cars, buildings, landmarks or even the colour palette.

Look at the spread of Lennie arriving on George Street in Sydney, and compare to a photo of George Street today. What differences are there between then and today? Have any things stayed the same? How does this design help to draw your eye or highlight certain parts of the illustrations?

Further Activities

Starting at Leongatha and ending in Sydney, track Lennie and Ginger Mick's journey on a map, using as many references from the book as possible (such as the town of Kilmany, the Snowy Mountains and Canberra). How does it make you feel to see the distance like this? How long would it take to make a similar journey today using modern transport?

Look at photographs and archival video montages of the construction of the Harbour Bridge. Are they different to how you imagined them from the story? What extra new information did you learn?

Have a class discussion on how you would go about seeking further information on the Harbour Bridge construction. Discuss the places information can be found and the reliability of the information based on the author. Also discuss the difference between primary and secondary sources.

Choose a location mentioned in this book (or that you've found on the map between Leongatha and Sydney) and compile a list of questions that you could ask to find out more about it. Where do you think you could find this information? Use this list of questions to research the location and present your findings in a PowerPoint presentation or a poster. Show where you can find this location on a map of Australia and include images and text that give the reader more information than they can find in the book.

Write a newspaper report from a town Lennie and Ginger Mick visit (you could one mentioned in

the book, or one you've found on the map of their journey). Use informative, unbiased language in your report.

In small groups, find other books about moments in Australian history in your school library. Compare these books with *To the Bridge* and discuss what is similar and what is different about the books. Give a short presentation to the class on how the authors/illustrators deal with the subject of Australian history differently.

Write a book review on *To the Bridge*. Write what you liked about the book and if you think the author/illustrator did a good job of conveying information in an interesting way. Mention any books that are similar to *To the Bridge* and make a recommendation as to who you think will like this book.

Research the author and illustrator on the internet. Locate other books they have done and compare these to the one you read in class.

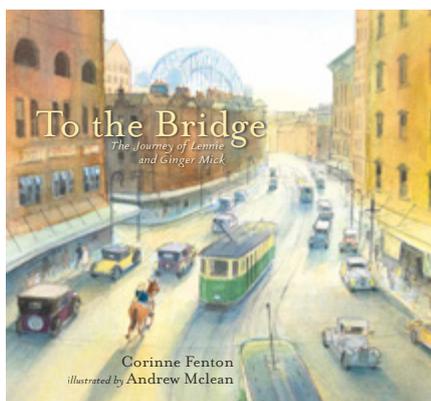
Deliver a persuasive speech arguing that all primary school students across Australia should study the book. Make sure you explain what the book is about and what the author and illustrator have done well.



Name: _____

To The Bridge Find a Word

S Y Q B M S V F F I V R
R J F E G D I R B J R E
U C G A T M S I T P R M
O P Z F J O B Y Y I R G
B Z V J U U B O D D I W
R G N C Q N E G S N L H
A M T A B T L M G L E R
H K R B L A P E J E D Y
P E N K F I R C N N C I
A J O U R N E Y E N Z F
L S Q S E S K T G I V F
X E S R O H F X Y E R N



Journey Sydney Ginger

Harbour Bridge Lennie

Horse Mountains

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