

Springboard

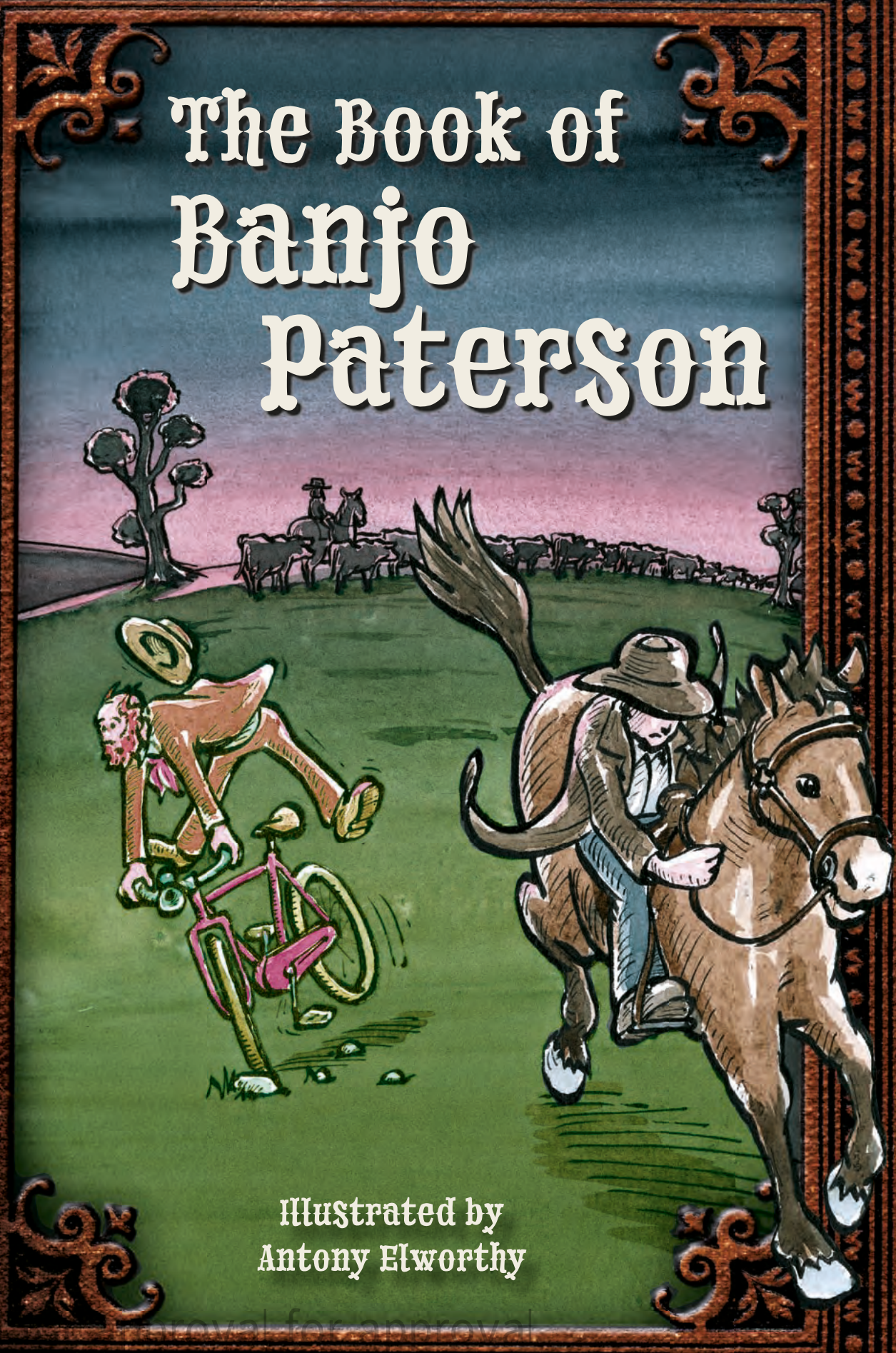
into
Comprehension

6

Main Idea	Number 15 Orchard Street Piracy in the Modern Age
Compare and Contrast	Back from the Brink Two Dying Seas
Fact and Opinion	What's the Real Story? On the Ball
Cause and Effect	Inventions by Women Use It, Wear It
Bias and Prejudice	My Way or the Highway? Whaling
Figurative Language	The Book of Banjo Paterson Gold in the Hills

RA 11.5–12.5

Narrative



Illustrated by
Antony Elworthy

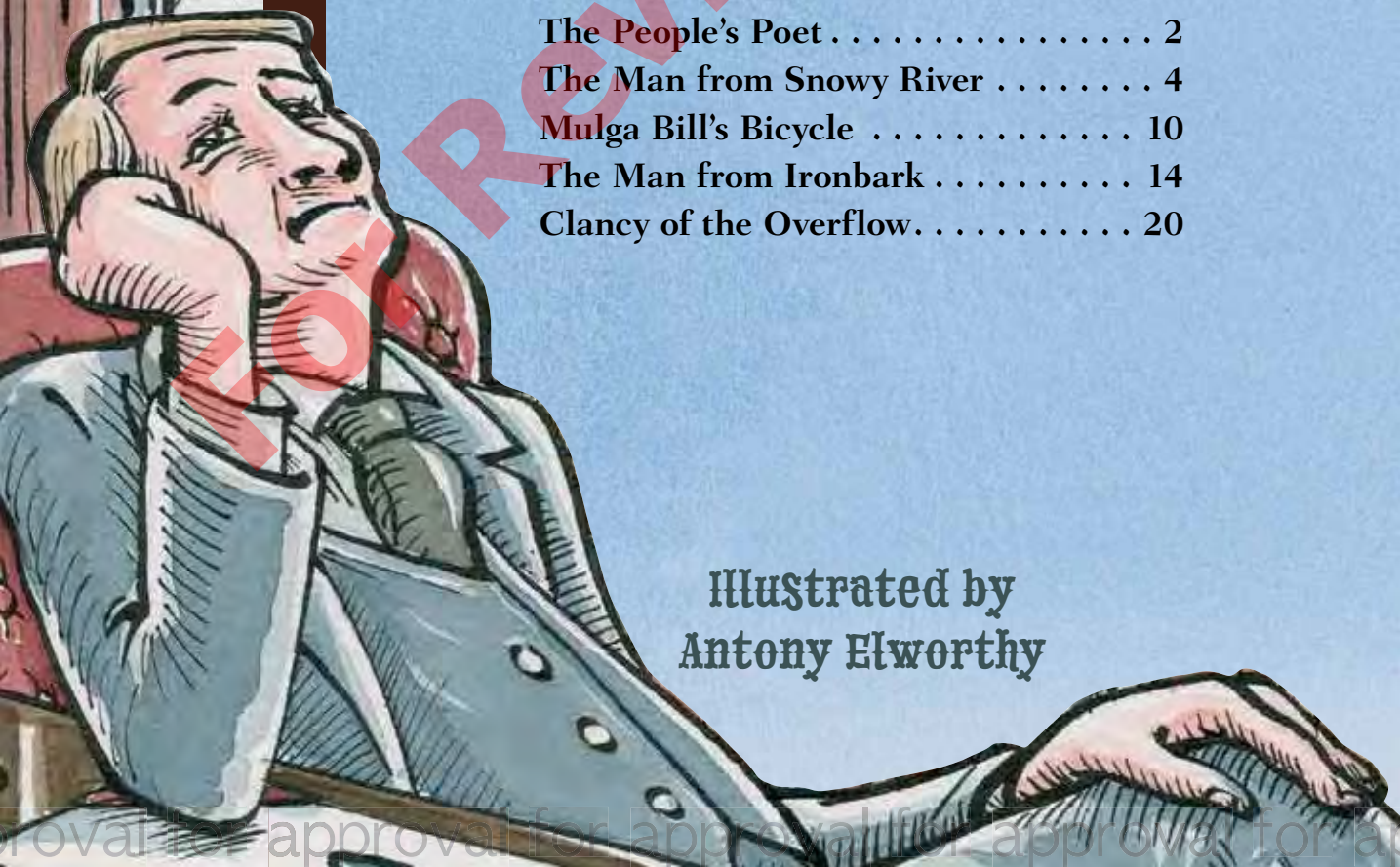


The Book of Banjo Patererson

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The People's Poet

Have you heard of Banjo Paterson? If you haven't heard the name, you will certainly know Paterson's most famous work – "Waltzing Matilda." Andrew Barton (Banjo) Paterson was born in 1864 and died in 1941. He was a poet, a lawyer, a journalist, and a soldier. He was born in the bush, but he wrote many of his poems while holding down a desk job in the city. While working in a Sydney law firm in 1889, Paterson tried to track down a stockman who owed money to some of his clients. Paterson wrote the man a letter and posted it to his last known address. Later, the letter was returned, unopened, with a brief message scrawled across it: "Clancy's gone to Queensland droving, and we don't know where he are." These words inspired Paterson, and he built a 32-line poem around them. He compared his existence in noisy, crowded Sydney with the simple, rewarding life of a stockman in the outback of his imagination.

When *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses* was published in 1890, Paterson became a national celebrity. Paterson wrote about the drovers, shearers, and swagmen of the back country of south-eastern Australia. The men who inhabited his poems were often plucky, salt-of-the-earth types who wore old Akubra hats and oilskins. Paterson's fame has not dimmed much over time. Through his most famous poems, he helped shape not just how the rest of the world viewed Australia and Australians, but also how Australians viewed themselves.



The Man from Snowy River

There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around
That the colt from old Regret had got away,
And had joined the wild bush horses – he was worth a thousand pound,
So all the cracks had gathered to the fray.
All the tried and noted riders from the stations near and far
Had mustered at the homestead overnight,
For the bushmen love hard riding where the wild bush horses are,
And the stockhorse snuffs the battle with delight.

There was Harrison, who made his pile when Pardon won the cup,
The old man with his hair as white as snow;
But few could ride beside him when his blood was fairly up –
He would go wherever horse and man could go.
And Clancy of the Overflow came down to lend a hand,
No better horseman ever held the reins;
For never horse could throw him while the saddle girths would stand,
He learnt to ride while droving on the plains.

And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy beast,
He was something like a racehorse undersized,
With a touch of Timor pony – three parts thoroughbred at least –
And such as are by mountain horsemen prized.
He was hard and tough and wiry – just the sort that won't say die –
There was courage in his quick impatient tread;
And he bore the badge of gameness in his bright and fiery eye,
And the proud and lofty carriage of his head.

But still so slight and weedy, one would doubt his power to stay,
And the old man said, "That horse will never do
For a long and tiring gallop – lad, you'd better stop away,
Those hills are far too rough for such as you."
So he waited sad and wistful – only Clancy stood his friend –
"I think we ought to let him come," he said;
"I warrant he'll be with us when he's wanted at the end,
For both his horse and he are mountain bred.

“He hails from Snowy River, up by Kosciuszko’s side,
Where the hills are twice as steep and twice as rough,
Where a horse’s hoofs strike firelight from the flint stones every stride,
The man that holds his own is good enough.
And the Snowy River riders on the mountains make their home,
Where the river runs those giant hills between;
I have seen full many horsemen since I first commenced to roam,
But nowhere yet such horsemen have I seen.”

So he went – they found the horses by the big mimosa clump –
They raced away towards the mountain’s brow,
And the old man gave his orders, “Boys, go at them from the jump,
No use to try for fancy riding now.
And, Clancy, you must wheel them, try and wheel them to the right.
Ride boldly, lad, and never fear the spills,
For never yet was rider that could keep the mob in sight,
If once they gain the shelter of those hills.”

So Clancy rode to wheel them – he was racing on the wing
Where the best and boldest riders take their place,
And he raced his stockhorse past them, and he made the ranges ring
With the stockwhip, as he met them face to face.
Then they halted for a moment, while he swung the dreaded lash,
But they saw their well-loved mountain full in view,
And they charged beneath the stockwhip with a sharp and sudden dash,
And off into the mountain scrub they flew.

Then fast the horsemen followed, where the gorges deep and black
Resounded to the thunder of their tread,
And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they fiercely answered back
From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead.
And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held their way,
Where mountain ash and kurrajong grew wide;
And the old man muttered fiercely, “We may bid the mob good day,
No man can hold them down the other side.”

When they reached the mountain’s summit, even Clancy took a pull,
It well might make the boldest hold their breath,
The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hidden ground was full
Of wombat holes, and any slip was death.
But the man from Snowy River let the pony have his head,
And he swung his stockwhip round and gave a cheer,
And he raced him down the mountain like a torrent down its bed,
While the others stood and watched in very fear.

