

The Drover's Wife

'The bush is a very significant symbol of Australian land and so are the bush stories. But as long as the bush story is mentioned, the man is connected.' Jana Laszáková – The Position of Women in Australian Literature: the Analysis of the Drover's Wife Stories Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

Henry Lawson wrote some of his stories as sketches. Think of the difference between a full drawing and a sketch. This type of story is about impressions, in this case Henry Lawson's impression of women's lives in the bush of the late 1800s. You will remember from your context research that Lawson was a journalist and wrote primarily for *The Bulletin*, which showed city people and people 'back home' in London what the real Australia was like – a big contrast to English climate and vegetation! *The Bulletin* was a magazine known as the 'Bushman's bible' – it was nationalist and quite racist in its views. Remember as you are reading *The Drover's Wife* that this is the way Lawson saw things – from the perspective of a white, male dominated world. Barbara Bayton a female Australian author from the same time had a different angle on women's experience and there have been lots of interpretations of it since.

Lawson's language created an image and an idea of Australian women. We will look at how he did that. Essentially, your job is to Lawson's language created an image and an idea of Australian women. We will look at how he did that. Essentially, your job is to:

- look at how Lawson created people out of words
- what ideas were 'behind' that creation?
- you then need to question if it informed or influenced our individual and collective identity.
- how does it affirm, ignore, challenge, reveal and disrupt what you believe about yourself as an Australian or about groups in Australian society (in this case women, children, Aboriginal people)?

Activities

1. Read the story in full before you look for 'techniques' or 'ideas'
2. Use the 'Triangle, square, circle' activity below after reading the story
3. Draw a triangle and next to it write down three important points from the story
4. Draw a square and next to it write down what ideas and values you think the story supports (that women are strong, that Aboriginal people are sneaky and so on)
5. Circle draw a circle and next to it write down anything that is still 'circling' your head or any questions you have
6. Using the annotated copy of the story, complete the following table

Idea about culture and identity	Example (quote)	Language, feature, technique and comment	Effect and impact (your analysis)	Affirm Ignore Challenge Reveal Disrupt
Resilience is a feature of Australian identity				
Australia has its own characters (which contribute to the way we see ourselves as a nation)				
Expectations of men				

Idea about culture and identity	Example (quote)	Language, feature, technique and comment	Effect and impact (your analysis)	Affirm Ignore Challenge Reveal Disrupt
Expectations of women				

Creative task – choose one

When writing these stories, start in media res ‘In the middle of things’. Don’t spend ages getting to the action, start in the action and back fill details as we need them.

1. Write the scene where the child dies and she is alone with the other children. What happened?
2. Place the Drover’s Wife in present day drought. Use current news reports and information to assist you. Write what her life is like living in contemporary times in our agricultural centres.
3. Take us back to when the Drover’s wife was a newlywed. They had money, trips, she was a city girl then. Use textual evidence and write a letter to the Drover’s wife’s sister or mother describing the first few months of married life. End with the hint that they are about to move out into the bush
4. Imagine The Drover’s life. Start your story with ‘I had been 6 months since I was home. The stars keep me company as I listen to the small secret sounds of the bush’
5. Tell Black Mary’s story- The King’s Wife. The indigenous stories here are only used to act as warnings or humorous interludes. Draw on your knowledge of history and Aboriginal texts you have studied through years 7 to 11 to assist you.