

## Context and plot summary

Context: Henry Lawson's short story 'Shooting the Moon' was published in an anthology of Lawson's stories in 1896, entitled 'While the Billy Boils.'

Literary critics have speculated that Lawson's protagonist John 'Jack' Mitchell represents Henry Lawson himself. Mitchell is often portrayed in Lawson's stories as the instigator of an embedded 'yarn' with Lawson being the ultimate real-life story teller.

Protagonist, Jack Mitchell also appears in 'Our Pipes,' another short story set for study in Standard English Module A: 'Language, Identity and Culture.'

John Barnes in his Introduction to *The Penguin Henry Lawson Short Stories* (1986) describes Jack Mitchell as a 'shrewd, kindly and philosophical swagman... Mitchell is on the track, a man on his own except when he finds a mate to travel with.'

From various stories, Lawson describes Mitchell as:

- Self-assertive
- Diplomatic

Other Lawson stories featuring Mitchell depict him as charismatic, gruffly romantic, talkative, benignly manipulative, humorous, easy-going and laconic.

Plot Summary: 'Shooting the Moon' is narrated from first person perspective. An unnamed persona is travelling with Jack Mitchell and they make camp for the night on the edge of a plain fringed by mulga. Both men smoke tobacco and relax after a long day on the track. Mitchell tells a yarn while his companion tries to interject with humorous quips – the inference is that the companion is younger. Mitchell narrates an unsuccessful 'moonlight flit' from a pub where he not only befriends another 'bushie' Tom, but they are also ironically forgiven and helped by a benign publican.

# Definition glossary

(in order that they appear in the narrative)

Word or phrase	Definition
shooting the moon	colloquial – to stealthily run away by night without paying
mulga	botanical jargon – small tree or shrub found in dry regions of Australia often used as sheep or cow feed when droving
nose-bags	equestrian jargon – a hessian bag tied over a horse's nose and mouth containing feed; in 'Shooting the Moon' Lawson uses zoomorphism
nail-rod	tobacco jargon – densely packed, dark tobacco formed into short sticks
mate	a familiar endearment, traditionally used between Australian male friends, stemming from British colonialism
yarn	colloquial – a story about adventure, often containing exaggerated events
pipe	tobacco jargon – a tobacco smoking stemmed device with a bowl at one end and mouthpiece at the other
afresh	verb – to begin again
pub	abbreviation – public house; a social establishment where alcoholic beverages can be purchased or consumed and accommodation can be rented
landlord	the owner of a rental property
swag	Australian idiom – worldly belongings wrapped in a bundled bed roll
portmanteau	formal – a suitcase or travelling bag
revolver	a handgun
pawn	to leave a possession with another person in exchange for a temporary loan
pound	British currency or money used in Australia in Lawson's context
chap	colloquial – man
stoush	colloquial – a physical fight
chummed	colloquial verb – become friends
galvanised iron	wrinkled metal used for roofing
bosh	colloquial expletive – stupidity; nonsense
bushies	abbreviation – people living in the Australian bush or outback
city swells	colloquial – city dwellers
blessed	adjective – annoyance or frustration
presently	after a short time
palings	vertical pieces of wood that create a fence
funky	frightened

<b>Word or phrase</b>	<b>Definition</b>
you was fixed	colloquial – situation or problem
in that fashion	in that way or behaviour
tucker	Australian jargon – food
drop of stuff	euphemism – possibly alcohol or and tobacco
bob	colloquial – money
was white, any road	colloquial – was good, in any case
slandered	made untrue and damaging claims about a person
publican	a person who owns or manages a pub

# 'Shooting the Moon' Analysis

Idea about culture, identity individuals	Example (quote)	Language feature, technique and comment	Effect or impact (your analysis)	Affirm Ignore Challenge Reveal Disrupt
Admiration for the working class	'Shooting the Moon'	Idiomatic title	no formal education yet instinctive philosophical awareness – survival in a hostile environment requires instinct and ingenuity (quick thinking)	Challenges the educational establishment and social conformity Reveals the Australian working-class ethic
Mateship	'We lay in camp...'	Inclusive pronoun	The reliance on companionship in a harsh physical environment is paramount to mental resilience	Affirms the importance of human relationships Reveals our egalitarian values (equality) when faced with adversity
Landscape as life-giving or taking	'...the fringe of the mulga'	Personification or Australian botanic jargon	The mulga is a symbol of survival for bush people. Sheep or cattle eat mulga to thrive, thus people survive. The personification of the 'fringe' suggests the power of nature and the tenuous or fragile nature of life and or death in the bush	Reveals our reliance on the physical landscape
Landscape as all-consuming	'watched the big, red, smoky, rising moon out on the edge of the misty plain'	Accumulation of descriptive imagery	Recognition of the power and beauty of nature which dominates life and death	Reveals our reliance on the physical landscape
Survival or humility of the Australian spirit	'Our nose-bags were nice and heavy, and we still had about a pound of nail-rod between us.'	Zoomorphism Tobacco jargon	The men are content – they have plenty of food and tobacco and enjoy these simple pleasures. The zoomorphism of 'nose-bags' figuratively illustrates the humble nature of working class men – their respect for	Challenges the educational establishment and social conformity Reveals the Australian working-class ethic

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			equality over social hierarchy	
Landscape dominance Mateship Intelligence of the 'everyman' character	'The moon reminded my mate, Jack Mitchell, of something – anything reminded him of something, in fact.'	Personification Endearment Anaphora	The power of nature ever-present foreshadows the embedded narrative that Jack relates to his younger companion – Jack is described through anaphora of possessing a shrewd and enquiring mind	Reveals our complex relationship with the Australian landscape – it is both life-giving and life-taking  Challenges the educational establishment and social conformity
The importance of story-telling	'Did you ever notice,' said Jack, in a lazy tone, just as if he didn't want to tell a yarn – 'Did you ever notice that people always shoot the moon when there's no moon?'	Direct speech Irony Rhetorical question	Jack's lazy tone and rhetorical question is used by Lawson to tantalise us as readers to want to hear his yarn. Storytelling was important to bolster resilience in a harsh and monotonous existence	Affirms and or reveals the importance of human relationships
Hardship or poverty	'I remember once, at a pub I was staying at, I had to leave without saying goodbye to the landlord.'	Euphemism	Humour is created to illustrate the Australian identity as encompassing roguish behaviour as acceptable when there are few legitimate solutions available	Reveals the harsh existence of living in the Bush  Affirms the larrikin nature of the Australian character
Hardship or poverty  Acceptance or admiration for larrikinism, criminality and the 'underdog'  Death being omnipresent  The importance of humour and	'My room was upstairs at the back, with the window opening on to the backyard. I always carried a bit of clothes-line in my swag or portmanteau those times. I travelled along with a portmanteau those times. I carried the rope in case of accident, or in case of fire, to lower my things out of the window — or hang	Past tense narrative Descriptive imagery  Juxtaposition of Australian and British idioms  Hyperbole	Describes the setting of the narrative to orientate the audience  The adverb 'always' denotes adaptability and ingenuity required to survive in hard times  'Swag' and 'portmanteau' – the interchangeable nature of these carrying devices shows Lawson's colonial context	

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<p>wisecracks to the Australian identity</p> <p>Hardship or poverty</p> <p>Acceptance of death</p>	<p>myself, maybe, if things got too bad. No, now I come to think of it, I carried a revolver for that, and it was the only thing I never pawned.'</p> <p>'To hang yourself with?'</p> <p>'Yes – you're very smart,' snapped Mitchell; 'never mind- . This reminds me that I got a chap at a pub to pawn my last suit, while I stopped inside and waited for an old mate to send me a pound; but I kept the shooter, and if he hadn't sent it I'd have been the late John Mitchell long ago.'</p>	<p>Hyphen</p> <p>Interjection</p> <p>Funeral jargon</p> <p>Formal register (name)</p>	<p>Creates humorous image</p> <p>The tenuous nature of existence in the Australian Bush is illustrated through black humour outlining the desire to have power over one's own fate or destiny</p> <p>The younger companion's quips are entertaining and highlight one of the major interactions in a mateship relationship – good-natured mockery of one another</p> <p>Only in death are formal names necessary in Australian Bush culture</p>	
<p>Violence is somewhat normalised</p>	<p>'Now, look here,' I said, shaking my fist at him (Tom), like that, 'if you say a word, I'll stoush yer!'</p> <p>'Well,' he said, 'well, you needn't be in such a sweat to jump down a man's throat. I've got my swag under the bed, and I was just going to ask you for the loan of the rope when you're done with it.'</p> <p>'Well, we chummed. His name was Tom — Tom — something, I forget the other name, but it</p>	<p>Exclusive pronouns</p> <p>Colloquial language</p> <p>Hyperbolic idiom</p> <p>Inclusive pronoun</p> <p>Colloquial verb</p> <p>Descriptive imagery</p>	<p>The use of Australian idioms sets the context and adds to the humour of the exchange</p> <p>A common way friendship was established in the Bush was or is bonding over common experiences such as adversity or hardship</p>	

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<p>Mateship</p> <p>Improvisation</p> <p>Survival</p> <p>Admiration for the 'underdog'</p>	<p>doesn't matter...There was a lot of old galvanized iron lying about under the window, and I was frightened the swag would make a noise; anyway, I'd have to drop the rope, and that was sure to make a noise. So we agreed for one of us to go down and land the swag. If we were seen going down without the swags it didn't matter, for we could say we wanted to go out in the yard for something.'</p>	<p>Personification</p> <p>Repetition of inclusive pronouns</p>	<p>Galvanised iron was synonymous with the Australian bush as a common building material</p> <p>"we" and "us" consolidate the new friendship between the two characters</p> <p>illustrates the Australian identity as encompassing roguish or devious behaviour as acceptable when there are few legitimate solutions available</p>	
<p>Admiration for the 'underdog'</p>	<p>'If you had the swag you might pretend you were walking in your sleep,' I suggested, for the want of something funnier to say.</p> <p>'Bosh,' said Jack, 'and get woke up with a black eye. Bushies don't generally carry their swags out of pubs in their sleep, or walk neither; it's only city swells who do that. Where's the blessed matches?'</p>	<p>Interjection</p> <p>Colloquial expletive</p> <p>Abbreviated</p> <p>Australian jargon</p> <p>Contrast of Australian slang and or jargon</p>	<p>'Bushies' denotes the common experience or bonding of country dwellers</p> <p>'city swells' suggests the judgement city dwellers as appearing arrogant or too prideful (connotations of chests 'swelling' with pride)</p>	<p>Affirms...</p> <p>Ignores...</p> <p>Challenges...</p> <p>Reveals...</p> <p>Disrupts...</p>
<p>Larrikinism</p> <p>egalitarianism</p>	<p>'All right!' said the shadow, and just then the moon came out.</p> <p>'All right!' says the shadow.</p>	<p>Personification</p> <p>Past tense</p> <p>Present tense</p> <p>Exclamation</p>	<p>The use of contradictory tense once again pronounces the characters as uneducated, yet are</p>	<p>Affirms...</p> <p>Ignores...</p> <p>Challenges...</p> <p>Reveals...</p> <p>Disrupts...</p>

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	'But it wasn't all right. It was the landlord himself!'		still admired for their innate intelligence	
Mateship Egalitarianism Community spirit	The boss looked up at the window, and dropped to it. I went down, funky enough, I can tell you, and faced him. He said: 'Look here, mate, why didn't you come straight to me, and tell me how you was fixed, instead of sneaking round the trouble in that fashion? There's no occasion for it.'	Idiom and or Colloquial language Endearment Colloquialism Rhetorical question	This dishonest behaviour by Jack is legitimised by his willingness to own his mistake. Jack makes no violent threat towards the publican, but instead apologises.  The publican, though an authority figure, champions the egalitarian ethic and empathises with other bush characters	Affirms... Ignores... Challenges... Reveals... Disrupts...
Mateship Generosity Egalitarianism Community spirit          Acceptance of death as normal	'And the boss kept us a couple of days, and then gave us as much tucker as we could carry, and a drop of stuff and a few bob to go on the track again with.'  'Well, he was white, any road.'  'Yes. I knew him well after that, and only heard one man say a word against him.'  'And did you stoush him?'  'No; I was going to, but Tom wouldn't let me. He said he was frightened I might make a mess of it, and he did it himself.'  'Did what? Make a mess of it?'  'He made a mess of the other man that slandered that publican. I'd be funny	Australian idioms   Metaphor and or connotation   Colloquial language     Short bouts of dialogue	Further establishes the generosity of an egalitarian society where the community is united in caring for individuals regardless of social class or past misdemeanours  'He was white' connotes the racial judgement in Lawson's context that Europeans were decent, fair people	



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	<p>if I was you. Where's the matches?'            'And could Tom fight?'            'Yes. Tom could fight.'            'Did you travel long with him after that?'            'Ten years.'            'And where is he now?'            'Dead — Give us the matches.'</p>	<p>Negative emotive language            hyphen</p>	<p>The loyalty between mates in a challenging situation</p> <p>The long narrative sentences are undercut by this laconic, dry, unemotional statement of Tom's fate. Lawson's protagonist, Jack un sentimentally accepts death as a natural process.</p>	

## Creative activity

Through dialogue, write the conversation between Tom and the other man who slandered the publican. You should use appropriate register, including colloquialisms from the original text of "Shooting the Moon" to re-create Henry Lawson's distinctive use of language.