

# TEACHERS' NOTES

## *Tea and Sugar Christmas* by Jane Jolly and illustrated by Robert Ingpen

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### **Author:** Jane Jolly

Jane Jolly is a primary school teacher of 35 years' experience. She has taught in Aboriginal schools, area schools and primary schools. In 1983, she worked as a governess on Commonwealth Hill Station. She now works part time as a teacher/librarian at Eastern Fleurieu School in South Australia, teaching creative writing and literature appreciation. Jane has had three picture books published, each earning a Notable Award from the CBCA. Her interests include organic gardening, cooking and the plight of refugees.

[www.janejolly.com](http://www.janejolly.com)

[janejolly.wordpress.com](http://janejolly.wordpress.com)

### **Illustrator:** Robert Ingpen

Robert was born in Geelong and educated at Geelong College. He has a Diploma of Graphic Art from RMIT. In 1968 he began work as freelance designer, illustrator and author. Robert has written and/or illustrated more than 100 published books. These include children's picture books and fictional stories for all ages. His nonfiction books mostly relate to history, conservation, environment and health issues. In 1968 Robert became the only Australian to be awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Medal for his international contribution to book illustration. In 1989 Robert was awarded the Dromkeen Medal for his significant contribution to children's literature and in 2007 he was awarded an Order of Australia for service to literature.

[www.melaleuca.com.au/ingpen/](http://www.melaleuca.com.au/ingpen/)

### **Setting:**

*Tea and Sugar Christmas* is set along a railway track in Australia on the Nullabor Plain. The track travelled from Port Augusta in South Australia to Kalgoorlie in Western Australia.

### **Activities:**

1. Trace the route of the Tea and Sugar Train on a map.
2. Why are the towns there? Research.
3. Who lives in the towns? What were the populations of the towns in the 1950s compared to now? Why is there such a difference?
4. Choose one town along the track to research the population, facilities, amenities and distance from the next town (or closest centre).
5. How has life changed for people living and working along the line?

6. How did children receive their education?
7. Research School of the Air at [australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/school-of-the-air](http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/school-of-the-air) and compare School of the Air education with going to an ordinary school.
8. How would shopping be different? Compare going to a supermarket in a town or city with shopping from the Provisions store on the train.
9. Do you think children living along the line would have been lonely? How would they have filled their spare time?
10. Where did the workers come from? Many were postwar migrants. What did they bring to Australia, which has changed the lives of Australians? (Food, culture etc.) Can you trace your heritage?
11. **Aboriginal perspective.** Groups living across Australia in the area where the line ran included: Nukunu, Andyamathana, Banggurla, Wirangu, Kakatha, Arabana, Yankuntjatjara, Ngalea, Mirning, Pitjantjatjara, Nakako, Nyanganyatjara, Mandjinja, Ngaanyatjarra, Wangkathaa, Malpa, Ngatjumay and many others. See this map: [www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/](http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/)
12. What would first contact with Europeans have been like for these people?
13. What were their lifestyles like and how did this change with the coming of Europeans?
14. Imagine the first time Aboriginal people saw a train. Has there been anything in your life which was a huge surprise and which you could not explain?
15. Is it always hot in the desert? Research the climate in the Australian desert across the Nullabor Plain. Were there seasons? How many seasons would Aboriginal people have been able to identify? Look at these sites: [www.bom.gov.au/iwk/climate\\_culture/Indig\\_seasons.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/iwk/climate_culture/Indig_seasons.shtml)  
[www.csiro.au/Organisation-Structure/Divisions/Ecosystem-Sciences/Indigenous-seasonal-calendars.aspx](http://www.csiro.au/Organisation-Structure/Divisions/Ecosystem-Sciences/Indigenous-seasonal-calendars.aspx)

## The Tea and Sugar Train

1. View this short film on the Tea and Sugar Train: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vAh-p0-cPA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vAh-p0-cPA)
2. View this film made by the National Railway Museum: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wamK015778s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wamK015778s)
3. Why do you think the Tea and Sugar Train moved from steam to diesel?
4. What were conditions like for the men who laid the track? How would this be different in the twenty-first century?
5. What did the women do? How would this be different in the twenty-first century?

6. What was the job of the ganger? How did it differ from a fettler?
7. Lots of young children want to be train drivers when they grow up. How do you become a train driver? Go to this site for more information:  
[www.railcareerpathways.net.au/career/train\\_driver\\_passenger\\_and\\_freight](http://www.railcareerpathways.net.au/career/train_driver_passenger_and_freight)
8. Compare groceries from the 1950s with groceries available now from supermarkets. How are they the same? How are they different?
9. Make a list of what your family would need in the way of supplies for one week. Remember, if you forget to get it or order it you will have to wait another whole week.

### Language of the Story

1. How does Jane Jolly set the scene at the beginning of the story?
2. What senses has she used to describe the setting and Kathleen? Using your five senses, what other words could she use to describe the settings in the story?
3. What is a **simile**? Similes make the biggest impact when they have not been overused. 'As white as a ghost' is used too much. Try writing some similes of your own.
4. **Onomatopoeia** is when a word imitates the sound that it describes. Clunk and clink, tinkle, croak and screech are all examples of onomatopoeia. Make a list of other words that imitate the sound that they describe.
5. Why has Jane put a crow in to the story? How does the crow help to create atmosphere?
6. Rewrite the story in a completely different landscape. (For example, in the snow, in a rainforest.)
7. What if the main character was a boy? Would the story be different? If so, how?

### The Illustrations: Storyboards

Robert Ingpen's style has been described as authentic, detailed, evocative and rich. He uses a variety of media including watercolour, pencil and pastel.

For *Tea and Sugar Christmas*, Robert began with a **storyboard**.

1. What are storyboards? Why are they useful?
2. Design your own storyboard for a story you have written or one you have heard.
3. Think about close up and distance illustrations, and middle distance illustrations. Match the text with the illustrations.

### Pencil sketching

1. Try some pencil sketching, starting with simple subjects. For example, a vase, a piece of fruit, a face.

2. Try different-coloured pencils but keep the sketch monochromatic.
3. Try different-coloured paper. For example, use a white pencil on black paper, or a yellow pencil on red paper.

## Realism

Robert's style is called **realism**. This is where the artist attempts to represent the subject matter truthfully.

1. What other artists and illustrators are realists?
2. Would the book have worked as well if he had used a different style? What other styles might have worked?

## Research

A lot of research was involved to get the images correct. Because the subject is real, it is important to get the illustrations as close to reality as possible. Robert worked from photographic images of the train and of the environment. Clothing on the characters is true to the period that the story is set in.

1. Make a list of what Robert might have researched to get the illustrations correct.
2. Use the National Library of Australia's website, <http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/>, to do a search on the 'tea and sugar train'. Look at the images from your search. Compare them with the images in the book. How are they similar? How are they different?
3. Use the National Library of Australia's website, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>, to find a newspaper article from the 1950s? What was the news on the front page? How does the newspaper compare with newspapers of the twenty-first century?