Aussie Legends
by Tom Baddeley
with illustrations by Tracey Gibbs

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Synopsis
Aussie Legends compiles the true stories of six famous
Australians each told through a rhyming narrative and vivid
pictures. This edition recounts the remarkable journeys of
Burke & Wills, Ned Kelly, Phar Lap, Evonne Goolagong,
Nellie Melba and Don Bradman – Aussie icons who are not
only part of our history but helped shape the Australia of
today.

Themes
Children love a good story, and this collection of ripping yarns
has the added advantage that they are true stories. One aim
is to promote to children the joy of a good tale.

At the same time, the book aims to alert our young readers
to Australian history. This is important because it is their own
history.

Common to each story is the theme of fame, and it demonstrates the different reasons for
which people in our history have become famous.

The individual stories also raise particular themes, such as:
Justice, poverty, family loyalty (Ned Kelly); exploration, survival in harsh climates, Austra-
lian geography (Burke and Wills); music, opera, travel (Dame Nellie Melba); horses, horse-
racing, mystery (Phar Lap); cricket, sporting achievement (Don Bradman); tennis, sporting
achievement, Indigenous rights and culture (Evonne Goolagong Cawley).

Writing Style
From the experience of reading to his young children, Tom Baddeley recognised their love
for stories with rhyming narratives. They liked the rhythm of each sentence and found them
easy to remember. The rhyming style is effective in sparking an interest in reading and in
helping the young reader to retain information.
About the Author
Tom Baddeley is a former solicitor and journalist, who now works in the oil and gas industry. His previously published book is a history of the early days of the Western Force Super 14 rugby team. He is a father of two young daughters, and started writing the book while on tour with the Western Force as a way of connecting with his kids while away from home.

Author Motivation
“I loved history as a child; I still do. I wanted my children to enjoy it too. Once I recognised their preference for hearing stories with a rhyming narrative, I thought combining that style with Australian history would be a good way to encourage a love for reading and storytelling, as well as an interest in our nation’s fascinating past.”

About the Illustrator
Tracey Gibbs is a graphic designer and illustrator. She has a BA in Graphic Design and worked as a book designer for Fremantle Press for two and a half years. Her illustrations have appeared in Let’s Go Baby for the WA State Library and Spider Lies for Fremantle Press. Tracey runs her own graphic design business and continues to work as a freelance Art Director for major Fremantle Press projects.

Illustrator Motivation
“The style for Aussie Legends came about simply by reading the text. The history was so layered — there seemed to be lots of different textures and facets to each story ... was Ned Kelly really bad or was he just persecuted for being poor? Was Nelly Melba a diva or was she an ordinary woman who longed for a career? It was these questions that prompted me to come up with a style that had considerable depth under its simple details.

“I chose to use ink and to grunge up the book in order to give it this sense of history. Papers, cardboard and fabrics all tea stained, folded, creased and torn were layered over each other, along with sketching and ink splashes; these all add to the effect of a paper collage and bring history and story-telling together.”

Study notes
1. Research each of the characters in the book. What can you find out about them? Look especially for information that expands what is learnt in the book.

2. Write a report on one of the characters, using your research.

3. Draw a comic strip of an event in one of the character’s lives.

4. Prepare and act out a short play based on an event in one of the character’s lives.
5. Research one of the eras in which these historical characters lived:
   1850-1900
   1900-1930
   1930-1950
   1950-1970

   Write about the social and cultural customs of your chosen era. What were some significant events around that time? How different was it to now? Any similarities?

6. Questions for introductory research:
   • What were Ned Kelly’s last words?
   • Was he good or was he bad?
   • What was Don Bradman’s batting average when he retired?
   • What was ‘Bodyline’?
   • Who was Nellie Melba?
   • Did Evonne Goolagong ever win Wimbledon?
   • What is Wimbledon?
   • What should Burke & Wills have done when they put the box back in the ground?
   • Did Phar Lap ever win the Melbourne Cup?
   • What is the Melbourne Cup?
   • Who is your favourite Australian, and why?
   • What would you like to be famous for?

7. Specific activities related to each character’s story:

   Ned Kelly (1855-1880)
   • Research and write about bushrangers in Australian history.
   • Research and write about Irish immigration to Australia in the nineteenth century.
   • Find out about the towns/places where the Kelly gang stopped.
   • How did the justice system operate in those days, and how was it different to now?

   Burke and Wills (1860-1861)
   • What was the early history of exploration in Australia?
   • What did some people imagine lay at the centre of Australia?
   • Research Indigenous cultures that existed before European colonisation.
   • Describe the geography (terrain, climate, wildlife, flora etc.) of the various kinds of country the Burke and Wills team travelled through.
   • Find out about survival techniques in the bush and desert.

   Dame Nellie Melba (1861-1931)
   • What would you change your name to if you were a famous artist (singer/painter/writer)?
   • Research and write about opera as an art form. When did this form of entertainment develop? How is an opera written? What are the different musical aspects of an opera? Who is involved in the preparation and performance? What is required of an opera
singer? Name some famous operas.
  • Who were some of the royalty that Nellie Melba sang for?
  • What role did entertainment, such as singing, play during World War I?

Don Bradman (1908-2001)
  • Where and when did cricket develop?
  • What do the players wear? What is the baggy green? What is a Test?
  • How do you score in cricket? How do you get out?
  • Draw a diagram/picture of a cricket ground, marking the players and equipment.
  • Research the Ashes.
  • Research the Australian cricket team.
  • Why was Don Bradman such a unique cricketer at the time?

Phar Lap (192-1932)
  • Research different breeds of horses. How is a thoroughbred different, and why is it well suited to racing?
  • Draw a horse. Label the different parts (mane, tail, forlock, hoof, etc).
  • How does a jockey train for horse racing?
  • What role does a horse trainer play in horse racing?
  • What is the history of horse racing in Australia?
  • Research the Melbourne Cup.
  • What activities are associated with horse racing? (i.e. learn about bookies and odds; dress code and why hats are usually worn.)
  • Why was Phar Lap a unique racehorse? Write about his physical characteristics.

Evonne Goolagong-Cawley (1951-now)
  • How is a tennis game scored?
  • Where and when did tennis develop?
  • Draw a diagram of a tennis court. How different is it playing on a grass court or a dirt court?
  • What are some of the international tennis competitions? Research Wimbledon in particular.
  • What does it mean to be a Sports Ambassador for Indigenous people?
  • What does being Australian of the Year mean? Who else has been given this honour?
  • See what you can find out about the Wiradjuri people.

8. Who would you like to meet from Australia’s history? Why?

9. Which of these characters would you most like to have been? Why?
The following links may be useful for teaching ideas and for student research.

**Websites**

* Ned Kelly:  
  http://www.bailup.com/links.htm

* Burke & Wills:  
  http://www.burkeandwills.net.au/  

* Dame Nellie Melba:  
  http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?i_rm=163391  

* Phar Lap:  

* Don Bradman:  
  http://cricket.com.au  
  http://www.bradman.com.au

* Evonne Goolagong Cawley:  
  http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/IMP0070b.htm  

Your school or local library should also have resources on most of these historic figures. Encyclopedias, general Australian history, and biographies will all be useful.