

Bush Boys: A Living Book Unit Study

By Sue Elvis with direction from Father James Tierney

Bush Boys is a “living book”. Charlotte Mason, who coined this term, said that a living book was lively and full of facts and passionate zeal. One boy wrote to Father Tierney, “The book feels like it is alive. It made me feel I was there. I would love to have those boys as my friends.”

Here are some suggestions on how everyone can use *Bush Boys* as a resource in the education of our children. I have arranged the ideas in themes. The list is not exhaustive: you may have your own ideas! You might like to research individual topics or perhaps you could put together a Bush Boys Theme Book.

How to make a Bush Boys Theme Book

Read through the following ideas for further research. All ideas use Bush Boys as a starting point. Choose the topics that appeal to you. Record any information you find out on loose-leaf paper. Include drawings, pictures, poems, stories, quotes, biographies, diagrams, lists of interesting facts, pressed flowers and leaves, book reviews, lists of books read, interesting vocabulary, photographs etc. Place the completed pages in a ring binder or bind the pages together yourself. Cover the notebook and decorate to match the content.

Abbreviations:

BB, Bush Boys

CJTBB, Cuthbert Joins the Bush Boys

BB&BR, Bush Boys and Bush Rangers

BBOTM, Bush Boys on the Move

H2, Handouts 2, The Australian Bush Catechism of Camping

H5, Handouts 5, How to Write a Story: a Dozen Suggestions for the Young Writer

H8, Handouts 8, St Joseph the Worker and the Complementarity of the Sexes

CFCDE 50 Q&A's, Catholic Family Catechism Disciples Edition with 50 Questions and Answers.

All Bush Boys books, the Handouts and the Catholic Family Catechisms are available from Cardinal Newman Faith Resources Inc: www.cardinalnewman.com.au
email: fr@cardinalnewman.com.au

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Appreciating the Beauty of the Bush

Fr James Tierney: “..boys particularly need beauty pointed out to them, to refine them, and to overcome any prejudices that beauty is ‘sissy’.”

“..beauty expresses a religious reality: ‘Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory’. (cf. the hymn of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3)

Have “LOYALTY

to what is TRUE: ‘The truth will make you free’:

to what is BEAUTIFUL: ‘Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory’:

to what is GOOD: ‘And God saw it (creation) was good’:

to GOD, Who embraces all truth, beauty and goodness.

See CFCDE 50 Q&A p 6

Experience the beauty of the bush by going bushwalking or camping.

Return to the same place at different times of the day or in different seasons. Draw or photograph what you see.

Train yourself to be observant. Listen for different sounds and record.

Keep a nature notebook. Purchase a drawing book, perhaps pocket-sized, and paint or sketch different plants, birds, insects, animals etc. On your return home, research your subject further and add interesting facts to your page. Include a suitable poem if you can find one.

There are numerous passages in *Bush Boys* that reflect the lyric beauty of the bush.

- From Chapter 5 The Hills of Home

The trees pressed about them, blocking any view. Through them, their route lay gently upwards to the saddle, whence it levelled, before the steep descent. In the saddle, timber was sparse, and, for the first time, Peter and John could see the far horizons, south and west.

Of late, familiarity had led Greg and Bernie to take the view for granted. But, in the presence of their cousins, they were seeing it through other eyes, and a new realisation of its splendour dawned upon them. All four of them felt its awesomeness – and somehow sensed that, when a boy beheld the wonder of the world, there was no place for evil in his heart.

Framed by the tree trunks were the peaks and ridges of the Wild Bush Mountains, stretching out, endlessly, effortlessly. Their vastness challenged the puniness of man, as did their silence and their mystery.

It silenced the four boys – for quite some moments.

Find similar passages e.g:

From Chapter 6, Their First Bush Swim: They scrambled down by the rocky clefts and held on to branches and saplings...

From Chapter 10, Down Koala Creek: Sunlight danced on the rippled surface.

From Chapter 17, Heading Homewards: So they plodded up the steep climb, grimy but happy.

From Chapter 19, Daybreak on Mount Mighty: The all-round view of the sleeping bush was strange in the moonlight.

Copy out your chosen passages and illustrate. Find out more about any mentioned landforms so that you can draw them accurately.

There are many fine poems about the bush. Find out more about Dorothea MacKellar , Henry Lawson and 'Banjo' Paterson. Find other less well-known bush poets. Copy out or print off your favourite poems and illustrate.

Try writing your own bush poetry. There are many websites that have hints for poetry writing.

Investigate Australian artists who have painted the bush. Perhaps start with Frederick McCubbin. Research the artist's biography. View his paintings, perhaps online. Write descriptions of your favourite paintings. Perhaps base a story or a poem on a painting. Look out of a book containing your favourite paintings. Take your paints or pencils into the bush and create your own scenes of beauty.

The Flora and Fauna of the Australian Bush

There are many, many fascinating animals and plants of the bush that would be interesting to research. I have made suggestions for those mentioned in "Bush Boys".

Research common Australian spiders. Make your own identification guide.

Research the features of spiders.

Find out the real story behind *Little Miss Muffet*.

Find out about famous spiders in history e.g. David, Robert the Bruce.

Find an aboriginal dreamtime story involving the dingo.

Find out more about dingoes.

Research facts about kangaroos.

Is the kangaroo a pest? Research the issues. Have a debate.

The kangaroo is regarded as a symbol of Australia. It is featured on Australia's Coat of Arms. Find out the significance of our Coat of Arms.

Research other symbols of Australia and our state emblems.

The kangaroo is featured on the reverse side of the dollar coin. Research the history of the coin and how coins are made.

Find out more about the aboriginal legend, the bunyip.

Leeches are segmented worms. Research its life history.

Find out how to remove a leech from the skin.

Leeches have been used in medicine for thousands of years. Find out more.

Find out about a leech's habitat and the best ways to avoid being bitten.

Find out some facts about yabbies. Yabbies are a traditional food of aborigines. Find out more about "bush tucker".

Find out about reptiles. What are their defining characteristics?

Investigate lizards particularly the goanna.

Make an identification guide for snakes of Australia.

Research the life cycle of a snake.

Draw a picture of a death adder.

Find out more about the red-bellied black snake.

Did you know that the black cockatoo is listed as a vulnerable species under the Threatened Species Conservation Act? Investigate the main factors affecting the decline in black cockatoo numbers. Find out what you can do to help these birds.

Black cockatoos from the Riverina area, are thought to be the victims of illegal bird trading. Find out more.

Wombats are a protected species. They are on the Threatened Species list. Find out more about the independent scientific committee that decides which species should be listed as endangered or vulnerable. What do “endangered” and “vulnerable” mean?

Wombats and other native wildlife are often injured by cars etc. Find out what to do if you find a sick, injured or orphaned native animal. Investigate wildlife rehabilitation groups e.g. WIRES.

Make a list of locally found Australian birds, or birds found in bush near you. Make an identification guide complete with drawings and features.

Learn to identify Australian birdcalls. Visit a website to hear the calls of birds such as the kookaburra, whipbird, galah, currawong, magpie.

Listen to a whipbird’s call. Find out more about birdcalls. The whipbird female answers the male’s call. Find out more.

Brush turkeys can sometimes be a nuisance if they invade a garden. They dig up garden beds to build large mounds of vegetation, earth and mulch. They then use these mounds to incubate their eggs. Find out what you can do if this happens in your garden.

Draw pictures of different types of ants such as sugar ants and bull ants. Find out the differences between each type.

Make an ant farm and learn about ant colonies.

Did you know that 19 species of native small mammals have become extinct since Europeans introduced the cat, fox and rabbit into Australia? Find out about methods that have been used to try to control the spread of introduced species.

www.questacon.edu.au

Investigate funnel-web spiders.

Did you know that the word “eucalyptus” comes from the Greek *eu*, meaning “well” and *kalypto*, “to cover”? Eucalyptus refers to the cap of the calyx which covers the flower stamens before they open. When in flower, observe and enjoy the beauty and diversity of eucalypt flowers

Identify common local eucalypts using fruits, flowers, bark, and leaves.

Find out about eucalyptus industries such as timber production, oil distillation and honey production.

Eucalypts hold the soil together and prevent soil erosion by water and wind. Find out more.

Read May Gibbs' books.

Identify local species of wattle. There are two different groups of wattles: ones in which the leaves are feathery and bipinnate, and ones which have leaves modified to phyllodes. Find and draw examples of each.

The wattle is the national flower of Australia. Find out the national flowers of all the states.

The wattle got its name from "wattle and daub". Early settlers used slender wattle sticks for dwellings built by the method known as "wattle and daub". Find out more.

September 1st is Wattle Day. Find out more. What is the association between wattle and the War?

Casuarinas have cones attractive to seed eating birds. Find out more.

Turpentines provide strong durable timber for wharf construction. Find out more about these trees.

Turpentines sometimes have hairy lumps under their leaves. These are wasp galls. Research.

Bloodwoods are rough barked eucalypts with red sap. Bloodwood suckers are saplings springing from a stump after a tree has been chopped down or burnt in a bushfire. Investigate bush regeneration after a fire.

Bush Craft

Make a compass.

Find north using a watch.

Research the history of the compass.

Have a backyard star gazing evening.

Research backyard astronomy for tips.

Learn how to use a naked-eye map.

Learn to use a planisphere.

Research the history of star names.

Find out more about the history of navigation including navigation by the stars.

Look at the diagrams in Chapter 19 (BB)

Read the article, *Basics of Navigation* www.paddypallin.com.au

Visit the Paddy Pallin site for more outdoor tips and to take *The Wilderness Challenge Quiz* www.paddypallin.com.au

Find out about the sport of orienteering: an outdoor sport using maps to find one's way. Join a local club.

Learn Morse code using sound. Did you know that Samuel Morse's original code was later modified by operators, and the latter version is the one to learn?

If you would like a copy of a freeware Morse code program please email Andy, elvisfamily@optusnet.com.au

Use a Morse code simulator on the Internet.

Make a simple circuit to tap out Morse code or purchase a Morse Code Trainer Kit from Dick Smith's.

Find out more about Samuel Morse.

Research the history of the telegraph.

Draw pictures of common tools such as the shovel and the mattock. List their uses. Find out how to use correctly and how to care for them.

Find out more about kindling. Chapters 13, 16, 27 (BB)

Read Q31: *How do we light a fire in the rain?* (H2)

Read Q32: *Describe dry kindling.* (H2)

Find out how to squat safely at a fire. Chapter 14 (BB)

Read Q 30: *Describe a good campsite.* (H2)

Make a battery protector for your torch. Chapter 20 (BB)

Read Q 18: *Describe a good knot.* (H2)

Learn how to tie knots. pp 323-332 (BB), pp 479–491 (BBOTM)

Use sheer lashing to make a clothes-horse. See Chapter 22 (BB) and p 330 (BB)

Learn the correct way to coil a rope. Chapter 27 (BB)

Learn about square lashing. p 330 (BB)

Use square lashing to make an A frame ladder. Chapter 27 (BB)

Read about weapons for defending the innocent. p 143 (CJTBB)

Find out how pulleys work. Make single, double and quadruple pulley systems. List some uses of pulleys. See Chapter 33 (BB) p. 209 (BB&BR)

Make a homemade billy can

Make billy tea.

Read about billy support systems. Chapter 16 (BB)

Read Q 4: Describe good camping food. (H2). Food list pp 311-312 (BB)

Research suitable bush camping recipes.

Research the history of tea.

Find out about tea drinking customs.

Find out how tea gets from the plantation to the cup.

Find out the history of ANZAC biscuits.

Make a batch of ANZAC biscuits and enjoy them with your billy tea.

What does ANZAC stand for? Find out more about the ANZACs and the First World War.

Read Q2: *Where do we find water?* (H2)

How can we purify water to make it suitable for drinking? Read Q3: *How do we purify polluted water?* (H2)

Research the history of water purification.

Find out more about water borne diseases such as cholera. Research the work of Dr Snow.

Character Study

Fr James Tierney said this about his Bush Boys characters (BB p. 3): The four bush boys in this book are, of course, drawn from life, but as composite characters. Fortunately, boys like Greg, Bernie, Peter and John, are still to be found on the fringes of creeping suburbia. Their resemblance to the characters in this book is inevitable, but incidental.

Make a list of the characters of *Bush Boys* and show the relationships between them using family trees.

Describe each of the main characters perhaps adding a drawing of each.

Make a list of qualities that make up a good character. Read about required virtues: pp 497-498, (BBOTM)

For each of the main characters in *Bush Boys*, find examples where they show these virtues. Find examples where they fail to exercise a virtue. What was the consequence? What did they learn?

Parents might ponder the group dynamics within (1) families and (2) gangs of boys. How do the characters interact? e.g. How do Pete and John relate to each other as older and younger brothers? How do the boy cousins of the same age relate to one another? How are relationships different between brothers compared to between brother and sister? etc.

Fr Tierney says: “Bush Boys is a wholesome adventure. It is meant to be enjoyed, and also to be beneficial. Through reading it, many will enjoy the bush vicariously, identifying themselves with particular characters, characters who are likeable, realistic, manly and Christian. A lesser number will do some such camping themselves, helped by the information and attitudes in the book. Then there is the background of family life, and the bonds between brothers, the importance of boys being boys, and not being girls, unisex or sissies.”

Read p 495 (BBOTM) and *St Joseph the Worker and the Complementarity of the Sexes* (H8)

The Complementarity of the Sexes: “make full allowance for the difference of sex and for the particular role which Providence has appointed to each sex in the family and in society.” (Vatican II, *On Christian Education*; CFCDE 50’Q&A, p. 111).

“A boy learns manliness of character particularly from his father.” p 495 (BBOTM) Under the patronage of St Joseph the Worker, a father needs time with his sons on manly activities e.g. Dad and his sons might read the *Bush Boys* books together for ideas and inspiration on camp craft and leadership.

A father might like to tutor his son in camp craft and leadership, using *A Programme in Ten Steps* p 496 (BBOTM)

Discuss the following *Bush Boys* themes:

Family life

Lots of outdoor adventures as the alternative to TV, videos and computer games

Noting the difference between a Catholic and a Protestant family

The rugged beauty of the bush of the Blue Mountains

Safety...”using the adventure story to encourage the readers to go camping and to do so in safety.”

Read Handouts no. 5 *How to Write a Story: A Dozen Suggestions for the Young Writer*.

Write your own story, bearing in mind Fr Tierney’s advice on characters: “Don’t tell the reader what sort of people they are. Rather let him find out from what they say and do.”

You might like to read your story out aloud for the enjoyment of others. See Father Tierney’s handouts *How to Write a Story* (H5) for more tips. “An author can facilitate reading aloud by putting in any vital ‘prompts’ for direct speech ahead of the passage of spoken words, e.g. ‘he whispered’ or ‘he roared’, so that the reader can do justice to them.”

Father Tierney: ‘Another aspect (of writing speech that will be read aloud) is elisions: “he’s” can mean “he is” or “he has”, and “he’d’ve” means “he would have had”’: some people don’t like this in written prose, but it does tell the one reading aloud to be colloquial.’

Safety First and First-Aid

“Safety First’ is preventative planning, and if 100% successful, would make First Aid unnecessary.”

Read *Safety First*, p 315 (BB)

Learn the Seven Deadly Dangers that lead to death in the bush. Read pp 316-318 (BB)

Start keeping a Scrapbook of Accidents as described on p 318 (BB).

Find out how to avoid and treat burns. Read *Avoiding burns* p 317 (BB).

Read Q 47: *How do we avoid burns and scalds?* (H2)

Read Q 48: *What is the First Aid for burns?* (H2)

Did you know that St John Ambulance has its roots in the Catholic Church? Visit their website and find out more about the history of this order.

Do a first aid course.

Join the St John Ambulance cadets.

Put together a first aid kit. Read Q 20: *What items should the First Aid Kit have?* (H2)

Visit the Royal Lifesaving website and find out more about water safety. Do their Aqua Quiz. www.swimandsurvive.com

Learn to swim or do an advanced swimming course or learn to dive.

Read the notes on the Deadly Danger of Drowning p 316 (BB)

Read Q 41: *What are the Seven Deadly Dangers which lead to death in the bush?* (H2)

Read Q 43: *How do we avoid drowning?* (H2)

Read Henry Lawson’s poem *The Ballad of the Drover*.
www.poetryconnection.net/poets/henryLawson

Research what to do to help someone who has nearly drowned.

Make a list of camping crimes and safety rules broken in Chapter 21.

Read Q37: *What is essential for bush safety and happiness?* (H2)

Read Q 38: *What are the two rules for good discipline?* (H2)

Read about avoiding snake and spider bites. p 317 (BB)

Read Q 45: *How do we avoid snake and spider bite?* (H2)

Read Q 46: *What is the First Aid for snake bite or spider bite?* (H2)

Research further the correct treatment for snake bite and spider bite.

Find out how anti-venoms are made.

How can we purify water to make it suitable for drinking? Read Q3: *How do we purify polluted water?* (H 2)

Find out how to remove a leech from the skin.

Find out about a leech's habitat and the best ways to avoid being bitten.

Bush Lore or Respecting and Caring for the Bush Environment

Find out what your local bushfire regulations are.

Read Q 49: *Between October and March, do the bushfire regulations allow cooking fires?* (H2)

Read about building safe fireplaces, Chapter 23 (BB).

Find out more information about fire bans and bushfire danger ratings.

Support your local volunteer bushfire brigade.

Find out more about National Parks and Wildlife.

Visit the National Parks and Wildlife website to find out more about

How to care for our National parks:

- being a considerate park visitor,
- looking after historical and cultural sites,
- how to stop weeds and foreign animals from invading parks,
- fire bans and bushfire danger ratings. www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

Research aboriginal heritage sites.

Visit your nearest National Park for a bushwalk.

Visit www.bushwalking.org.au to find out what the bushwalkers code is. Find out what to do about rubbish, washing, and walking where there are no paths.

Read Q 33: *What is camp hygiene?*, Q 34: *What is a latrine?*, Q 35: *What is a bush bath?* Q 36: *What does rubbish disposal mean?* (H2)

Read about bush baths, Chapter 26 (BB)

Make a list of camping crimes and safety rules broken in Chapter 21

For passages relating to care of the bush environment read:

- Chapter 22, Tactical Withdrawal

Greg continued: "My friend the Ranger says it's evil for people to sling their rubbish and break bottles." They certainly agreed with that. Greg continued, "But he says there are three grades of good people."

"What!" said Peter, "How come?"

- Chapter 26, Lying Low

".....make sure the soap does not pollute bush creeks..."

- Chapter 27, We'll Head For the Hills

"Watch out for snakes, and only cut every second or third piece (of bracken) so it'll revegetate."

- Chapter 29, Cave Dwellers

*"Let it not be said to your shame,
all was beauty till you came."*

Christianity

Fr James Tierney: “It is not a religious book, but lays a foundation, like good philosophy, for religious impact in the long term.”

“As well as *Bush Boys* being a **life-situational catechesis** of the camping ‘doctrine’ contained in the Appendix, it also attempts to face up to the challenge of portraying religion and virtue within an adventure story as a normal part of life. This is not easy to do, because any suggestion of moralising or preaching is ruinous to an adventure story. No one likes being ‘got at’.

But there are passing references to daily prayers, actual texts of ‘Angel of God’ and of a Morning Offering and ‘Now I lay me down to sleep’ (in the glossary which also includes the specific Bible references to the Golden Rule and the Good Samaritan), and there are veiled scriptural quotes (Chapter 6 and Chapter 19). There is an ecumenical dimension, in that the two city boys are Protestants and their mountain cousins are Catholic (Chapter 2 and Chapter 19 on ‘For thine is the kingdom..’ “

Look up the references mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Write out the texts of *Angel of God*, a Morning Offering and *Now I lay me down to sleep*.

Find more prayers to a guardian angel or compose one of your own.

Read *The Golden Rule*: Matt 7:12

Read the story of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10:30-37. Re-tell these Bible stories.

Find out some differences between the beliefs of Catholics and Protestants.

Read *Ecumenism* in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Glossary (only in 2nd edition) p 876. Look up the relevant paragraphs in the body of the catechism, nn. 816, 820-822.

Learn the 50 Q & A’s in Fr James Tierney’s *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples’ Edition*

Q 4: *Who are Angels?* Read p 21 (CFCDE) : Bible on Guardian Angels. Look up the reference: Matthew 18:10

Q 36: *Say God’s 10 Commandments.*

Q 47: *Say the Lord’s Prayer.* Q 48: *Say the Angelic Salutation.* See pp 8-10 for more prayers.

Read the CFCDE for more information on respect for parents, purity, respect of property, care of animals, environment etc.

Literature and Poetry

Snugglepot and Cuddlepie by May Gibbs

The Muddle Headed Wombat by Ruth Park

Wombat Stew by Ruth Park

Other books that *Bush Boys* fans will enjoy:

- ❑ *Swallows and Amazons* by Arthur Ransome
- ❑ *The Adventures of Turkey*, 4 books by Ray Harris
- ❑ *Quokka Island* by Leslie Rees
- ❑ *Bevis, the Story of a Boy* by Richard Jefferies
- ❑ *Wild River* by Bernard O'Reilly
- ❑ *Bush Christmas* from the film by Smart and Borer
- ❑ *Children of the Dark People* by Frank Dalby Davison
- ❑ *The Boundary Riders* by Joan Phipson
- ❑ *The Treasure of the Hills* by Charles Shaw
- ❑ *Darkie & Co.* by Howard Spring
- ❑ *The Prince and the Pauper*, by Mark Twain.
- ❑ *Billabong* series by Mary Grant Bruce (for girls)

Other books, although non-camping, contain similar outdoor doings:

- ❑ *The Treasure Seekers*, and two sequels by Edith Nesbit
- ❑ *Stolen Voyage* by Helen Marey
- ❑ *Biff* by Charles Gould
- ❑ *We sailed for Treasure* etc by Ian Serraillier
- ❑ *Chalky* by Howard Apps
- ❑ *Willow's Point* (NZ) by C. Drummond Manson
- ❑ *The Boys of Puhawai* (NZ) by Kim
- ❑ *The Young Detectives* by R.J. McGregor
- ❑ *Children of the New Forest* by Captain Marryat
- ❑ *The Family Conspiracy* by Joan Phipson
- ❑ *Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn* (USA) by Mark Twain
- ❑ *Tambai island*, and two sequels by R.N. Porteous

Poetry including:

- ❑ *The Man From Snowy River* by 'Banjo' Paterson
- ❑ *Horatius* by Lord Macaulay
- ❑ *The Ballad of East and West* by Rudyard Kipling
- ❑ *The Ballad of the Drover* by Henry Lawson
- ❑ And many more

Useful websites

Undiscovered Sydney: www.usyd.com.au
Australian Museum Online: www.amonline.net.au
National Parks and Wildlife www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au
The Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc: www.bushwalking.org.au
St John Ambulance Australia: www.stjohn.org.au
St John Ambulance UK: www.sja.org.uk
Royal Australian Mint: www.ramint.gov.au
Paddy Pallin: www.paddypallin.com.au
Australian National Botanic Gardens: www.anbg.gov.au
Australian Fauna: www.australianfauna.com
Bird calls: www.anbg.gov.au , www.abc.net.au
Questacon: www.questacon.edu.au
Backyard astronomy: www.hom.mira.net
WIRES: www.wires.org.au
Royal Lifesaving Association: www.swimandsurvive.com

Useful Books

Compass: A Story of Exploration and Innovation by Alan Gurney, published by W.W. Norton & Co Inc
Field Guide to Australian Wildflowers by Denise Grieg, published by New Holland Publishers
Eyewitness Handbooks: Trees by Allen J. Coombes
Field Guide to the Birds of Australia, Simpson and Day with Peter Trusler, Penguin Books