



RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower primary

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** History, English, Literacy
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, critical and creative thinking, historical knowledge and skills, visual literacy

THEMES

- Twentieth-century Australian history
- The role of sport in popular culture and national identity
- Perseverance, ambition and determination
- How individuals become iconic and why.

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Meet... Don Bradman

Written by Coral Vass

Illustrated by Brad Howe

PLOT SUMMARY

Don Bradman was born in Cootamundra, NSW in 1908. He grew up in Bowral, and developed a love of cricket from a young age. His unusual, improvised method of practising batting in his backyard has become part of Australian sporting folklore.

Don left school at 14 to begin working fulltime for a local real estate agent. He could no longer play on the school cricket team and was still too young for the men's cricket club. Don focused on tennis instead, and began to win local competitions.

Once he was old enough to join the men's cricket club, Don began playing cricket seriously and caught the attention of the press in Sydney and NSW cricket selectors. In little more than two years, Don was invited to join the St George first-grade team in Sydney, then the NSW Sheffield Shield side, and then the Australian side for the 1928–1929 Ashes series against England.

In 1930, Don set a new world record by batting 452 not out in 415 minutes. Later that year, he was selected for the Australian side leaving for an Ashes tour of England. It was his first opportunity to travel overseas, and a luxury few Australians could experience at the time.

Don's rise to fame coincided with the dire economic period of the Great Depression. Life was bleak for many people as jobs, money, food and opportunities grew scarce. The Australian cricket team's successes in England in 1930 were a source of entertainment, hope and pride for many Australians.

Don Bradman's record-breaking batting and modest manner made him the star player of the tour. The story ends with Don returning to Australia a national hero.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Coral Vass has always had a passion for writing and telling stories. After studying media at university, she dabbled in script writing, radio drama and video production before working for several years in marketing and publications. Her first children's picture book was published in 2011 and she now writes fulltime and is on the team of Kids' Book Review. She adores children's books, visiting schools and inspiring children with a love for literature. With three cricket-loving sons, Coral was delighted to write a children's picture book based on the life of Sir Donald Bradman.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Can you tell us a little bit about your research for this project and the resources you used?

The internet is not always a reliable resource, so I visited the library frequently; borrowing countless books on Bradman, as well as watching old footage of the game and various interviews.

Did your opinion of Don Bradman change or deepen as you wrote the book?

My appreciation of Donald Bradman grew immensely as I researched and wrote this book. I definitely have much more admiration and a deeper respect for him as a sportsman and a person, as I gained insight into his character. As well as being a phenomenal talent, Sir Donald Bradman was a man of enormous integrity and humility.

Why did you choose to tell this particular part of Bradman's story?

I wanted to particularly focus on Don's early years; including his daily batting practice in his own backyard and his 'never give up' attitude. I hoped that by focusing on this aspect, children reading this

story would be encouraged to work hard and persist in life. I also hoped children would identify with this incredible Aussie cricket legend, who too was once just a kid.

What was the most challenging part of the project?

The most challenging part was making sure I got it right. The hardest thing about writing non-fiction is checking, double checking and triple checking that all the details are correct. Added to that was the pressure of writing about and making sure the story honoured this extraordinary man.

What was the most rewarding part of the project?

It was an absolute honour and thrill to be given the opportunity to profile such an amazing Australian legend. And watching Brad Howe bring this story to life with his phenomenal illustrations was a joy.

What did you learn while researching this book that surprised you most?

Despite his relatively quick rise to fame, Donald Bradman actually had many knockbacks. Most Australian cricket selectors initially didn't see his cricketing potential, thinking his batting style was unconventional. But with persistence, hard work and a little bit of luck, Donald went on to become cricket's greatest ever batsman. Don's story offers a great message of hope, hard work and persistence for all children.

What do you think is Bradman's greatest legacy?

Sir Donald Bradman leaves a wonderful legacy on many fronts: lifting the profile of international cricket, increasing national pride during a difficult climate of the Great Depression, and giving Australians a stronger sense of identity and independence from the mother-country, England.

But I'd like to think Donald's biggest legacy was his character. Sir Donald Bradman showed integrity, humility, grace, diligence, perseverance and 'good sportsmanship' in all he did. He was a wonderful example to others and, I would hope, still is today.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Brad Howe grew up in Sydney, Australia on a healthy diet of skateboarding, music and drawing. He spent his salad days in various animation studios as a layout artist, working on TV programs, commercials



and computer games. He studied graphic design at Melbourne's RMIT and has since gone on to illustrate for clients and publications including *Beams*, *Bicycling* magazine, Daptone Records, *Esquire*, *Fretboard* journal, *GQ Australia*, J Sound and Recording, *Straight No Chaser* and *Wax Poetics* among others. Brad lives in Amagasaki, Japan, with his wife and three children, where he is a teacher and completed an MA in linguistics in 2014. *Meet... Don Bradman* is his first children's book.

INTERVIEW WITH THE ILLUSTRATOR

What media did you use to create the book's illustrations? Can you explain a little bit about your process?

I use watercolour paint to create the illustrations. To start out, I do the initial sketches on a B5 pad of graph paper. The paper is really thin; not as thin as tracing paper but thin enough to be able to see an illustration placed underneath the sheet I'm drawing on, as if you were using a lightbox. The pads have a light blue grid which seems to help for overall proportions and they don't show up when I scan them. The best part about them is that they are really cheap. All the materials I use come from the supermarket here in Japan. Art supplies are expensive, so if I have a nice sketchbook, I always worry about wasting paper. With the graph pad, if I make a mistake, I throw it away (recycle) and start again – I don't like to edit drawings if I can help it. It usually takes between three and five attempts to get something that looks okay. It's rare to get something I like right off the bat. I sketch with grey ink in a calligraphy brush, as I like the flow and different line weights they give you. Once the sketches are approved, I transfer them to water colour paper and paint them. It's a laborious process and would probably be faster if I did it on a computer, but I've always liked the painting process. For me, computers are for editing, not creating.

This is a historical book, based on real people and their stories. Did you have to do a lot of research to get the historical details right, such as how people looked and what they wore?

I was given some great references to work with and spent a lot of time digging around looking at photos, books and illustrations from the period before I

started sketching. Once I did start sketching, I tried not to look at the reference material at all and tried to draw from what I remembered or felt about the images. This makes the illustrations a little more personal for me but I'm not sure how accurate my historical details are, I was more concerned with the overall feel. I was lucky enough to be back in Australia visiting family at the beginning of the project so I think this helped. I spent some time with my grandmother who had gone to see Bradman play when she was younger, which helped me understand just how much he meant to people.

What was the most challenging part of the project?

There were so many challenges for me as this is my first children's book and the entire process was new. I would have to say the biggest challenge was time management, juggling illustration time with family commitments and other work responsibilities. I really wanted everything to be epic and to blow kids away but I think the final illustrations had about half as much detail as I had planned. I could easily keep chipping away at illustrations forever but I was always conscious of the fact that I was working with a team of people and didn't want to hold things up. If it was up to me, I'd still be painting!

What was the most rewarding part of the project?

I've always wanted to work on a children's book, so to be asked to join the team on this was a huge reward in itself. I live in Japan, where cricket is largely misunderstood. Trying to explain the game to people here is quite funny and the questions people ask remind me just how unique the game is. For me the biggest reward was my eldest son starting to take interest in the project. He would come by my desk each day after school to see what I was up to and how things were progressing. He got really into the story, particularly Bradman's character and after a while I started seeing little cricket drawings in the margins of his notebooks. This was really encouraging for me because I was trying to make images that would appeal to all kinds of people, not just cricket fans who already knew Bradman's story.

Did you know much about Don Bradman before working on this book? Did your opinion of him grow or change through the course of the project?

I was born and raised in Australia and Don Bradman was definitely part of the landscape. It seemed like



everybody knew about him. If you played cricket, people would ask if you were practising to be Don Bradman, the way someone playing basketball would be asked if they wanted to be Michael Jordan. I definitely knew his legend but not so much about his character. I really liked that he seemed like a humble sort of man – almost a reluctant hero who was most comfortable on the pitch. I really admired his drive. He was willing to put so much work into developing his game and was always trying to improve. He really did go above and beyond.

Did you learn anything unexpected while researching this book or creating the illustrations?

Everybody I spoke to in Australia about Bradman would repeat the folklore of the golf ball and cricket stump so I knew this well, but I didn't know that he could have been a tennis champion too. Given his work ethic, I'm sure he could have been great at anything. I read that he was the only Australian player to be knighted and that he had said that he would have preferred to remain 'mister'. It really did seem like the celebrity side of things was hard for him and his family. It seemed like he was made to be a legend when all he wanted to do was play cricket, which made the people love him even more.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. What does the cover of *Meet... Don Bradman* tell you about the book?
 - Who is the subject of the book?
 - Who is the author?
 - Who is the illustrator?
2. Does the back cover give you more information about the book?
 - Does the blurb explain who Don Bradman is and what he is known for?
3. What do you already know about Don Bradman? For example: had you already heard of him? Why is he famous? When was he active – and what else was happening in Australia at that time? Start a list and add to it as you read the book.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

English

Questions and activities

1. Create a simple story map of the key elements in the narrative e.g. the setting; characters; beginning, middle and end. *See Worksheet 1.*
2. The rules of many games include specific or unusual language. Cricket has lots of terms that seem strange to anyone who doesn't know the game. List any words or phrases from the book that you think might be cricket terms. Look up what the terms mean, or discuss them in groups or as a class.
3. Verbs are doing words. They can be simple, such as 'be' and 'sit'. Others can sound more exciting and descriptive, such as 'whizzed'. List five interesting verbs the author has used in the story. *See Worksheet 2*

Extension questions: Discuss the term 'onomatopoeia' and look for examples of it in the text. Discuss what is being described when the interesting verbs and onomatopoeia are used and what effect they have on the story.

4. List five adjectives, or descriptive words, used to talk about Don Bradman in the story.

Extension discussion question: Consider the adjectives you have found. What kind of person do you think Don Bradman was? Which traits do you think helped him become a record-breaking cricketer?

5. Do you think Don Bradman's success was due to luck, natural talent, hard work or all three? Can you find examples in the story all three?
6. The word 'improvise' means to do something even though you don't have the things you usually use to do that task. What does Don Bradman improvise early in the book? Can you think of times you have improvised?
7. See the reading comprehension activity on *Worksheet 3*

History

Questions

1. Were any close family members or friends of your family alive when Don Bradman was a cricket star in the 1930s? Ask them what they remember about the way Don Bradman was discussed at the time.
2. *Discussion or research:* What is the Ashes series? Why do you think it is important to people in Great Britain and Australia?
3. *Discussion or research:* What was the Great Depression?
4. Why do you think people admired Don Bradman during the Great Depression? Was it simply because cricket was entertaining?
5. Think about the technology shown in the book. How do the people in the book learn about Don Bradman? Consider how you learn about sport, current events, movies and music today – what's different? What's the same?
6. How long was the Australian cricket team's trip to England in 1930? Why do you think they were away for so long? How did they travel? How would players travel today?
5. Look at the boy on p. 25. Do you notice anything he has in common with young Don Bradman on pages 4 and 5? Why do you think that is?
6. Look at the illustration on page 8. Would you know by looking at just the illustration (and not the text) that Don is the youngest person there? How has the illustrator exaggerated this? What do you think this tells us about the situation and how Don might have felt?
7. Look at the illustration on page 14. The men at the top are the cricket selectors choosing players for their teams. Look at how big the selectors are compared to the cricketers on the pitch. Do you think the illustrator is trying to say that the selectors are really ten times bigger than the cricketers? What do you think the size difference means here?
8. Look at pages 16–17. What is unusual about the two scenes? What do you think the builders on page 16 and the couple on page 17 are talking about?
9. What animals are shown on page 19? Do you know or can you guess why?
10. Read the text on page 24 again and think about what you've researched or discussed about the Great Depression. What do you think the men on page 24 are lining up for?

Visual literacy

Questions

1. Imagine seeing the illustrations without the text. What details in the illustrations tell you that the book is set in the past? (You could consider clothing, technology, transport, even the colours.) Are any of the objects you noted still in use today? If not, what do people use now instead?
2. Drawing past and present technology: *See Worksheet 4*
3. What details in the illustrations hint that the people in the book didn't have a lot of money?
4. Do you think the style of the illustrations suggests the past too? How were the illustrations made? If the book were set in the future, do you think the illustrator might have made the illustrations differently, or made them look different? Try to describe or draw how.
11. Reading an illustration: *See Worksheet 5*

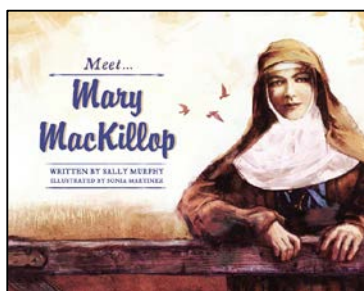


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by Sally Murphy & Sonia Martinez

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Meet... Captain Cook
by Rae Murdie & Chris Nixon

Captain James Cook was an English explorer and Navy captain. In 1770 Captain Cook and his crew on the HMB *Endeavour* were the first Europeans to discover the east coast of Australia.



Meet... the ANZACS
by Claire Saxby & Max Berry

Anzac is the name given to the Australian and New Zealand troops who landed at Gallipoli in World War I. The Anzac name is now a symbol of bravery and mateship. This is the story of how the Anzac legend began.



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Douglas Mawson led the first Australian expedition to the Antarctic. This is the story of how Mawson survived the dangers and challenges of the frozen continent.



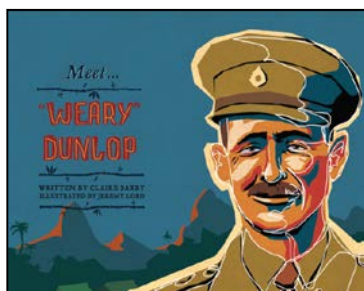
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Nancy Bird Walton grew up during the golden age of aviation. When she was 18 Nancy studied under the famous aviator Charles Kingsford Smith. This is the story of how Nancy began her career as Australia's first female commercial pilot.



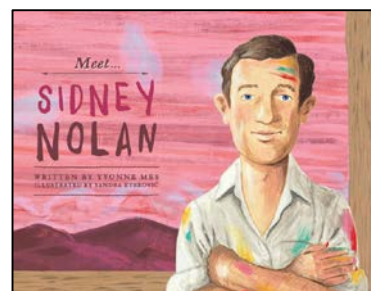
Meet... Banjo Paterson
by Kristin Weidenbach & James Gulliver Hancock

Banjo Paterson is one of Australia's most loved poets. This is the story of how he came to write his legendary ballads 'The Man from Snowy River' and 'Waltzing Matilda'.



Meet... Weary Dunlop
by Claire Saxby & Jeremy Lord

Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop was an Australian Army surgeon during World War II. This is the story of how Weary's bravery and compassion helped to save the lives of fellow prisoners of war on the Thai-Burma Railway.



Meet... Weary Dunlop
by Yvonne Mes & Sandra Eterović

Sidney Nolan is one of Australia's most admired and recognised visual artists. This is the story of how he developed his iconic Ned Kelly paintings, brought modernist art to Australia and took Australian art to an admiring international audience.



WORKSHEET 1: Simple story map

Book title:

Author:

Illustrator:

Characters:

Setting:

Beginning

Middle

End

WORKSHEET 2: Verbs

Write down at least five interesting verbs from the book, and what they mean. It's okay if you like the sound or look of the verb but don't know what it means. Look up its meaning and write it down.

Verb	Meaning
E.g. whizzed	



WORKSHEET 3: Comprehension

Without looking at the book again, can you remember the answers to these questions?

Question	Answer
Where did Don Bradman grow up?	
What did Don use to practise batting at home?	
As a boy, where did he travel to watch an Ashes test? Who was with him?	
Why did Don focus on playing tennis instead of cricket for a couple of years?	
Which country competes with Australia in the Ashes series?	
How many runs did Don score against Queensland in January 1930?	
On what kind of vehicle did the Australian cricket team travel to England in 1930?	

WORKSHEET 4: Drawing past and present technology

In the left column, draw three old-fashioned objects you noticed in the illustrations. On the right, draw the modern version of each object.

Old object	Modern version
1	
2	
3	



WORKSHEET 5: Reading an illustration p.1



WORKSHEET 5: Reading an illustration p. 2

On the page above, the illustrations for pages 10 and 11 have lost their background detail and their text.

Imagine you have to guess what is happening in these two illustrations and write a story about this person. Use the cues below to write some notes about the character and their story.

Page 10

Body language

This person's mood is: _____

I can tell because he is doing this with this face: _____

And because his shoulders are: _____

And his chest and belly are: _____

Costume and props

I think he is going to (place/activity): _____

I think this because he is wearing: _____

And holding: _____

Page 11

Body language

This person's mood is: _____

I can tell because he is doing this with this face: _____

And because his shoulders are: _____

And his chest and belly are: _____

Costume and props

I think he is going to (place/activity): _____

I think this because he is wearing: _____

And holding: _____



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