



# **THE DAY WE BUILT THE BRIDGE**

*Written by Samantha Tidy and Illustrated by Fiona Burrows*



## ***Teacher Resources***

***The Day We Built The Bridge***

ISBN: 9781 9252 274 37

Publication date: February 2019

Publisher: MidnightSun Publishing

**[www.midnightsunpublishing.com](http://www.midnightsunpublishing.com)**



MidnightSun



## **Story Summary**

There are moments in history that connect us and define a country. In our hearts and minds, some moments rely on us to hold onto a dream, face tough challenges, and put in a great deal of effort.

This illustrated children's book follows the journey of one boy, who over the course of his entire lifetime, sees the Sydney Harbour Bridge grow from an idea, and then to a plan, and on to become a source of employment and a well-loved Australian icon that he can be proud to show his children. The illustrator uses red socks, to show the passing of time for the one character in the story.

As a child, he plays in his backyard near Milson's Point. His family, along with other Sydneysiders, have to negotiate the journey across the harbour in either a boat or via a 20km journey involving 5 bridge crossings.

As a teenager, he is a clerk in the office of public works, where officials are trying to finalise plans for a bridge across the harbour ahead of a visit by the Duke of York. Older still, he witnesses the decision to appoint a chief engineer. Whilst momentum had reached a strong point, the Great War arrives, taking with it, the workforce and money to make the bridge a reality. Our lad, now a grown man, returns from the war himself, and continues the family he started before his own service.

Where jobs are few, the new bridge employs men in era of the Great Depression - a feat of engineering that came to be known as the Iron Lung for its contribution to the economy. Upon completion, the final bridge is a culmination of determination and hard work, and brings great joy to the people of Sydney.

Big dreams can take generations. It can also take six million hand driven rivets and 53,000 tonnes of steel. *The Day We Built the Bridge* celebrates our connection with one another, and declares that despite the greatest of challenges, together we can make history.

## Author Biography



Samantha Tidy is a writer of children's, young adult and adult fiction. She has a Master of Creative Writing and is a former English and French Teacher, having worked in both primary and high schools in big cities and small towns, including Aboriginal communities. She now works as a museum professional, where she cultivates a strong passion for history and cultural heritage in young people.

Samantha's first novel, *Cappuccino Diva*, set in Fremantle was Runner Up for the T.A.G Hungerford Award.

Samantha's other children's books, *The Blue Polar Bear* and *The Flying Dream* were purpose written for the NSW Government, to assist children of parents with mental illness and substance abuse challenges.

Her most recent adult novel, *The Happiness Jar*, set in the Kimberley region of WA and on the Ganges in India, won the ACT Writing and Publishing Award for Fiction, among several other award nominations.

Proudly born and raised in Fremantle, Western Australia, she now lives in Canberra. She is an avid permaculturalist and potter – she loves nothing more than getting dirt under her fingernails and harvesting things from her prolific garden.

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

## Illustrator Biography



Fiona Burrows is an emerging author-illustrator from Perth, Western Australia. She has a BA (Hons) and a PhD in English Literature — her thesis looked at the links between poetry, metaphor and synaesthesia in the literature and art of the early twentieth century — and has taught creative writing, poetry, literature and academic writing at university level for a number of years. As an avid reader and lifelong picturebook collector, she recently made the decision to focus on pursuing one of her first loves— children's book writing and illustration.

She currently works part-time as an academic adviser at UWA, and works on her writing and illustration projects from her home studio when she is not teaching. She has three picturebooks due for publication in 2019—two as illustrator, and one as author-illustrator— and is also working on illustrating an educational picturebook project through the Loreto Schools Advisory Council of Australia.

Fiona has been drawing her whole life, and has always loved combining her love of art with her interest in education. She is passionate about educating through creativity and multisensoriality, and loves working and collaborating with schools, libraries and educational groups. She also strongly believes in advocating for the importance of literature and stories, particularly Australian ones, and is an active member of her local chapter of SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators).

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



## **Useful Links**

Online you will find a range of other useful resources that focus on the building on the Sydney Harbour Bridge:

<http://constructingaustralia.nfsadl.com/thebridge/default.htm>

**National Film and Sound Archive**

<https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/the-screen-guide/t/constructing-australia--the-bridge-2007/25033/>

**Screen Australia**

<https://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/construction-sydney-harbour/clip2/>

**National Film and Sound Archive**

<http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/learning/sydney-harbour-bridge>

**State Library of NSW**

<http://sydney-harbour-bridge.nesa.nsw.edu.au/>

**NSW Government / Education Standards Authority**

<https://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/stories/bridging-sydney>

**Sydney Living Museums**

<http://www.nma.gov.au/kspace/teachers/harbour-bridge/curriculum>

**National Museum of Australia**

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/digibook/2810241/growing-up-in-the-early-1900s>

**ABC Education**

<https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/sydney-harbour-bridge-guide>

**State Archives and Records Authority of NSW**

<https://collection.maas.museum/object/341641>

**Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences**

<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites/g/files/net691/f/come-out-2015-teacher-resource.pdf>

**SA Education / Come Out Festival 2015**

<https://www.bridgeclimb.com/the-bridge/>

**Bridge Climb Sydney**

<http://www.scootle.edu.au>

**Scootle (search for Sydney Harbour Bridge)**



*The activities provided below, seek to provide a cross-curriculum approach to reading the text. Teachers should consider their individual year level's curriculum connections and student abilities.*

## **HaSS: Humanities and Social Sciences**

This story is historical fiction, in that it tells us about a significant achievement in Australia's history, through the eyes of one fictional character. However our main character is not far from the truth in that many Australian men went to war, and returned to work on building the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

1. Research the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and create a timeline in the classroom of all the major moments in its creation, from conception to opening. What other major world events were happening at that time in Australia? Add those to the timeline.
2. Search online for the Honour Roll, of all who worked on the bridge, including the 16 people who lost their lives in the process. Research the many nationalities of people who worked on the Harbour Bridge. Using a world map, mark flags in those countries that represent the many nationalities or backgrounds of those who worked on the bridge.
3. The road that crosses over the Sydney Harbour Bridge is called the Bradfield Highway, Who was this named after and why?
4. Research the Hell Gate Bridge in New York, USA and the Tyne Bridge in Newcastle, UK. Were these bridges built before, during and after the Sydney Harbour Bridge? Why do you think there are similarities or differences? Order them in terms of size. Which is biggest? Do you think the size of that bridge has determined its fame? Why or why not?
5. (Years 5 – 6). The character in the story goes off to serve in World War 1. 1917 was a particularly difficult year in that war for Australian troops. If our main character were a real person, he would have signed up and have been placed in one of several battalions. Which battalion might he have been in? Consider the story, and his early home being Milson's Point in Sydney, and which battalion he would have joined. Research one battalion and their service in WW1, and one battle that occurred in that year that involved Australians.

6. In *The Day We Built the Bridge*, the illustrator has importantly included an Indigenous serviceman in the image of the men going off to World War I. Using the website [discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au](http://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au), have students DISCOVER the difficulty in ensuring that the aboriginality of servicemen and women was recorded. Have them research one indigenous serviceperson (in any conflict), and find a way to honour that that person as a class in your next Anzac Day or Remembrance Day service.
7. Using TROVE (and in particular the online collection of the National Library of Australia, and the National Museum of Australia), search for items that relates to the building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. What objects, documents and photographs exist, that were made, written, or taken, whilst the bridge was being built? What do we call these types of items? Why are they important to consider when we read a fictional text about history? Who looks after them and why?
8. Consider the photographic work of Frank Hurley. What other major Australian stories did he document? Do you or your family have photos that might one day be considered valuable witnesses to history or of your own family story? What are they of, and how do you keep them safe for future generations?
9. What great achievements have you witnessed in your lifetime? How long have they taken to build? What great achievements do you hope to see in your lifetime?
10. As history changes our landscape, things disappear from view and can only be found in the documentation of the past. Research the Milson's Point Ferry Arcade. What changes have occurred, that contributed to its disappearance?
11. How did the Great Depression affect Australia? Research the lifestyle of this era and compare it with your own.
12. Today's ferries, past under and around the Sydney Harbour Bridge several times on a daily basis. Research the names of the ferries. Create a biographical report about one of those people.
13. On the final page of the story, you will see a young boy, sitting atop a horse in the background of the celebrations. His name was Lennie. See what you can find out about him and what he was doing there. Teachers may wish to read aloud, the book *Lennie the Legend*, by Stephanie Owen Reeder.
14. What controversy happened on the day of the opening of the bridge? What effect did it have on the proceedings of the day?



15. The final opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge involved a great deal of pomp and ceremony. Using TROVE, find images of that day and the people who walked across the bridge. Research who was part of that day, and what you would have seen, were you to be one of the people who witnessed it. Create a collage in the classroom, of the day.
16. There are only a handful of Australians who were alive to witness the completion of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Times have certainly changed since 1932. Ask your grandparents about their childhood memories. How has life changed for a young person, since your grandparents were your age?
17. Consider what the Sydney Harbour Bridge represents to Australians today and why. How should we care for the bridge? Does it require any particular maintenance? What does this cost and should we put a limit on this expense?

## English / HaSS

1. In 2017, a new ferry was added to the Sydney fleet, and named after May Gibbs. Research her birthplace, her life and work, and her long-time home, which still stands on the banks of the Sydney Harbour. What books did she write? What characters did she create? Read one of her stories.
2. Other than the year markings in the book, what other things tell you about the era/year/time of the story? Research the fashions, the transport and the pastimes, of people in the 1900s to 1930s in Australia.
3. There are several poster ads on the wall of the shop / Milk Bar. Are they real or made up names? Research products that those posters may refer to, and design your own ad for a product that would be right at home in this era.

## Maths

1. Research how many rivets were used in the building of the bridge. What other materials were required? How much of these materials were required?
2. What anniversary / birthday will the Sydney Harbour Bridge have this year? It is widely agreed that Aboriginal Australians have been on Australian soil for over 40,000 years. What percentage of those 40,000 years has the bridge been standing? British settlement occurred in Australia in 1788. What percentage of these years has the bridge been standing? How long have you been in Australia? What percentage does your life, represent in the life of the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

## Health and Physical Education

1. Look at the children playing in the image in front of the milk bar. Research children's games of the early 1900s – 1930s era. How are they played? Create one of those games for use in the classroom. Consider games with or without equipment.

## Science / Visual Arts

1. What botanical features are found within the illustrations? Which parts of the world are these flora found in? Why do you think the illustrator used these to illustrate the story? What are their botanical names? See if you too can draw some native Australian flora and label them appropriately with their scientific name. Consider including a map of where that species is located.

## Design and Technologies / Science

1. The final design that was used for the Sydney Harbour Bridge was one of many that were considered. Research those designs and compare and contrast them. What do they have in common? How would Sydney be different if one of the unsuccessful designs had have been used? Would our bridge still be iconic? Would Sydney still be so famous around the world for its bridge?
2. Design your own bridge, as if you were one of the designers in the early 1900s. How would you make the bridge iconic? What do you need to consider when designing it?

