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Teachers' Notes

Shearing Time

By

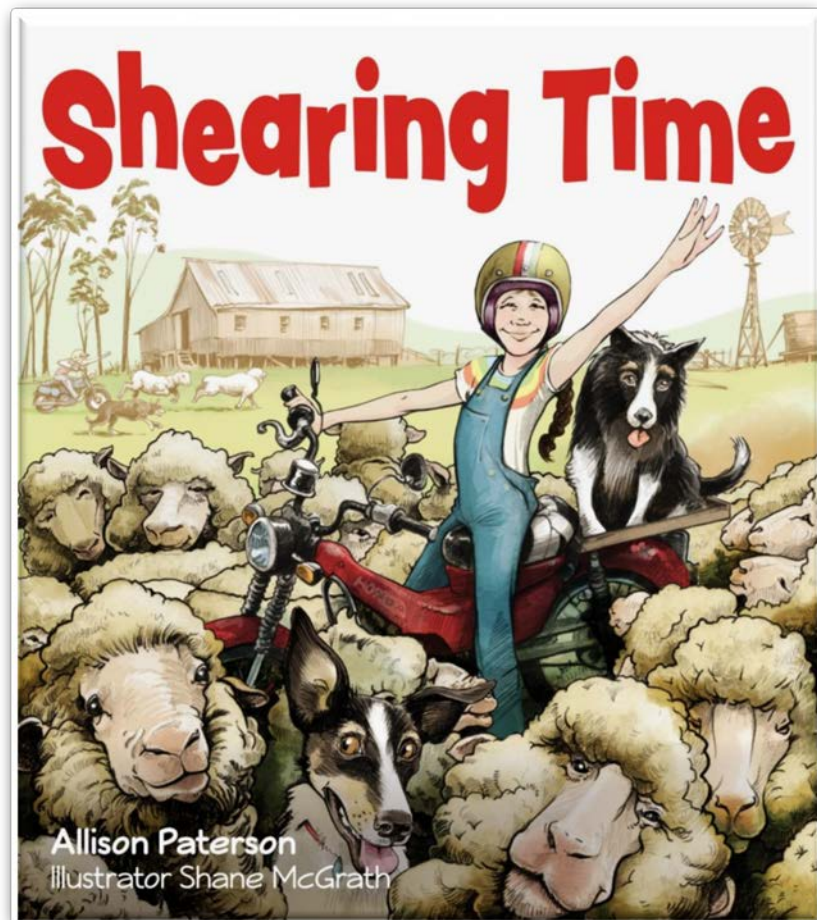
Allison Paterson & Shane McGrath

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Recommended for ages 5-10 years

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Synopsis

Shearing time is the best time of the year! Told through the eyes of a child, *Shearing Time* is a charming and evocative story that captures the author's delight as her family work together during one of their most significant annual tasks. Sunrise to sunset there are sheep with attitude, a shed of shearers, dogs with personality, motorbikes and a country kitchen to open the door on the life of a country kid.

Shearing Time reflects the experience of rural children while providing an opportunity for readers to both appreciate that the lives of others are different to their own, to understand concepts related to the Australian farming experience and to engage with a delightful, accessible narrative of times past. Childhood memories and experiences bring the past to life!

A companion tale to the author and illustrator's previous publication, *Granny's Place*.

From the Author

I am the author of *Anzac Sons: Five Brothers on the Western Front* and the adult version *Anzac Sons: The Story of Five Brothers in the War to End All Wars*, both true accounts of the service of my grandfather and his four brothers on the Western Front. *Shearing Time* is the second in my series of children's fiction picture books based on childhood memories. The first in the series titled *Granny's Place*, centres on my much-loved grandparents, the joy of the family gatherings on their small farm in central Victoria and my reflections on the changes that life brings. There are links to *Anzac Sons* hidden in the illustrations. *Shearing Time* follows on from *Granny's Place* and contains my memories of the best time of the year on the farm – shearing time!

I grew up on the farm near Pyramid Hill, the small Victorian town where I was born. I have two big sisters. We travelled 24 miles to school at Kerang on an ancient bus – top speed 40mph. I now live on the beautiful Sunshine Coast. I was a teacher librarian for over twenty years and I now spend my days writing, reading, reviewing children's books or planning a holiday (anywhere will do!). I can also be found on a long walk at the beach or cooling off in the pool.

Writing Shearing Time

My childhood was wonderful, growing up surrounded by animals, vast expanses of land and the freedom to explore and discover. Sounds idyllic! Of course, there were tough times as well – droughts, fires, floods - Australian farmers are a tough bunch and I admire them greatly!

When *Granny's Place* was published, I decided to write a story about my life on the farm on which I grew up and my favourite time of the year, that's how *Shearing Time* came to be. It is a companion tale to *Granny's Place* with the same characters appearing including the dog, the little girl and even Granny has a guest appearance!

In *Granny's Place* there are connections to my previous books which are based on a collection of over 500 letters that my grandfather and his four brothers sent to their family during WWI. They all served on the Western Front and only two of them made it home, Grandpa was one of them. Look for the Marlow surname on the mailbox, the stained glass window above the door (which really did exist) and the photos on the walls. Look carefully in *Shearing Time* as well, the connection to *Anzac Sons* appears in the illustrations, especially during the baling of the wool.

I was very fortunate to be able to work with an awesome illustrator. I created an early version of the book with dreadful stick figures, then translated that into some thoughts for Shane, I didn't let him see my stick figures! It was magical to see Shane's interpretation come to life. He created concept drawings, we discussed these and then he waved his magic paintbrush. Shane's blending of simplicity and meticulous detail in his illustrations is outstanding, he captures movement and mood and seamlessly enhances the story – adding humour, character and links to his own life – check out the tally boards in the shearing shed!

The Illustrator

Shane was born in Melbourne and has a brother and two sisters. His dad says he was named after a Hollywood cowboy. His mum says he was always talented (all mums say that) and one of the first artworks Shane made was when he bit his toast into the shape of a horse. He always loved drawing pictures and reading picture books, especially *Where the Wild Things Are* & *Asterix* comics. When at school, Shane would sometimes draw pictures of his teachers on the blackboard, which everyone found funny (except his teachers).

Shane also had lots of cousins that he loved to visit in places like Ballarat and St Arnaud in country Victoria. He would explore the old buildings, climb over old machinery and chase geckos through the bush. The sounds and colours of the countryside are what he remembers most.

In *Shearing Time*, Shane thinks about each of the characters in the story (including the animals) and tries to imagine what their back-story might be. This could be about the clothes they wear, the car they drive, even the drink bottles of the shearers. Shane remembers the country houses and the old sheds he used to visit when he was a boy and adds these details into the illustrations. For example, in the kitchen you will see that the sink has THREE taps, one for hot, one for cold and the third for tank water (rain that ran off the roof and is collected in the tank outside), it's fresh but sometimes can taste a bit different to city water!

Shane likes to draw the old-fashioned way with pencil and paper first, and then scans them into Photoshop. Using a drawing tablet he then gives the pictures colour, adding shadows and textures and trying all types of things.

Curriculum Links

Specifically, *Shearing Time* targets children of Years Prep to Year Three with the focus of providing a significant resource for the following key national Australian History & English Curriculum content descriptors:

History

Prep – Personal and Family Histories – How can stories of the past be told and shared?

Year One - Present and Past Family Life – How has family life changed or remained the same over time? Including the differences and similarities between the daily lives of students and life during their parents' and grandparents' childhoods -family traditions, leisure time and communications.

Year Two – The Past in the Present - What aspects of the past can you see today? What do they tell us? How have changes in technology shaped our daily lives? Including the impact of changing technology on people's lives (at home and in the ways they travelled, communicated, and played in the past).

English

Prep – Literature and Context – Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' own experiences.

Year One – Responding to Literature – Discuss characters and events in a range of texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences.

Year Two – Examining Literature - Discuss the characters and settings in different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways.

Year Three – Responding to Literature – Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts and share responses with others.

– **Examining Literature** - Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative.

-**Texts in Context** – Identify the point of view in a text and suggest alternative points of view.

Themes

- Family
- Belonging
- Shearing
- The Past
- Change
- Changing technology
- Pets
- Farm life
- Australia

Class Discussion and Activities

Pre-reading

1. Discuss farm life, including the types of farms that exist in Australia – children can share their thoughts/experiences.
2. Introduce *Shearing Time*. What does the cover tell you about the book? What sort of things might happen in the story?
3. Look carefully at the dogs. What type of breed are they? Could they be related?
4. If the children are familiar with *Granny's Place* explain that the stories are related featuring the same characters and containing connections to the author's previous books. Compare the front covers and discuss the differences and similarities between the characters. It is the same dog but what has changed? Look for other connections to *Granny's Place*.

Viewing/Reading the Text – progressive page suggestions

Take time to talk and allow comment enabling the children to express feelings, to grasp the meaning, mood and atmosphere, also taking time to explore the meaning of the endpaper illustrations.

1. Consider the title page – what does this tell the reader about the setting and the time of day? What clues are there? (lights on, dogs in kennel, their appearance and frosty breath, the sun and the shadows).
2. Turn to the first page and set the scene. What is the girl sitting on and what is it used for? What time of the year do you think it is? What might the dog be thinking?
3. Consider the double-page spread on pages 2-3. How does the illustrator show movement?
4. There are several examples of alliteration throughout the text, ask the children to look for examples during the reading.
5. The sheep dogs can be identified by their collars. The eldest dog, let's call her Annie (turn to the notes at the back of the book to find out why), has a brown collar. The dog with the red collar is a kelpie. Their pup has a blue collar and he is learning to be a good sheep dog. How does the illustrator show us the differences in their characters?
6. At the end of the day how does the illustrator depict that the characters are tired? What does the little girl mean when she says, "I wish Grandpa was with us ... etc." and why would Dad say it instead?
7. Discuss the idiomatic saying "counting sheep". Why is there no need to do that tonight?

After Reading

1. Consider the shearing shed and how it is constructed. This one has been made from recycled roofing iron, how has the illustrator shown this to the reader? Ask the children why the pens have grating as their floor and what could it be like if the flooring was solid? Farmers often use the “stinky sludge” as fertilizer on their gardens. The floor is raised to allow sheep to shelter underneath and be protected from the rain, the shearers cannot shear wet sheep!
2. There are many online video clips which depict how skilled sheep dogs are, for example:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4bb_-T2cDg (a skilled kelpie and her pup depicted with their trainer and interviewed on Burke’s Backyard - the word *damn* is used in this clip; however, it is a great example of how working dogs and their owners interact)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0sO1wdBhMY> (a Border collie pup in training)
3. The Past - This story is set in the 1970’s. Look for things from the past related to transport and items in the kitchen, laundry and bathroom, including the fittings, furniture, appliances and colour schemes.

The life of a shearer was different in the past as depicted in the sepia photo illustration. This video is of the 1950’s but typical of how my father ran the shed; however, as the story explains, the shearers no longer camped on the farm, they would turn up on the day and the shed would be ready to go. The shed in the video is a large scale shed but has great images of the process of shearing, baling the wool, the yards and the hard life of a shearer of the past (please be aware that some of the shearers are smoking on their break).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NfxZQFO-vbY>

4. Consider the shearer’s clothing. The image below is of a shearer’s moccasin made of sheep skin. In the past, the shearers made them themselves but now they can buy them. They help to prevent the shearers from slipping on the greasy boards. Not all shearers wear them.



Further Discussion & Activities

1. Why do you think that shearing time is the little girl’s favourite time of the year?
2. Brainstorm the different uses for wool.
3. What do the endpapers show the reader? How does the story begin and end?
4. Explore the illustrations closely and discuss the use of colour, tone, shadow, line and space – how do they create atmosphere? How does the illustrator show movement and emotion?
5. Discuss the themes of sense of place, the past, belonging, family connections, rural life and pets.

6. Explore the notes and terms on the final page in *Shearing Time* and discuss. Older students could complete the included word search activity.

Writing activities

1. *Shearing Time* is an example of a personal recount. Using a recount template identify the orientation, events and conclusion. Students can also identify the language features e.g. time connectives and action verbs.
2. Students write a recount of their favourite time of the year.
3. Students pick a page in which there is interaction between the sheep and dogs. Create dialogue or speech/thought bubbles for the animals.

Art activities

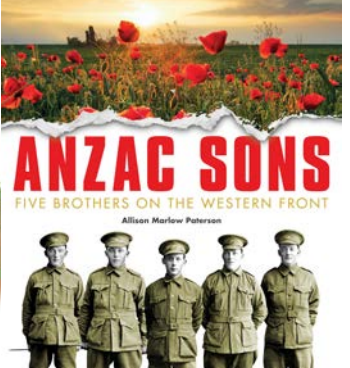
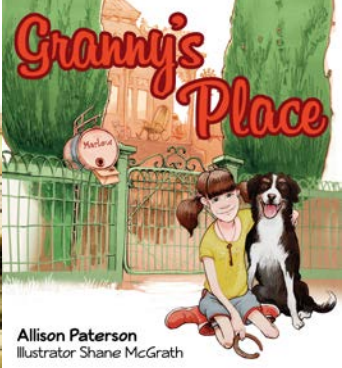
1. Children create their own woolly sheep using a template (there are many online versions) and cotton wool balls. Create a mural depicting a mob of sheep in their paddock.

Key Points

- Gentle, lyrical text told in a child's voice that captures both the joys of childhood adventures and how family life and places change over time.
- Charming and light-hearted illustrations bring the story to life, highlighting the Australian landscape and living conditions of times past with energetic characters and detailed vignettes.
- An engaging resource for filling a gap in available resources for young children regarding the significant rural experience of shearing. Teachers Notes are available.
- There are few books for young readers that convey a child's perspective of Australian farming life until now! An excellent resource for the early childhood national curriculum, which explores family life of the past, changing technology over time and life in rural Australia.
- The author's previous children's book *Anzac Sons* was long listed for the 2016 ABIA Awards and as a notable for the CBCA 2016.

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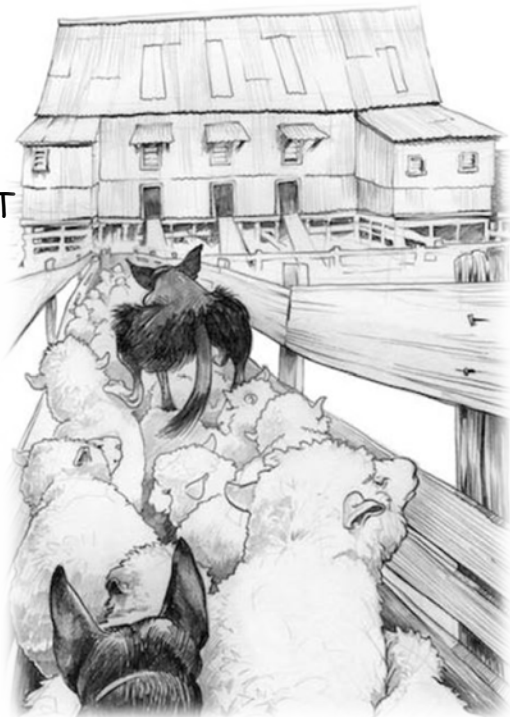
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Shearing Time

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B D U K I S H E A R E R S R O
Q H S S H E E P X W R W A O A
T D T S E K I B R O T O M U X
R O E S K C O D D A P O D S V
H I R I I Q E B P G I A R E N
L W N W T P D L Y G U G E A Z
Z A O G N I R A E H S N H B J
H O M L E R A D P D D I X O E
L A M B B R O E Y O M L T U C
S P U C S Y B S G T O A S T E
G N I T R I K S M N B B N L E
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P R C L I P E R M H Z O P M F
G W R D R A F T F O Y J Q S O

BALING
BLADES
BLOW
BOARD
CLIP
DOGS
DRAFT
EWE
FLEECE
GUN
HERD
JUMBUCK
LAMBS
MOB
MOTORBIKES
MUSTER
PADDOCKS
PENS
RINGER
ROUSEABOUT
RUN
SHEARERS
SHEARING
SHEEP
SKIRTING
WOOL



Written by Allison Paterson and illustrated by Shane McGrath

Shearing Time

Colouring in Time

The clever dogs crouch down low and
then dash about as they round up the sheep.

Grandpa trained them so well that we don't say a word.
Our four-legged friends know just what to do.



Written by Allison Paterson and illustrated by Shane McGrath