

Little Lon

TEACHERS' NOTES

by Andrew Kelly, illustrated by Heather Potter & Mark Jackson



Little Lon



Synopsis:

Marie and her friends sailed boats in the gutters, ate Mr Bracchi's ice-creams in summer and roast chestnuts in winter, all in the centre of a big busy city, behind the fancy fronts of the main boulevards. Here lay the network of lanes and houses called Little Lon. Times were different when Marie was growing up. The families may not have been rich, but they were a community. A surprising history in every way.

Specifications

Author	Andrew Kelly
Illustrator	Mark Jackson and Heather Potter
ISBN	9781742035932
Format	297mm x 210mm
Extent	32pp + cover
Binding	Hardback
Reading level	8+
Interest level	8+
Category	Non-Fiction

About the Author:

Andrew Kelly is the Yarra Riverkeeper. He was born in Melbourne, grew up in Melbourne and apart from a few years in England (the land of a portion of his ancestors) he has spent his life in Melbourne. He is passionate about the city and its history (and its river). He has written numerous books for children. His most recent book is Wilam: A Birrarung Story.

About the Illustrators:

Mark Jackson and Heather Potter are illustrators and frequent collaborators whose works have been featured in several exhibitions. They are the recipients of many awards, including CBCA Book of the Year Award, the Wilderness Society Environment Award for Children's Literature, the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards and Indie Book of the Year Awards.



Little Lon



Ages:

Year 1 – Year 4

Key Learning Areas:

English, Humanities and Social Sciences

Themes:

Community, family, home, the past, change, generosity, sharing.

Australian Curriculum Standards:

English:

Year 1

ACELA1447 ACELA1453 ACELT1581 ACELT1582 ACELT1584
ACELT1586 ACELY1658 ACELY1661

Year 2

ACELA1463 ACELA1466 ACELA1470 ACELT1589 ACELT1590
ACELT1593 ACELY1667 ACELY1671

Year 3

ACELT1594 ACELT1596 ACELT1599 ACELT1600 ACELT1601
ACELY1675 ACELY1676 ACELY1677 ACELY1678

Year 4

ACELT1602 ACELT1603 ACELT1605 ACELT1607 ACELT1794
ACELY1689 ACELY1690 ACELY1694

Humanities and Social Sciences:

Year 1

ACHASSI018 ACHASSI019 ACHASSI023 ACHASSI0125
ACHASSI026 ACHHK029 ACHHK030

Year 2

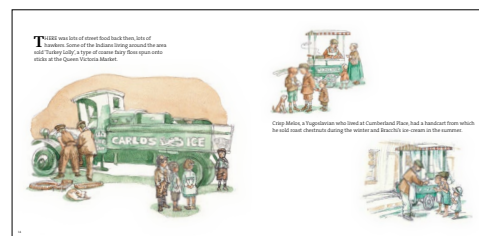
ACHASSI034 ACHASSI036 ACHASSI038 ACHASSI042
ACHASSI043 ACHHK044 ACHHK045 ACHHK046

Year 3

ACHASSI052 ACHASSI053 ACHASSI059 ACHASSI072
ACHHS061 ACHASSI063 ACHHS215

Year 4

ACHASSI073 ACHASSI079 ACHASSI080 ACHASSI082



Little Lon



Before reading the story to the children:

Take time to read and explore these brief summaries of life in Little Lonsdale Street. Some will be suitable to share with your students; others will need to be modified to suit the age group. Understanding the historical view of Little Lonsdale Street, nicknamed Little Lon, will inform your reading and discussions with students.

<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/31>

<http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00860b.htm>

<https://melbourneheritage.org.au/current-campaigns/save-little-lon-proposed-casselden-place-heritage-precinct/life-as-it-was-lived-in-little-lon/>

Guided Reading Questions – before reading:

Examine the cover and ask students:

- Where might Little Lon be set?
- When might it be set?
- Who will be the main character?
- What or who might the title refer to?

(Note observations on the whiteboard to revisit after reading.)

- How do you feel when you look at the cover?
- What type of book is this?
- Where would you expect to find it in your library?
- Examine the back cover and read the blurb. What clues does it give the reader about the story?
- Discuss the final line of the blurb. 'A surprising history in every way.'
 - * In what ways were you surprised?

Examine the endpapers.

- What clues do they give you about the story?
- How do the endpapers help you decide where and when the story is set?

While reading:

Listen to the story without looking at the illustrations. Then listen to the story and look at the illustrations.

- Which version of the story did you prefer? Just the words, or words with illustrations?
- In what ways did the illustrations change or improve your enjoyment of the story?
- Were the illustrations as you expected? What parts surprised you?
- Do you have a favourite page or illustration? What draws you to it?



Little Lon



After Reading – Discussions and Activities:

Revisit the class questions and observations collected before reading the story. What has changed after reading it?

How is Marie's life similar to yours? How is it different?

What do you think matters most to Marie and her neighbours?

Revisit the following spreads:

Spread 1

- Why do you think the illustrations show people looking out the window?
- Who do you think these people are?

Spread 2

Examine this picture of Marie's family outside their home.

- <http://melbournewalks.com.au/archaeological-melbourne/cumberland-place-tess/#main>
- Compare the photo to the illustrations on the second spread and with the illustration in spread 14.
- How have the illustrators created a sense of family, warmth and belonging?

Spread 3

- Examine Marie's sitting room. What items do you recognise?
- How is it similar to your own?
- Can you see anything you can't name? Discuss ways you could find out more about these items.

Spreads 4, 5 & 6

- The text tells us about Marie's neighbours and where they are from. What do the illustrations show about these people and their attitudes to children?

Spread 8 & 9

- Why do you think the girls and boys had separate playgrounds at school?
- Marie describes a week at the school. How is it different from your week?
- Do you think Marie and her friends had similar experiences at school?



Little Lon



After Reading – Discussions and Activities: (continued)

Spread 12

- Why do you think Marie and other Little Lon residents took their meat and vegetables to Exhibition Street to be cooked?
- Why did the man always give Tess (Marie's mum) an extra potato?
- What does this show about Little Lon?

Spread 13

- Compare John's birthday party to your last party. How is it similar and different?

Spread 14

"Everyone has always been kind to us. No one has ever even made us afraid. When you have lived so long in the heart of the city, you want to stay here always.

Tess (Marie's mother)"

Discuss Tess's quote at the end of the story. Why might it be unusual for her not to feel afraid in this part of the city?

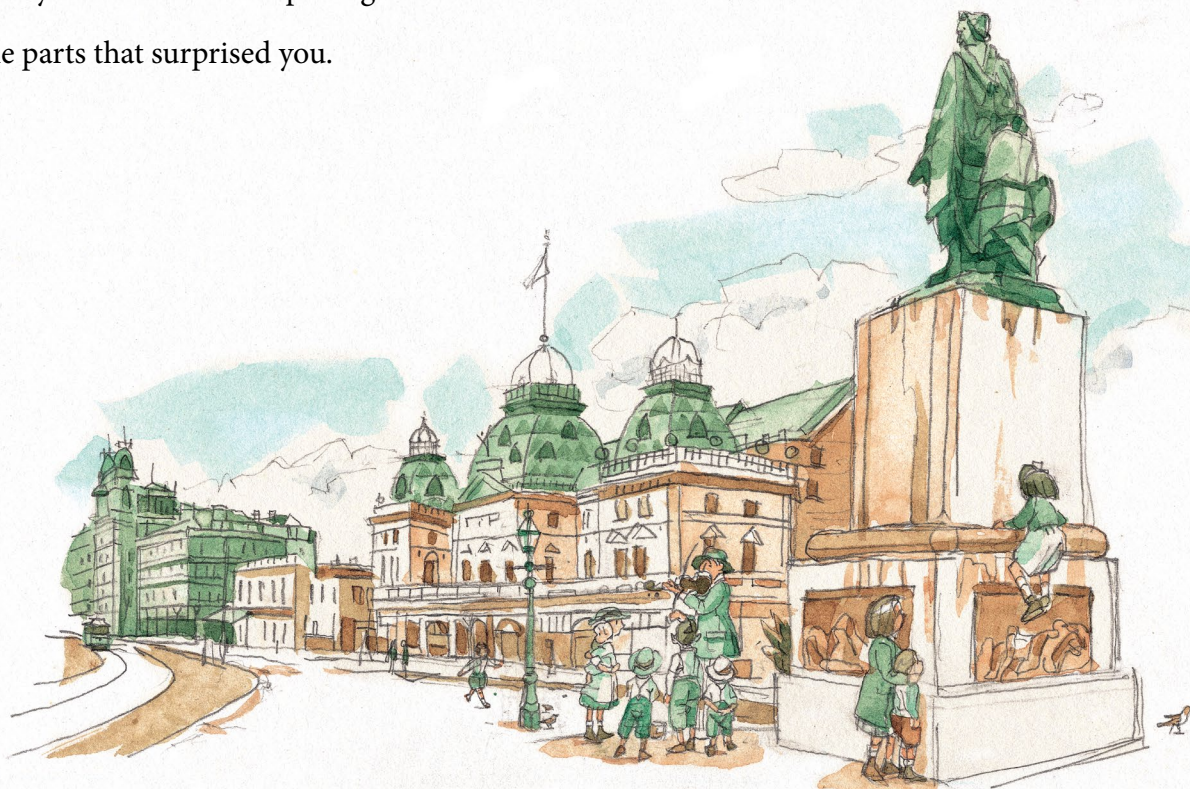
After reading the book, why do you think she wanted to stay there for 'always'?

Blurb:

- Revisit the Little Lon blurb. It describes the book as being a 'surprising history in every way.'

In what ways was the book surprising?

Share the parts that surprised you.



Little Lon



Humanities and Social Sciences:

Little Lon is historical fiction.

- What does that mean?
- Where would you find it in the library?
- How would the book be different if it was nonfiction?

Maps

As a class, do a Google Maps search for Little Lonsdale Street.

- Compare the endpapers to the map. Try to find the area where Cumberland Place was before the lanes and streets were demolished.
- Identify any buildings or streets on the endpapers that seem to still exist.

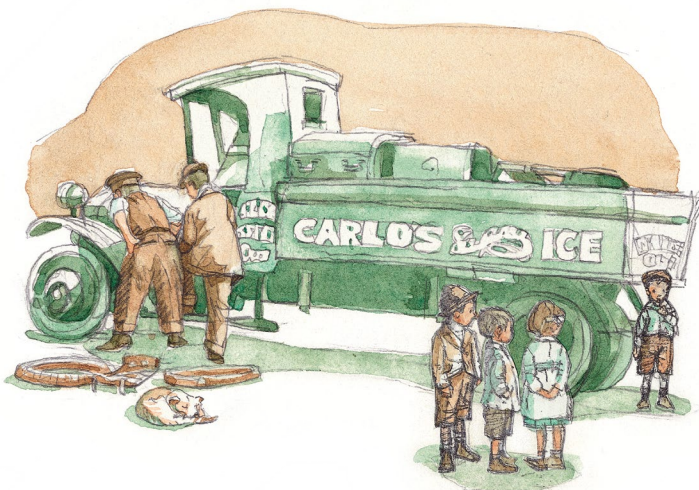
Artefacts

Study the photo of artefacts archaeologists' found in the area.

- http://melbournewalks.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/IMG_18601.jpg
- In pairs, try to work out each item could be.
- Share guesses with the rest of the class.
- After all pairs have shared, compare everyone's guesses to the Melbourne Museum collection. <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/31>
- If there are any items that couldn't be identified, discuss ways students could find out more.
- (internet, books, local historical society.)

Watch Melbourne Museum's video 'Excavating Little Lon' from 3.15 till the end.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6sEgwohg6k>
(The entire video has worthwhile information, but teachers need to use discretion. The section from 3.15 is suitable for students.)
- Why is it important to gather information about our past?
- What have you learnt about our past by reading this book and watching the video?
- How does that make you feel about your home and life?



Little Lon



Fat and Skinny Questions:

The idea behind Fat and Skinny Questions is to develop in students a mindset of asking questions that collect the most information in a short amount of time. Fat questions gather information and start with Explain, why, how. Skinny questions can often be answered with yes or no. (Use the example handout as a reminder.)

Once the students understand the concept, ask them to write three questions they would like to ask either the author, Andrew Kelly or illustrators, Heather Potter and Mark Jackson.

Incursion

Arrange an incursion for the class. Ask a representative from the local historical society to visit and speak about 1920 in your area. Before the visit, have children come up with questions to ask. Remind them of the difference between fat and skinny questions.

Games

Marie mentions a few games the children played, including spinning tops, making whistles from apricot stones and sailing boats in the gutters.

- What other games did you see in the illustrations?
- In pairs, have children investigate games that children might have played in the 1920s. At this stage, just names of games is enough.

Create a list of all the games discovered and ask children to choose a game to research. They can complete this activity in pairs or small groups, depending on class size.

Children then research their chosen game and create an instruction poster for it. The children present their game to the class, and if appropriate and the right equipment can be sourced, teach classmates how to play the game.



Little Lon



Fat and Skinny Questions: (continued)

Slipper Bath

Marie goes to the City Baths for a slipper bath every Saturday night.

- Divide the class into groups of three and give them one of these topics – City Baths, Slipper Bath.
- Each group spends time investigating their allocated topic, before sharing their discoveries with the class.
- <http://vintagevictoria.net.au/city-baths-melbourne/> This blog has interesting information about both.

English:

Language

Revisit the description of Little Lonsdale Street at the end of the story.

- Ask children to note any words, phrases and expressions they may not understand. Collate these on the whiteboard. Allocate these to either groups or individuals, depending on class size, to investigate. Students then write the word/phrase on a strip of card board to be added to a poster – Little Lon.
- Discuss the language used and compare this description to Marie's. Have students rewrite the description of Little Lon from Marie's point of view.

Questions

Picture books are limited in length. There are many parts of Marie's life that couldn't be included because of this. Place students in pairs and ask them to come up with three fat questions they'd like to ask Marie.



Little Lon



English: (continued)

Party

Revisit John's birthday party. Discuss the illustration and text with the students. Explore the food, facial expressions and names. Ask each student to choose one character that they feel drawn to and to write a page from their point of view, about the party.

Community Language

Little Lon is a celebration of community. Reread it to the children and ask them to identify the language used by the author that shows Marie's love for her Little Lon community.

Your Home

Write a description of where you live. Describe your family, home, friends, games and pets.

Slums or Paradise?

Historians have written about Little Lon as a miserable place. Ask students how Marie viewed her home and community. Children then write a piece describing how they feel about Marie's home.

School's In:

Compare the school photo to your own class photo.

- What do you notice?
- What assumptions can you make about school in 1926?

<http://melbournewalks.com.au/archaeological-melbourne/cumberland-place-st-josephs-1926/#main>

- Choose a child and write a letter to them, asking about their life, school, home and friends.



Little Lon



Book Trailer:

- In groups, children will produce a book trailer for Little Lon. Before they start, show students a variety of book trailers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDhNI3CkIpA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6fwlJxNoMM>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=d006m8sgjwo&feature=emb_logo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIHmR9RkW2M>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rg126xwE2q4>

- After watching, discuss the purpose of book trailers and which was the most successful.
- Read the Reading Agency book trailer advice on creating a book trailer.

<https://readingagency.org.uk/young-people/003-skills/5-tips-for-making-a-book-trailer-that-works.html>

- After creating the book trailers, allocate a different class for each group to visit and share their trailer.

Art

Cover

Think about what matters most to Marie and design your own cover for Little Lon.

Illustrator

Imagine you're an illustrator. You're asked to redo an illustration in Little Lon. Which page would you choose to do? Why? Create your own illustration. OR Choose a piece of writing from Little Lon and create your own illustration for it.



Little Lon



Interview with Andrew Kelly

1. How did you first discover Marie's story?

Two things came together. Firstly, I have always been fascinated by archaeology - I studied the subject at university. But then archaeology was about what was dug elsewhere not what was dug up here. Australia was seen as too recent, not old enough, not Bronze Age, not paleolithic. Since then Australian archaeology has discovered the incredible antiquity and continuity of Aboriginal Australian occupation and management of this continent. At the same time people were starting to dig up the settler history as well. The excavation at Little Lon is one of the best known of these excavations.

Secondly, I am also a passionate aficionado of the history of the town I live in - Melbourne. I was tootling around on the web one day and came across a reference to a radio program on Little Lon, about imaging its past through objects that had been dug up by archaeologists. I listened to that, got intrigued, and then I came across Marie's story. It had PICTURE BOOK written all over it. Pictures would bring Marie's story to life for a new generation. It was so exciting

2. Little Lon, the street, is often remembered as a slum, filled with sly grog shops and opium dens. How surprised were you to discover this other side of its history?

Really surprised. Startled. That was what really excited me about the story first up. Here were these children having the best time in a place that had the darkest of reputations. Marie remembers her childhood with such affection. It made me think how quick we are to judge. The quote from Marie's mother says it all: 'Everyone has always been kind to us. No one has ever even made us afraid. When you have lived so long in the heart of the city, you want to stay here always.'

3. How much research did you have to do?

Lots! And I loved doing it. That was the best part of the book. Research is such fun. There is so much that didn't make it into the book. For me writing a picture book is about leaving things out and only including precisely what the story needs. That meant I had to leave out a lot, including the story of Mr Bracchi sometimes letting Marie's mother take home-made jellies down to set in the big fridges at Carlo's Supreme Ice Cream Factory. The big fridges were used to make ice. I also had to leave out the story of when the Bracchi's safe at 12 Cumberland Place was broken into, while everybody was asleep upstairs. It was so delightful though to uncover these gorgeous tales that maybe it doesn't matter that they didn't make it into the book. A picture book, maybe any book, is an iceberg and you can only see the tip of the iceberg.



Little Lon

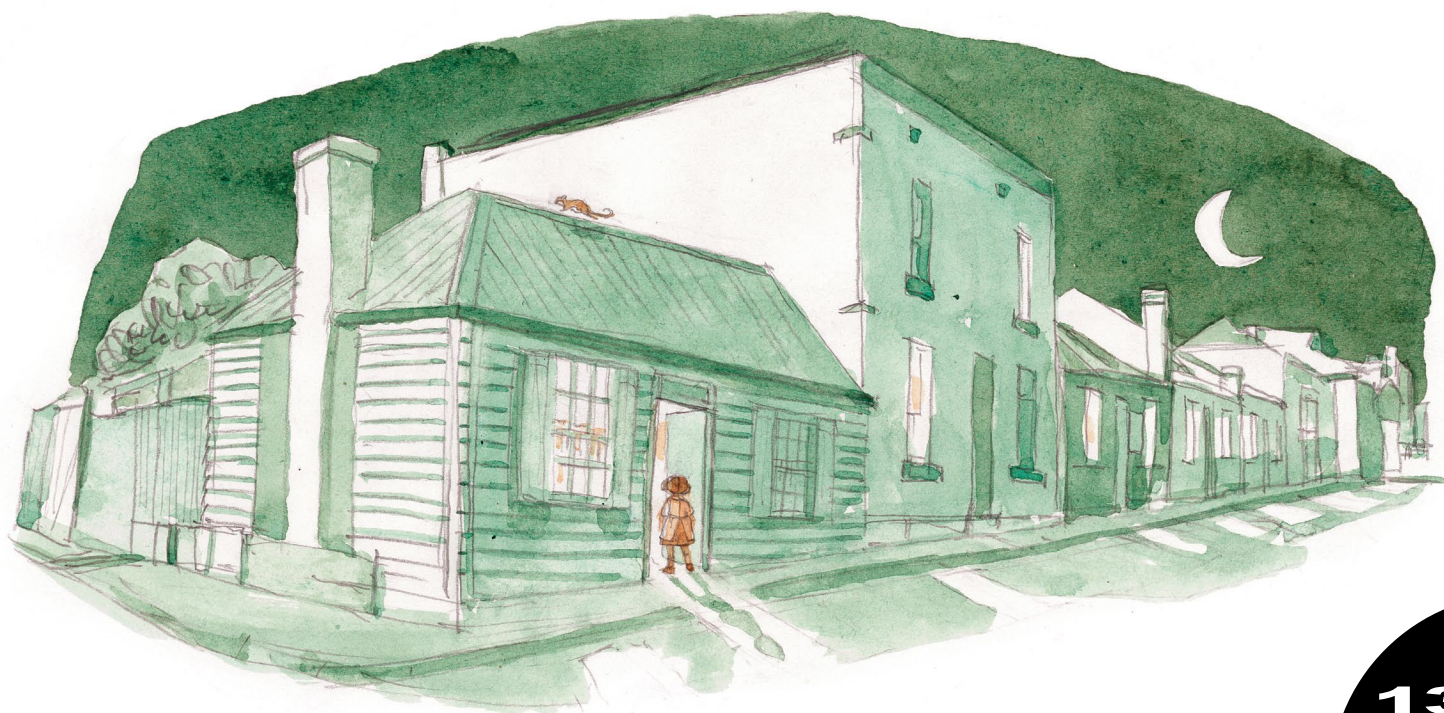


4. *Your most recent book was Wilam - A Birarrung Story, which you co-wrote with Aunty Joy Murphy. How different was the writing process for Little Lon?*

It was very different. In Wilam I was combining my experience as the Yarra Riverkeeper and Aunty Joy's deep Wurundjeri understanding of their river to create the book. I didn't have to do so much research, though I did do a lot of work on creating a good illustration brief for Lisa Kennedy, the illustrator. There was however a lot of trimming of words in both books. Words should be used sparingly in a picture book, and they are hard to give up,

5. *Picture books are very much a team effort. How closely did you work with illustrators, Heather and Mark?*

I owe a lot to Mark and Heather. The sharpness of the story revealed itself as we went along. Every book is a journey, and this journey was one with a lot of stones on the path and detours into boggy ground as the story was perfected. I am a very visual person so sometimes it takes seeing pictures to realise what the words that should be used. A lot of the writing process was to cut down on the words, to leave things out. Seeing Mark and Heather's beautiful sketches while they were working to realise their vision of the book was inspiring. They did so many drawings, and so many beautiful pieces of art that didn't make it into the book. That was their way of working, to draw and draw and draw their way into Marie's story. The other person I owe a debt to is Chris Ashe from Cordial Design. He is a very measured person, even quiet, and he brings that measured quality to the design of a book, drawing the book out to be a much better version of itself. It is a conjurer's trick, a piece of magic, to me.



Little Lon



6. *All books come with their problems during creation. What was the hardest part about writing Little Lon?*

The hardest part was to get the right fit between the words and the pictures. It took time, trouble and effort. That was hard on the illustrators. They were probably expecting a manuscript they could sit down, illustrate and return, but there was a lot of toing and froing instead. It was worth it. I was also very conscious I was telling someone else's story, someone who I had never met, and a story that had been collected by yet another person.



7. *What do you hope readers will take from Little Lon?*

That people, especially children, will make a life wherever they live, no matter what anybody else thinks. It really doesn't matter what other people think. That is really the story of the book. It is not the story of street in Melbourne nicknamed Little Lon, it's about how children make a life for themselves wherever they are. Life then for Marie was as real to her as to anybody today, maybe more real because there were no digital tablets or phones, no fridges, no running water in Little Lon, yet life was rich, so rich, so immediate. Maybe while gaining so much we also lost. I don't think we should think we are necessarily better than people in the past.