

Eureka!

A Story of the Goldfields



MARK WILSON

TEACHERS RESOURCES

Eureka!

by Mark Wilson

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INTRODUCTION

Eureka! A Story of the Goldfields is a very moving story based on historical figures who lived and worked on the Victorian goldfields in the 1850s.

Molly and her father have emigrated to Australia to try their luck as gold prospectors in Ballarat, Victoria. Life on the diggings proves difficult, though, and Molly misses her mother, who died of typhoid fever before they left England.

A Chinese teenager, Chen, shows Molly and her father how to pan for gold and helps them when their food and money run out. Not everyone on the goldfields is friendly, however. Chen and other Chinese diggers are often bullied and the police lock up miners who haven't paid the exorbitant gold licence fee. Before long, Molly, Papa and Chen are caught up in a protest that will become known as the Eureka Rebellion, also known as the Eureka Stockade – a legendary battle that will profoundly affect them all.

The Eureka Rebellion was part of the evolution of the Australian trade union movement. Life on the goldfields is a rich vein of Australian history to be mined by students. And the role that Chinese people played in early colonial life is another fascinating theme. Mark Wilson has drawn together these threads of our history and illustrated his story in a series of magnificent paintings which are highly evocative of this era.

THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several thematic ideas are covered in this book which might be used in conjunction with curriculum topics (for primary or secondary school students) in the following areas:

STUDY OF HISTORY, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT (SOSE)

LIFE ON THE GOLDFIELDS IN 1850s AUSTRALIA

DISCUSSION POINT: Life on the goldfields was very hard. People lived in tents, and had little money for food, or with which to pay the hefty licence fees demanded. Research their lives and the challenges they faced.

ACTIVITY: Mark Wilson tells us in an afterword that this story is inspired by the life of Catherine Martin and her descendants. Research her life and that of other people on the goldfields. [See **Bibliography**.]

DISCUSSION POINT: Images in the book show Molly and Chen panning for gold and then using a 'cradle' built by Chen and her father, which made the process more efficient. Research the various methods of finding gold.

ACTIVITY: Look at the images in this book of people travelling to the goldfields. What sort of problems might they have encountered when journeying to the diggings?

DISCUSSION POINT: How did life change in towns like Ballarat before and after the gold rush?

DISCUSSION POINT: From what countries did people come to the goldfields, and how did they get there?

DISCUSSION POINT: What effect did the gold rush have on Indigenous people in the area?

DISCUSSION POINT: Read other books about this era and compare to this book. [See **Bibliography**.]

THE EUREKA STOCKADE AND THE HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONS IN AUSTRALIA

DISCUSSION POINT: This rebellion was a seminal event in Australian economic and social history. Research to discover the impact it had on later history.

DISCUSSION POINT: Peter Lalor was a key figure in the rebellion. Research his later life. Why has he become such a symbol of this movement?

DISCUSSION POINT: The Eureka Centre in Ballarat commemorates the rebellion. Visit their website: <https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/city/facilities-and-venues/eureka-centre> to discover more about this history.

DISCUSSION POINT: Examine the battle scene incorporating the newspaper clipping headed 'Rebellion!'. What does it suggest about the struggle between miners and those in power?

DISCUSSION POINT: The Eureka Flag is a symbol of the movement to protect workers' rights. In 2018, the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) sought to have the flying of the flag banned on worksites but the Fair Work Commission ruled this invalid. What were the arguments for and against the flag being flown?

CHINESE IMMIGRANTS AND RACISM IN 1850S AUSTRALIA

DISCUSSION POINT: Many Chinese people arrived in Australia in this period and worked hard to establish themselves and sometimes to bring family to Australia, as Chen does in this story. Why did people of European origin resent them so much?

ACTIVITY: Research the treatment of Chinese people in this time, and how that resulted in the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* which was introduced immediately after federation.

DISCUSSION POINT: How might the marriage between Molly and Chen have been regarded during this time? Would they have experienced racism? [See **Bibliography**.]

VALUES

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss the **values** conveyed in this text.

DISCUSSION POINT: Chen is kind to Molly and her father, despite the fact that people have treated him poorly because he is Chinese. How difficult is it to forgive, and to be kind to people when you have been subject to unkindness?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The text of this book might be studied in relation to the following aspects:

DISCUSSION POINT: This text is written in first person, past tense, and in the voice of Molly. How might the story have been told if Chen had written it?

ACTIVITY: Test your students' comprehension by asking them questions about the written text. [See also **Worksheet 2.**]

ACTIVITY: Write a letter as if penned by Chen to his mother and sister at home in China.

VISUAL LITERACY

The visual text of a book combines with the written text to tell the story using the various parts of the book's design and illustrations, as explored below:

ACTIVITY: The **cover** of this book depicts Molly and Chen panning for gold and facing each other. There is also a stippled effect with paint dabbled over the photographic image. What does the cover suggest about their relationship and about any theme central to this book?

DISCUSSION POINT: The **front and back endpapers** portray the moment before the battle commences between miners, soldiers and police. How is the drama of this moment conveyed in the illustration?

DISCUSSION POINT: The **title page** depicts the gold locket with Molly's mother's image in it. Later on in the book, on the second last double page spread, the same locket contains a picture of Molly and Chen, presumably on their wedding day. What feelings and meaning do these two images convey?

DISCUSSION POINT: The **format** of the book is square in a large size (approx 28.5 x 26.5 cm) which enhances the dramatic impact of these paintings. How important is the format to the way you view these images?

ACTIVITY: The **medium or style** employed for many of the illustrations is **photo-realism in acrylic painting on canvas**. [See also Mark Wilson's note on **Illustration Technique** in his **Author's Notes.**] Invite students to use various techniques to create their own images of Molly and Chen panning for gold. [See also **Worksheet 1.**]

DISCUSSION POINT: What effect does the **photo-realism** of many of the illustrations convey to a reader?

ACTIVITY: Students might be encouraged to use **critical literacy skills** to unearth meaning in this text; teachers might ask them a series of questions. [See also **Worksheet 2.**]

ACTIVITY: **Create a graphic novel/comic version** of a scene in this book. Read other such books as a guide to the style and approach students might employ. [See **Bibliography.**] [See also **Worksheet 3.**]

CREATIVE ARTS

There are many creative activities suggested by this text. Students might:

1. Create a **classroom mural** which tells the story in a series of dramatic frames designed and executed by students.
2. **Write, direct and act out a scene** based on any incident in this book.
3. **Design a Book Trailer based on this book.** Visit sites such as: 'Book Trailers' *Insideadog* <<http://www.insideadog.com.au/teachers/book-trailers>> for advice.
4. **Create a diorama** of one of the scenes in this book using a cardboard box as your frame.
5. **Organise a classroom display** featuring some of the writing and illustration that students have done for this unit with books or texts they have researched as a group.

LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

ACTIVITY: Study any of the topics suggested by this book and notes online. [See **Bibliography.**]

MATHEMATICS

ACTIVITY: Explore statistics relating to the gold rush period and the population growth in places such as Ballarat during that time.

FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

Research the work of Mark Wilson. Compare his other books to this one.

Research the themes in this work by reading non-fiction books such as those listed in the **Bibliography.**

Conduct a debate about one of the issues explored in these notes.

CONCLUSION

This is a moving personal interpretation of an iconic historical incident in Australian social and economic history. Students will relish this imaginative interpretation of this era, beautifully illustrated in Mark Wilson's trademark photo-realism.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

MARK WILSON

INSPIRATION

Eureka! was inspired by the strangest coincidence. I wrote a fictional story about a Chinese girl in the 1850s escaping persecution and civil war in China and travelling to Australia to work on the goldfields at Ballarat, a time and place that have always fascinated me. I was in the process of changing the character to a Chinese boy after having found there were no Chinese women on the Ballarat goldfields. My wife Ros came home from work one day and said, 'You'll never guess what Chris (her friend at work) said about your story when she read it today. She said every word of it is actually true.' Chris's ancestors were Catherine Martin and Pan Ah Shin, and it was as if I had written her family story with different names! She even had photos of her ancestors for me to use as reference. How's that for coincidence, and not bad for stumbling upon a primary source for my research! I then adapted other aspects of her family history into my story, which made it so much stronger.

WRITING PROCESS

The writing process for *Eureka!* was a little unusual for me, as I did a story board before writing the ms. I had an idea (Molly's mother's gold locket) and I did a storyboard of 36 pages to see if it would work as a picture book. Then I did sketches of key events in the story. There was no manuscript at this stage, just captions for the storyboard; 'trekking to the goldfields', 'the setting', 'introduce characters', 'social issues at the time' (persecution of the Chinese miners), 'Chen Meets Molly', 'working together', 'Chen helps them survive', 'growing unrest over licence fees', 'finding gold!', 'growing tensions' and ultimately 'the battle at the Stockade'. Finally, I included a 'twist' involving the gold locket.

Research is next, which I love doing, then I write the manuscript, leave it for two weeks and rewrite it to fit the storyboard. I workshop the story in schools to see children's reactions at different age levels, and even take their advice on aspects of the story! After the sixth or seventh rewrite, I send it to Suzanne O'Sullivan and Karen Ward at Hachette.

Next is a set of detailed roughs. Then I do one or two more rewrites, as Suzanne and Karen always have great ideas to contribute. My books would be nothing without their input. We will still have subtle changes after that – even at the designer's final proof stage!

ILLUSTRATION TECHNIQUE

All my artwork starts with line drawings sketched in as much detail as I can manage. I then use permanent markers, ink, pastel, watercolour and acrylic paint – and just about anything else lying around; each picture dictates the technique.

I use a lot of photos, but for reference as opposed to directly, so although some paintings look like photos, they are not. They are 'super realism', used to emphasise important moments in the story, mostly where the action stops for a moment. The other colour pages, often with the moments of 'action' in the story, are 'Impressionism', or soft focus,

so the reader isn't held up looking at detail, and stays with the rhythm and flow of the written narrative. I actually used Catherine Ah Shin's (Martin) family photo album and journal as reference – there were many wonderful historical photos, including an old sepia photo of five generations of women in her family.

As you can see, the full-colour illustrations throughout are acrylic paint on canvas, or card, but I often overlay parts of these with simple black and white drawings. I use whatever is best for the page, but also what appeals most to me. I love sketching, painting in acrylics, doing washes in inks and oils, and generally working with new and different materials to add contrast and variety to the illustrations where needed.

About the Author/Illustrator

Mark Wilson was born in Brunswick, Victoria. He took to drawing from a very early age, and also loved comics. He went on to spend most of his teenage years performing as a singer and drummer in a rock band. He studied mural design and painting at the Caulfield Institute of Technology (now Monash, Caulfield Campus). He also did national service with Training Command in the ADF, followed by a Diploma of Education. In the early seventies, he became a designer and illustrator for *The Education Magazine* and *Pursuit Magazine*, and also started illustrating for various publishers including Penguin, Rigby, Brooks Waterloo, Houghton & Mifflin and National Geographic in the USA. In 1981 he held his first solo exhibition of paintings and drawings.

Recently, he has focused on writing and illustrating children's books, and also picture book presentations and workshops in schools and at literature festivals. His books include *The Last Tree* (2007 Whitley Award for Children's Literature) which deals with the effect deforestation has on the creatures that inhabit our forests, and *Journey of the Sea Turtle* (2011 Whitley Award) which highlights the fragile existence of sea turtles. Other award-winning books include *My Mother's Eyes* about World War One, published by Hachette Australia in 2009; *Angel of Kokoda* in 2010; the *Ben and Gracie's Art Adventure* series, *Inside the World of Tom Roberts* (shortlisted in the 2013 Aurealis Awards), *A Day to Remember: The Story of the Anzacs* with Jackie French (shortlisted in the 2013 CBCA Awards); *Vietnam Diary* (2013), *Afghanistan Pup* (2014), *The Horse Soldier* (2014), *Migaloo, the White Whale* (2015), *Digger, the Dog who Went to War* (2015), *Beth: The Story of a Child Convict* (2016), *Flapper, VC* (2017), *Never Lose Hope: The Story of Australia's First School* (2018) *The Rats of Tobruk* and *All of Us* (2019).

For more information about Mark visit: <<http://www.markwilson.com.au/>>

WORKSHEETS

WORKSHEET 1 COLLAGE IMAGE

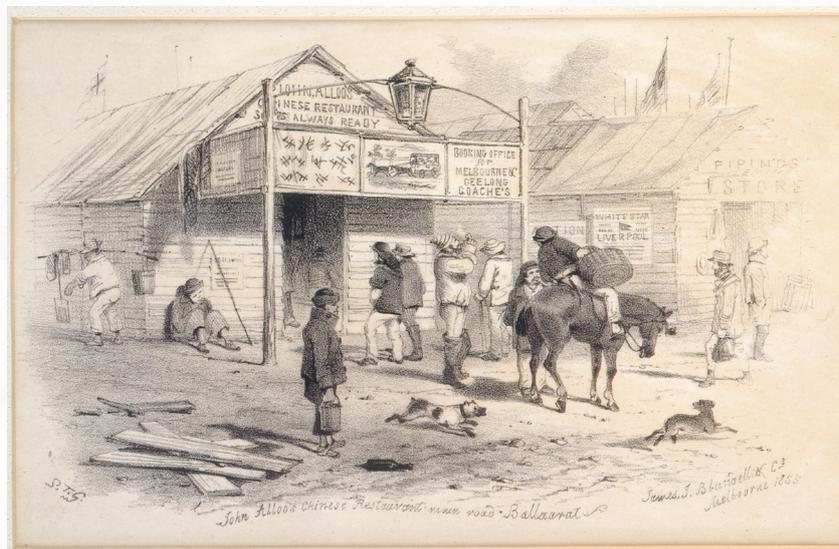
Create a collage by drawing a scene around this image of Molly and Chen and then applying materials such as fabric, cardboard, leaves, foil etc. to create a vibrant image.



WORKSHEET 2 QUIZ

These questions can all be answered by reading or interpreting the text of this picture book.

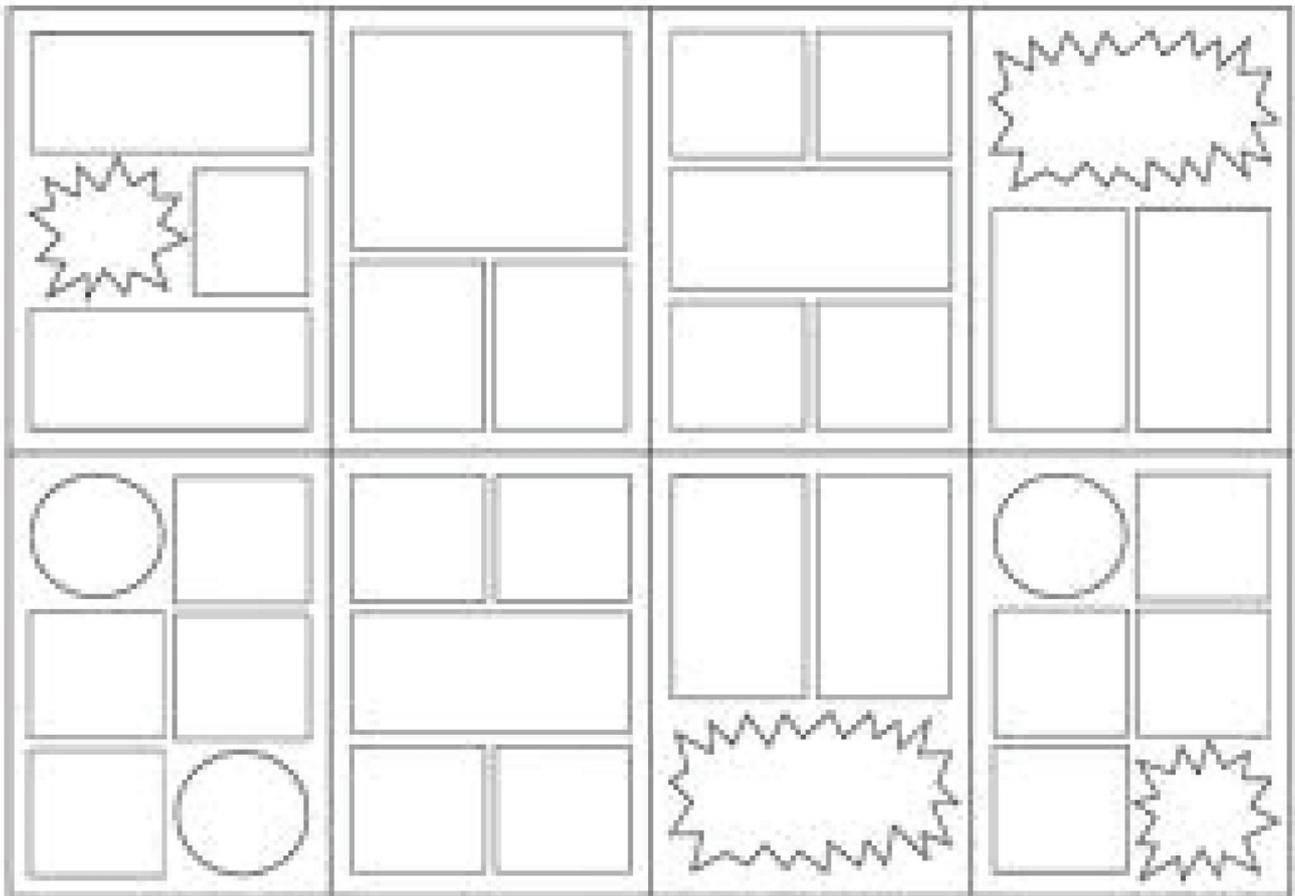
1. What disease did Molly's mother die from?
2. What item does Molly have to remind her of her mother?
3. How much does the three-month gold mining licence cost to buy?
4. What is a stockade?
5. What piece of equipment do Chen and Molly's father make to assist them in panning for gold more quickly?
6. What does Molly use to assist them?
7. What is the symbol featured on the Eureka Flag?
8. Who was the man who spoke at the meeting at Bakery Hill?
9. What year did Molly and Chen leave the diggings?
10. What did they do for a living later?



Answers: 1. Typhoid fever. 2. A golden locket. 3. Two pounds. 4. A sort of fort. 5. A cradle. 6. The puddling tub. 7. The Southern Cross. 8. Peter Lalor. 9. 1855. 10. They opened a store in Ballarat.

WORKSHEET 3 GRAPHIC STORYTELLING

Create a graphic novel/comic interpretation of one of the scenes in this book. Use any of the layouts below as the storyboard for your comic. [You might photocopy and enlarge to A3 to make more space.]



Layouts taken from *Comic Book Guide*

<http://comicbookguide.wordpress.com/tag/drawings/page/2/>

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