

Clancy of the overflow essay sample

[Parts of the World](#), [Australia](#)



One such example of a text that can be identified as Australian due to its use of the stereotypical ideas of Australian identity is Clancy of the Overflow, a poem by AB Banjo Paterson. This text is written from the point of view of a city-dweller who once met the title character, a shearer and drover, and now envies the imagined pleasures of Clancy's lifestyle, which he compares favourably to life in "the dusty, dirty city" and "the round eternal of the cashbook and the journal". The title comes from the address of a letter the city-dweller sends, "The Overflow" being the name of the sheep station where Clancy was working when they met. The poem is based on a true story that was experienced by Banjo Paterson. He was working as a lawyer when someone asked him to send a letter to a man named Thomas Gerald Clancy, asking for a payment that was never received. Banjo sent the letter to "The Overflow" and soon received a reply that read "Clancy's gone to Queensland droving and we don't know where he are"

The imagery that is used within the poem allows us to see the landscape that we now expect to be Australian, the language used also allows us to appreciate the behaviour that we have come to adopt as our own 'Australian way'. For example "In my wild erratic fancy visions come to me of Clancy, Gone a-droving 'down the Cooper' where the Western drovers go; As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them singing, For the drover's life has pleasures that the townsfolk never know." The real question is, without these so called 'Australian' images would we be able to recognise the text as an Australian one? The answer is no, Australian texts cannot afford to let their setting be ambiguous. Australia has few attributes that separate it from mediocrity and its setting is one of them.

As well as Australia's aesthetic attributes it also has its behavioural attributes that can be referred to as individual. Australian is renowned as being a masculine society, in which the sporting arena is worshiped; now this occurs other countries but this aspect of Australian life adds to overall individuality of Australian society. Bruce Dawe's Life Cycle is an example of this obsession that Australians have with sport in our masculine society. The diction in the poem plays the largest role in creating the ideas and the sense of obsession. The ability to create a poem which covers a life-cycle of a person through the game of AFL would not be possible without the choice of diction. For instance in the line " For possession of a Rusk: Ah he is a little Tiger!" It uses particular words like possession, which would be a term used in a game of AFL, or Tiger, the name of a team. Ideas are also conveyed through the word choice, for instance " You bludger and the covenant is sealed"- creates the sense that the poet is saying AFL is almost a religion.

People live their life according to the success of the team they follow. The word covenant being a commonly used religious term portrays ideas of religion. The word choice and words chosen prove the obsession as they bring in direct ideas and terms from AFL, and relating them to many stages of life and deeper ideas such as religion. Australia being the young nation that it is has not forged its own identity fully as yet, although many different sources contribute to the country's social amalgam. It is possible for different understandings, representing different starting points, to be grafted onto a common stock of images and beliefs. And we see this done within Dawe's poem, which we identify as an Australian text.

Perhaps Australia suffers from these deeper identity issues because of the relatively ignoble cause of European settlement in this country. No tales of Pilgrim Fathers escaping from religious persecution for us. Instead there is the ball and chain and the ignominy of a convict settlement consciously designed to house what were considered to be the dregs of another society. Or perhaps the difference lies in the fact of the ease of our attaining self government and independence.

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