

Poetry comparison mackellar vs hope essay

[Profession](#), [Poet](#)



Often referred to as 'the lucky country', Australia is a stable, democratic society. It is the biggest island on Earth, and home to one of the world's oldest living cultures. From tropical rainforests in the north, to the deserts of the Red Centre, to the snowfields in the south-east, Australia is vast and varied (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trades, Unknown date).

"Australian poetry is rapidly finding a place in the context of an international poetics. (Kinsella, unknown date) From reading poems such as "My Country" by Isobel Marion Dorothea Mackellar and "Australia" by Alec Derwent Hope, we can understand their varying yet essentially similar views of the Australian landscape through their life experiences and their opposing uses of word choice and symbolism. The commonalities start off with both poets being born in New South Wales, Australia. Mackellar was born in 1885 (Unknown, 2011) while Hope in 1907 (University of Sydney, Unknown date).

Mackellar wrote "My Country" during the First World War on a visit to England, where from then on it became one of the best-known Australian bush poems due to its appeal to the sense of patriotism encouraged by the war and post-war nationalism (Kingston, 1986). The poem was believed to have been directly influenced by Mackellar's experience of life on the land (State Library of New South Wales, 2011). Hope was another internationally known Australian poet who was famous for his "skilful use of traditional verse forms and critique of contemporary values" (University of Sydney, Unknown date).

His poem "Australia" also had a sense of patriotism to it, even though the word choice mostly points out the negative aspects of Australia. Although to

this day, the year in which he wrote the poem is still unclear, we know that Hope wrote the poem sometime in-between 1930 and 1970. Firstly, both poets' core belief about Australia remains very patriotic with Mackellar's ideology of Australia staying loyal and true all throughout her poem as opposed to Hope's "Australia".

The lines in her poem all build up to the very last part of the last stanza that truly concludes her tribute to Australia: "Wherever I may die, I know to what brown country, My homing thoughts will fly." In contrast with Hope's "Australia", the only line that really suggests of his devotion towards Australia is, in his second last stanza: "Yet there are some like me turn gladly home..." This line proposes that Hope is reluctant to admit his loyalty to his country but he is still willing enough to admit that he is patriotically Australian.

The first stanza of "My Country" is about England, lines such as "ordered woods and gardens" and "brown streams and soft dim skies" clearly describe the weather and some characteristics of England. Mackellar acknowledges this love but instead prefers Australia, the "sunburnt country" as she begins to describe. In comparison to Hope's "Australia", a fixed verse that speaks of the country as a juxtaposition - the many inherent flaws of Australia and his patriotic feeling towards the country, Mackellar's poem definitely brings out a more ideal image of Australia.

This suggests that in the early 1900's; back when Australia first became an independent nation, the people were more prideful of their country in comparison to Hope's social environment, a few decades afterwards, where

the sense of nationalism in the people have faded. Mackellar uses euphoric connotations and other literary devices to romanticise Australia. She describes many of the natural aspects of Australia, including its skies, its mountain ranges, the forest and the seas.

Use of repetitive phrases such as “ core of my heart, my country! ” is involved not only to make it more memorable but also to add poignancy to the poem. Since the poem was written while she was in England, it can therefore be surmised that she misses Australia. Hope too, had a similar thought, but most of his poem incorporates negative connotations such as mentions of “ modern wars” and “ cities, like five teeming sores” to describe a more industrial image of suburban Australia that is far different than Mackellar’s description.

In the second last stanza of “ Australia”, as mentioned briefly before, he wrote “ Yet there are some like me turn gladly home From the lush jungle of modern thought, to find The Arabian desert of the human mind...” This part of the stanza, suggests that he thinks of Australia as a paradox. Although he dislikes where Australia is going, he still enjoys retreating from such an extensive world back to Australia so he could reflect and rebuild his connection to the vastness of his mind, the size of which he likens to the Arabian Desert (Unknown, Literature Commentary on “ Australia” by Alec Derwent Hope, 2008).

Metaphors have also been used by Mackellar to create a deeper meaning in her poem. Three times, she has likened Australia to jewels: “ I love her jewel-sea,”, “ The sapphire-misted mountains”, and “ an opal-hearted country,”

Sapphires and opals are precious; they are called so because they are difficult to find. Also, precious stones require cutting and polishing before it shines - this ties in with her sense of pride as an Australian because she believes that the people of her country are hard-working people who are assiduous and strong-minded.

Opals, especially, are rich and iridescent, which makes it an apt description of Australia as it encompasses Australia's goodness, as well as the challenges involved (Buck, Unknown date). Metaphors were also used by Hope to create a different image of Australia. In the first stanza, "A Nation of trees, drab green and desolate grey In the field uniform of modern wars..." He compared the green and grey of the trees to the "field uniform of modern wars" to show that he sees Australia as bleak, dull and almost colourless.

It is also a metaphor for Australia's tendency to fade into the background and not receive much attention as green and grey were also worn by soldiers during wars as a way of camouflage (Unknown, Literature Commentary on "Australia" by Alec Derwent Hope, 2008). Hope believes that Australia is old: "Last of lands, the emptiest. A woman beyond her change of life, a breast still tender but within the womb is dry" By comparing Australia to a woman and her breast, I believe that Hope considers Australia to be young by the world's standards, but the most empty.

Hope believes that Australia utilises external beauty, but has no inner beauty, even though it has the capacity to do otherwise (Unknown, Literature Commentary on "Australia" by Alec Derwent Hope, 2008).

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Mackellar's ideology is somewhat similar to Hope's, but she paints a glossier picture of Australia, speaking of the country as a tough, challenging land where flood and fire are inherent parts of the landscape.

Yet, for all its wilderness and ferocity, it can be a generous land, and those who live in it will share a natural connection to the land. This ideology is exemplified in "My Country" through the lines "All you who have not loved her, You will not understand..." It is as if she is advertising Australia to foreigners, as opposed to Hope who is really just stating his personal observations of Australia to outsiders.

After investigating these two poems "My Country" by Dorothea Mackellar and "Australia" by A. D. Hope, we can see that there is much to be said about Australian landscape and the differences in Australian values in-between time periods. Mackellar and Hope, through the use of meaningful diction and imagery techniques, have created powerful poems that have passed through time into our hands, in the hopes that their love for Australia will be shared among the younger generation of today.