

Language as a way to contrast life in cities and the bush



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Through the manipulation of textual forms and conventions, composers portray unique cultural experiences in their texts. In the short story 'The Drover's Wife' by Henry Lawson, composed in 1892, the writer illustrates the unique, harsh environment of Australian bush culture and its downgrading physical and mental effects on the inhabitants living there. The text explores how a desolate, arid, and severe bush environment is disparate to urban culture, and how the bush environment can weaken a community to the point that their individuality is subverted to the opposite gender. Ultimately, through the effective manipulation and utilization of language forms and features, composers are able to capture unique experiences in different and contrasting cultures.

The text explores how the harsh environment of the Australian bush forces the subversion of cultural identity. The mother in the text has her role and identity subverted into that of a male's, as a result of the father's absence from the family. This is represented through the juxtaposition in, 'the gaunt, sun-browned bush woman dashes from the kitchen,' the writer compares the kitchen to a woman who is surprisingly different in appearance to that of a female living in a normal urban culture. Her appearance as tanned and gaunt is not suited to the usual social norm of Australia at the time. The writer purposely contrasts these two things together to contrast the uniqueness of bush culture. The kitchen is a domesticated area which is suited to the female. The audience expects a clean and presentable, healthy woman to come out from here, but instead they find an emaciated woman deprived of energy and strength. This lethargy showcases that the woman has been working extremely hard, much more than her usual domesticated roles.

Further elicited by the adjective of 'sun-browned' the audience knows the woman has worked outside as well - taking on the roles of the male. This is extremely unique as to the more laid-back, domesticated life of a woman in urban culture. The woman is dominant in the bush environment, not the male. Thus, it is clear that cultural experiences in the bush are far different to other urban cultures. Lawson has effectively represented this through his manipulation of language and is able to portray a unique experience of culture in the Australian bush where identities are subverted.

The composer highlights a unique culture of the Australian bush by portraying it as an arid, harsh, and brutal environment which is desolate from any help or assistance. The use of distinctive visuals paints a picture of a barren outback where life is a struggle. This struggle is represented through the visual imagery in, 'four ragged, dried up children,' which shows the profound effect the Australian outback has had on its inhabitants. The composer creates a vivid picture of withered and weak young boys created by the Australian bush. Unlike the usual environment, where children would be more active, healthy, and clean, Australian bush culture has shown to be suppressive the people living there. In addition, the adjective of 'dried-up' being used to describe the children emphasizes how severe bush culture affects the people living there. It would normally be used to describe inanimate objects, but instead has described a living thing - the children take on characteristics of a dry environment. Furthermore, through the negative connotation in, 'no horizon...nothing to relieve the eye...,' with the repetition of the negative terms 'no' and 'nothing,' an image of a barren, desolate and arid land is pictured. The audience sees a depressing land

where 'nothing is relieving' in sight. Lawson has illuminated the hardships of a unique bush culture where all is struggle and adversity, due to its harsh environment. He has showcased a unique culture that is diverse to an urban culture where life is much easier because of the better environment.

Lawson highlights how the unique culture of the Australian bushland puts gender dominance to a more extreme level. Tommy, the eldest son, reflects his father as well as the male culture pertinent to the time. Through the exclamatory sentence in, " Stop there, mother! I'll have him! Stand back!", the audience is shown a picture of a young boy pushing his mother back to protect her from the danger of the snake. In widespread culture, the father would be the dominator of the family who seeks to protect his children and family. However, Lawson has showcased here that due to the absence of the father, the male children have stepped up to protect the household.

Tommy's actions showcase this where he believes he is able to protect his mother from the danger. In addition, the dialogue of " stand back" shows how Tommy confidently believes he is able of removing the threat and his mother is not. This further showcases how a unique bush environment with harsh conditions can force gender dominance to a much higher level.

Community culture in the bush is unique to urban culture as the youngsters living there are made to be defenders of the family, not the adults. Lawson's effective manipulation of language causes the audience to understand an exclusive environment which is far different from other cultures.

In *The Drover's Wife*, Henry Lawson illuminates the unique aspects of community culture in the Australian bushland and how these aspects significantly differ to experiences of Australians living in urban areas.

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Through the manipulation of stylistic features of language, Lawson portrays the culture of the Australian outback where struggles and hardships are never uncommon. The frequency of the harsh, arid environment adds to the struggle of life. The text has accurately depicted the unique culture of bushland in the Australian context, and audiences have their understandings enlightened from the effective manipulation of language to portray a special environment.