

Get Me Out Of Here!: Foolish and Fearless Convict Escapes

AUTHOR

PAULINE DEEVES

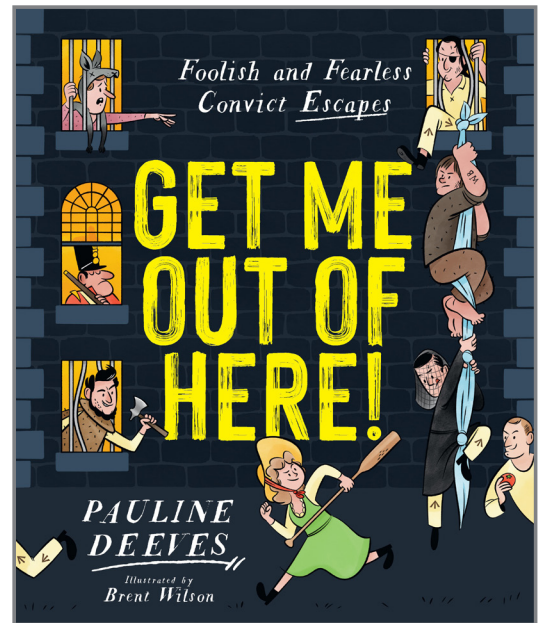
ILLUSTRATOR

BRENT WILSON

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

Meet the convicts behind Australia's most rascally, dastardly prison escapes.

Gifted geniuses or total goofballs? You be the judge!

Featuring Moondyne Joe, Mary Bryant, and a guy who put on a kangaroo skin and hopped away (literally), this fun and engaging collection brings our country's early colonial past to life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pauline Deeves has been a teacher for more than 30 years with experience from kindergarten to college, including 15 years as a teacher librarian. She has contributed to many educational and children's publications and reviewed manuscripts for educational publishers. Pauline has published more than 200 magazine articles in Australia and overseas and has written several books. She is a regular visitor to schools, presenting writing workshops for both students and teachers.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Brent Wilson is an illustrator whose art is characterised by a playful mid-century aesthetic. With its bold colours, loose lines and jaunty characters, his work inspires nostalgia for the children's books and advertising campaigns of the 1950s and '60s. His illustrations regularly appear in major national publications and, recently, Brent illustrated the children's book *Koalas Like To...* by Shae Millward, which was shortlisted for the 2021 Australian Book Design Awards.

BEFORE READING

- Look closely at the cover of *Get Me Out of Here!* and discuss what kind of a book you think this will be. Note that the subheading of the book is 'Foolish and Fearless Convict Escapes' before discussing the following:
 - How would you describe the people featured on the cover?
 - How could you tell they were convicts? (Hint: clothes, jail cells)
 - Where do you think the 'Here!' in the title refers to?
 - In what country might these people have been born?
 - Why might they have been transported to Australia?
 - Why do you think they are so keen to escape?

- Which person on the cover isn't a convict?
- Would you describe *Get Me Out of Here!* as fiction or non-fiction? Why?
- Turn to the map of Australia appearing opposite the book's Contents page and ask students what the buildings on the map have in common. (Answer: they are all prisons built during the convict period.)

COMPREHENSION

Moondyne Joe's Story (pp 5–11)

- Why was Moondyne Joe sentenced to three years in jail?
- Who do you think shot the horse and scraped the skin away from where Moondyne Joe had left his brand? What made you think this?
- Why did strangers help Moondyne Joe by letting him sleep in their stables and giving him food?
- How did Moondyne Joe 'trick' his prison guard to escape?
- [True or False] Well-behaved convicts could eventually earn a ticket of leave, which allowed them to work for themselves.
- [True or False] Iron fetters were usually a type of handcuff.
- [True or False] Some convicts used fat or soap to slip out of their chains.
- Why do we only have photos of convicts in Tasmania and Western Australia?
- Why did convicts who were made to wear leg irons develop a strange way of walking?
- How did the authorities make sure that Joseph Ralph never, ever escaped again?

Edward Ryder's Story (pp 53–57)

- Edward Ryder was sent to which gaol in 1853?
- What was the name of the Governor of the gaol?
- The Governor's wife is easily recognisable in town because she wears a...
- Why do the protests in Ballarat make the guards in the gaol nervous?
- Why doesn't anyone notice Edward walking out of the gaol?

AFTER READING

- Which of the escapes featured in *Get Me Out of Here!* would you choose to win the following (In your answer, try to explain what it is about that particular escape that made you vote for it):
 - The Funniest Award
 - The Bravest Award
 - The Stupidest Award
 - The Cleverest Award
 - The Saddest Award.
- Describe in your own words what the following mean:
 - Bolter
 - Centipede
 - Bail up
 - Croppy
 - Canary
 - Lag
 - Mang
 - Pugilists.
- Turn to the end of the book to find the Glossary and Index. What purpose does each serve? Why might a Glossary and Index be useful in a book such as *Get Me Out of Here!*?

ACTIVITIES

- Imagine you are a reporter working for the *Van Diemen's Land Gazette* and you are given the job of covering James Porter's court appearance after he is charged with escape and piracy. Write a news article explaining who James Porter is, how he came to escape with a ship, where he went with the ship, and how he was caught and sent back to Australia. You might also like to mention the famous scientist he is likely to have met while in Chile in 1835. (p 19)
- Write a script and perform it in front of the class based off one of the following script outlines:
 - Write a script between two characters talking in a gaol late at night. One of the characters is Billy Hunt and the other is the new prisoner in the cell next to Billy's. The new prisoner should ask Billy if he has ever tried to escape from the gaol and Billy should explain the episode where he dressed as a kangaroo.
 - Write a script between two characters talking over a counter in a Hobart store. One of the characters is the storekeeper, William Buckley, and the other is someone wanting to find out more about the local Wadawurrung people. In the script, be sure to have William explain what he learned from the local Indigenous people and how he came to learn it.
- Imagine you are either James Wilson or Mary Bryant writing a diary entry five years after your escape. In the entry, make sure you describe how you feel about leaving Australia, if you have any regrets about escaping, and what your best or worst moment on the journey was.