

TEACHER NOTES

'Knockabout Cricket' by N.McMullin, illustrated by A.Walters

One Day Hill Publishing

SYNOPSIS (PLOT)

'Knockabout Cricket' is a story told through the eyes of a squatters son, James Edgar, growing up on his parent's pastoral station 'Pine Hills' at Harrow in Western Victoria.

It is the story of the famous indigenous cricket player, Johnny Mullagh, and is set in 1865 when James Edgar has arrived home from boarding school to discover that it's shearing time at Pine Hills Station.

The story narrative is a fictional account of how Johnny Mullagh may have come to play cricket.

As pastoral runs in this era were typically very large, Pine Hills Station was 30,000 acres, there were many sheep to be shorn. Shearing was a demanding time of year and all the adults were extremely busy working during this annual period of 'shearing time'.

During these periods, James was very concerned that his holiday would be boring as there was no-one around to play cricket with. In these hard working times though, children fortunately had the freedom to roam and play with native fauna and pets and with the local Aboriginal children.

James managed to fill in his time and fulfill his passion for cricket by organising casual games after the shearers knocked-off, which was usually around 5pm. They played cricket for the pure enjoyment of the game although they were happy to prepare for any pastoral challenge matches coming up on the calendar. Not much of an excuse was necessary to play a game of cricket. Whoever was around usually joined in, including station owners, neighbouring stations owners, managers, roustabouts, drovers, groomsmen, gardeners, fencers, spiltters, and rabbiters.

The definition of 'Knockabout Cricket' means 'a casual game of cricket' with rules modified to suit the environment. This meant it could be played anywhere. There were usually no wickets and the bat and the ball would be typically home made and rudimentary.

In the 1860's, the game of cricket was hugely popular and often played between pastoral stations and it was a great revelation by the early settlers to see how wonderfully well Aboriginal people were at playing cricket.

Johnny Mullagh's real name was 'Unaarrimin' and he was born of the Jardwadjali people around 1841 at Pine Hills Station near Harrow in Victoria. He rarely moved far from Pine Hills Station and Mullagh Station, which probably covered his traditional tribal lands.

It was not unusual for Aboriginal people to be nicknamed from the pastoral station they lived.

Local young sportsmen Tom Hamilton (from Bringlebert Station) and William Hayman (from Lake Wallace Station) organised a match between an Aboriginal team and the MCC (Melbourne Cricket Club) in Melbourne. The match was played at the MCG (the Melbourne Cricket Ground) on Boxing Day in 1866 and attracted a crowd of 8,000 spectators. It is one of, if not the earliest matches of the great Boxing Day tradition. It was also the catalyst of an Aboriginal team touring England in 1868. Extraordinarily, this all happened 11 years before Test Cricket.

On the Aboriginal cricket team tour of England, Johnny Mullagh's cricket statistics were outstanding. He bowled an incredible 245 wickets at a bowling average of 10 runs apiece, in addition to scoring the most runs of the tour with 1,698. His performance during the tour is comparable to the best the game has ever seen.

The English crowds loved the Aboriginal teams cricketing prowess and were thrilled with their displays of traditional skills. At the end of a days play they would change into traditional tribal wear such as possum cloaks and feathers to provide demonstrations of boomerang and spear throwing. A player called 'Dick-a-Dick' used a narrow shield to parry away a hail of cricket balls thrown at him by spectators.

However, Johnny Mullagh was the star of the show. He became the 'social darling' of the upper echelons of English high society and ended up with a collection of pictures of English women who admired him. He was a cricketing hero to a white audience and he was a man caught between two worlds.

Johnny Mullagh went on to play professionally with the MCC but after a season, he returned to Harrow.

By this time, a law had been introduced in Australia that Aboriginals could not leave their designated Missions without written permission from the 'Board of Protection for Aboriginals.' This 'restriction of movement' ruined any opportunities that cricket may have had to offer an Aboriginal person and it was an absolute tragedy.

Johnny Mullagh continued to play for the Harrow Cricket Club right until the end of his life in 1891. He dominated the batting and bowling averages, and the locals recalled how he would emerge from the bush and, with seemingly no practice, perform like a champion.

Johnny Mullagh's life was never free from discrimination, but he rose above it with dignity and has been described as humble, upright and quiet. He refused to live on a Mission and he was a great advocate for Aboriginal rights. He never married and lived out his days alone with his dogs by a waterhole at Pine Hills. Among his belongings when he passed away was a miniature portrait of a lady he had met in England.

Johnny Mullagh is a true sporting legend - his feats making him one of Australia's first international cricketing stars.

THEMES: LEARNING, INCLUSION, FRIENDSHIP, RESPECT

Anyone who loves playing games - enjoys learning new games.

Cricket was a game Johnny Mullagh had never played before. The warrior skills he had been taught and had mastered from his people, he easily applied to cricket. Spear throwing, fighting with shields and hunting skills had all held him in good stead to play cricket. His reflexes were fast, and his hand-eye co-ordination was apparently exceptional.

Aboriginal cricketers were athletic and described in the 'Hamilton Spectator' newspaper as 'daring cricketers, displaying a great athleticism and aptitude for the game'.

Johnny Mullagh became known for his famous signature shot. He would drop onto one knee to a fast rising ball holding the bat over his shoulder, perpendicular to the ground. The ball would touch the blade and shoot high over the wicket keeper's head to the boundary. This shot was an adaptation of a technique traditionally used in tribal fighting whereby a narrow shield would deflect spears. It was a dangerous shot, but spectacularly mastered by Johnny Mullagh (and it's now being used today, especially in T20 Cricket).

The young men of these pastoral stations taught the aboriginal cricketers to play and encouraged their unique skills. James Edgar from Pine Hills, brought over arm bowling from Scotch College in Melbourne to Harrow. Tom Hamilton and William Hayman and other pastoral families were also very supportive and encouraging.

From historical journals, these friendships were genuine and true and respectful.

Aboriginal cricketers were admired and praised, particularly in England. But when they returned home to Australia they received a mixed reception.

Some schools of thought were that one; the Aboriginal Cricketers were exploited in England. This may have been true as they didn't just play cricket to entertain the crowds, they also performed in athletic events to show their prowess. Secondly, some white people may have been considered to be jealous of the Aboriginals cricketers' success.

As previously mentioned, after the tour of England, the 'Board of Protection for Aboriginals' restricted Aboriginal people's rights to move around and they had to live on allocated land called Missions. This restricted movement meant that Aboriginal Cricketers careers were effectively over as they couldn't leave the Missions to travel around country Victoria or go to Melbourne or Sydney to play cricket.

Sport has always been a vehicle for crossing cultural boundaries, and reducing racism and discrimination but perhaps at this time in our history it had the opposite effect.

Children however, bring other children together by learning how to create friendships through play.

WRITING STYLE

My writing style is historical based narrative non-fiction. This means that it's a true story set in a period of time (1860's) and with the use of dialogue to transport us back to this place. The beautiful illustrations also take us to this setting, making the story feel real.

'Knockabout Cricket' is interspersed with fact boxes relating to that period of time and a biography of Johnny Mullagh's amazing life can also be found at the back of the book.

We have also included fascinating images of the Aboriginal Cricket team that toured England in 1868 and a 'Map of Fielding Cricket' positions to encourage children to learn and understand the great game of cricket.

My choice of language is relatively informal, as it would have been at that time in Australia's history. However, my choice of certain terminology has been deliberate such as these choice words of praise 'Capital bowling' which was a fieldsman comment quoted in an old newspaper clipping about Johnny Mullagh's bowling skills.

My point of view is omnipresent/first person; from James Edgar's point of view.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

The purpose of writing this book was to acknowledge the amazing life of Johnny Mullagh. Not only was he an elite cricketer, but his persona captured my imagination. From everything I have read about Johnny Mullagh, he was a unique individual. He has been described as humble, upright and quiet, all qualities to be admired. But his cricketing career was cut short, taken from him and his life ended in tragically sad circumstances. His story was one that needed to be told.

Johnny Mullagh was the star of English cricket. He became the 'social darling' of the upper echelons of English high society and ended up with a collection of pictures of English ladies who admired him. He was a cricketing hero to a white audience, but he was a man caught between two worlds. He never felt fully accepted in either society. Due to the loss of ancestral lands and the demise of his tribal people, he keenly felt the loss of the old life.' He knew he could never go back to that. But he also knew he would never feel comfortable living in a city.

After the Aboriginal cricket teams tour of England, Johnny Mullagh went on to play professionally with the MCC but after a season, he returned to Harrow. He played for the Harrow Cricket Club right until the end of his life in 1891 where he dominated the batting and bowling averages. The locals recalled how he would emerge from the bush and, with seemingly no practice, perform like a champion.

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AUTHOR /ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Neridah McMullin, Author

Neridah lives in the city, but has never forgotten where she came from and is a country girl at heart. Her humour, sensitivity and love of nature shine in her writing.

An award winning writer and poet, Neridah is passionate about culturally significant narrative.

'Ponkiddoodle' was Neridah's first children's picture book, released by Little Steps at New Frontier in November 2009.

In 2010 she launched the first of a trilogy of chapter books for primary aged children with One Day Hill Publishing. These stories are historically based 'Aussie rules' folklore stories for the Collingwood Football Club. And in 2012, Neridah launched an 'aussie rules' football book called 'Kick it to me'. This is also a historical based Australian narrative story and recently received a full endorsement from the Australian Football League.

'Knockabout Cricket' is supported by Cricket Australia and their junior cricket education program, which is called 'Smart Cricket'.

Neridah aspires to write stories that matter; some are little known, some are long forgotten. You can read more about Neridah at her website www.neridahmcmullin.com Or on her blog neridahmcmullin.wordpress.com

Ainsley Power Walters, Artist

Born in Melbourne, Ainsley has been illustrating professionally since 2009. She studied Arts and Science at university, focusing especially on art history. Her love of history is often reflected in her art.

In 2012, one of Ainsley's paintings from entitled 'Colonial Cricket at Pine Hills Station, Victoria' was shortlisted for the National Cricket Art Prize.

You can learn more about Ainsley and see more of her wonderful artwork at www.onedayhill.com.au

EDITORIAL COMMENT

In every age, there are works of art and acts of public courage that matter. One Day Hill Publishing attempts to capture aspects of Australian culture, which are threatened and hopefully assist in their preservation.

Australia is a land of myth and magic; its great stories are the equal of anywhere else's. Stories that constitute our everyday lives need proper telling since these are the way we find wisdom and courage to move forward.

Neridah McMullin and Ainsley Power Walters are an important part of the One Day Hill team, bringing culturally significant narrative to our children, facilitating cultural identity and pride in Australian history.

STUDY NOTES

- SPORT: Australia is a very sporty country. Throughout the year you're likely to see various sports being played. Can you name the sporting seasons with the months they are played?

Complete a table by shading the months each sport is played:

Write down five interesting points from the table.

- FEELINGS: *"And as they walked back to the woolshed, James put an arm around Johnny's shoulders to explain the rules of the game."*

How do you think Johnny Mullagh feels in this sentence? Why?

Authors, such as Neridah McMullin, can describe how characters are feeling by describing their actions. It is much more interesting to read a sentence like the one above rather than being told how the character is feeling. For example: *Johnny was sad.*

Write sentences that show James and Johnny feeling the following emotions: Happiness, Surprise, Fear, Confusion.

Can you find other examples in *Knockabout Cricket* where Neridah McMullin has used actions to describe a character's feelings?

- INVENT YOUR OWN SIGNATURE SHOT:

Johnny Mullagh was clever for creating his own unique signature shot. Do you think you could invent your own?

Brainstorm ideas for your signature shot:

Now you've brainstormed ideas, circle the elements you will include in your game.

Mark the special features/areas:

- INSTRUCTIONS:

Neridah McMullin has written detailed descriptions in *Knockabout Cricket*. Her description of Johnny batting and bowling could be taken straight from a cricket instructional book! Add diagrams to SOME OF Neridah's descriptions.

Write your own instructions (with diagrams) for a different sporting skill.

- VENN DIAGRAM:

The game of cricket we know and love today has certainly changed a lot since the early days.

Complete the Venn Diagram below comparing then and now.

In the circle labelled CRICKET YESTERDAY, list all the things that were specific to that sport then.

Do the same for the CRICKET TODAY circle. In the area where the circles overlap, write the features that cricket still has in common.

- CALCULATE THE SCORES:

The table below shows the results for a cricket match. It is your job to calculate each team's runs and individual player averages. When you have completed each result, cut out each player and paste them to create a ladder showing the best batting and bowling averages.

- KNOCKABOUT CRICKET – DICE CRICKET:

Don't you hate it when it's raining outside and you can't play cricket?

Here's your solution... Dice Cricket! Dice Cricket is played by 2 people with 1 dice.

Decide whose team will bat first. The batter rolls the dice, scoring however many runs appear on the dice on each roll. However, if the batter rolls a 5, it is an appeal for the fielding team.

The fielding team then rolls the dice and the following applies:

1= Batter out hit wicket

2= Batter out bowled

3= Batter out caught

4= Batter out LBW

5= Not out

6= Batter out run out

The batting team continues to bat until 10 batters have been dismissed. The teams then swap roles.

Batting Scorecard Team 1

Batsman	Tally	Total Runs	Out. How?	Team Total
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
			Total Runs	

Batting Scorecard Team 2

Batsman	Tally	Total Runs	Out. How?	Team Total
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
			Total Runs	