INTRODUCTION

"Now everyone can discover the secrets The Happiness Box contains."

In 1942, after the fall of Singapore to the Japanese, Australian soldier Sergeant David “Griff” Griffin became a prisoner of war in a military compound outside the gates of the infamous Changi Prison, where women and children had also been interned. With Christmas approaching, it was suggested that POWs make wooden toys for the children cooped up nearby. The men and their captors agreed. But Griff had a special present in mind … he had decided to write a book, which his mate, Captain Leslie Greener, would illustrate.

*The Happiness Box* was said to contain the secrets to happiness. But the enemy was suspicious when they read a reference to a character named “Winston”. The book was supposedly destroyed, only to be miraculously recovered after the war ended, and later published.

In this picture book, award-winning creators Mark Greenwood and Andrew McLean bring to life the inspirational true story of a book that became a National Treasure. “The original book was written to chase away fear and to give children hope, and contained the ‘secrets to happiness’ such as the importance of friendship, kindness, compassion, generosity, loyalty, faith, courage and hard work.”

*The Happiness Box* not only survived the war – it toured Australia along with Sir Don Bradman’s cricket bat and Ned Kelly’s helmet as part of the “National Treasures from Australia’s Great Libraries” exhibition. The book currently resides in the State Library of NSW.

This new book by Mark Greenwood and Andrew McLean is a tribute to this “national treasure” and the power of books to transcend circumstances – and offer hope and happiness.
MARK GREENWOOD – AUTHOR

Mark Greenwood is an author with a passion for history. His books, *The Legend of Moondyne Joe* and *The Legend of Lasseter’s Reef* have both won the West Australian Premier’s Award. *Simpson and His Donkey* was a CBCA Honour Book. *Jandamarra*, illustrated by Terry Denton, was shortlisted for the CBCA Eve Pownall Award and the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards for Children’s Literature. Mark often teams with his wife, illustrator Frané Lessac, to produce award-winning books such as *Drummer Boy of John John*, *Magic Boomerang*, *Ned Kelly & The Green Sash* and *Midnight – the story of a light horse*. Mark’s recent chapter book series delves into some of Australia’s most baffling “History Mysteries”. In 2018 he will celebrate the release of *The Happiness Box*, illustrated by Andrew McLean. Visit his website for further information: www.markgreenwood.com.au

ANDREW McLEAN – ILLUSTRATOR

Andrew McLean grew up in the Victorian country town of Bairnsdale. He trained as a painter and teacher, and taught in secondary schools before becoming a lecturer in painting and drawing at Caulfield Institute of Technology. He has been a full-time artist now for more than thirty years. Andrew and his wife Janet have created many picture books together, and Andrew also illustrates books written by other authors. Many of his books have been award winners: he has won the Children’s Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award three times. *Bob the Railway Dog* (written by Corinne Fenton) was his first work with Walker. Visit the website he shares with his wife Janet Mclean: www.mcleanpicturebooks.com/

DR ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT – TEACHER NOTES AUTHOR

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children’s literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011, she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children’s Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children’s Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the Queensland Writer’s Centre’s Johnno Award.
A. Critical Literacy: Before and After Reading the Book

- What do your students know about World War II events in Singapore?
- What does the cover of this book suggest to them?
- What did they learn about World War II from reading this book? Make a list of facts and impressions.

B. Themes & Curriculum Topics

These Teachers’ Notes are aimed at primary school teachers of students in years 2–5 and written to the Australian National Curriculum <www.australiancurriculum.edu.au> Topics relevant to specific curriculum areas are listed below. The following are general themes or values to be explored with students.

- Happiness
- Hope
- Friendship
- Kindness and compassion
- Generosity
- Loyalty
- Faith
- Courage
- Hard work

**Discussion Point:** Choose any one of the values above and discuss in relation to this picture book. What other values are shown in this book?

**Discussion Point:** What are the secrets to happiness? Discuss the fact that these “secrets” are different for each person. Would those secrets change if you were a prisoner of war?

- The Importance of Books and Reading

**Discussion Point:** Mark Greenwood writes: “The Happiness Box is a book about a book – a story about a story. It shows that books can also be a secret to happiness. In the original The Happiness Book book, when the characters dig up the box, what they find inside are books … So for Griff, reading was a key ingredient in the secret to happiness.” How can stories help people to transcend circumstances?

**Discussion Point:** Where did the books come from that Griff wanted the soldiers to read? Mark Greenwood writes: “Books were donated from the kitbags and some were trucked in after being looted from Singapore. ‘Books are the answer,’ as Colonel put it to the Japanese commandant, ‘to prevent thoughts of escape.’” How did this deceptively boisterous scene fail to warn against the later hardships endured by prisoners of war?

**Activity:** Research the definition of, and rights of, prisoners of war in sites such as The Australian War Memorial <www.awm.gov.au>

C. Humanities & Social Sciences

- World War II

**Discussion Point:** What were the causes of World War II and how did it escalate from a conflict in Europe to the Asian region?

**Activity:** Research prison camps and the treatment of prisoners of war during World War II by all countries involved in the conflict.

Discussion Point: Why did the enemy imprison women and children, as well as soldiers?

Activity: Investigate aspects of life in Changi such as work, educational programs, health, food, religion and leisure pursuits. [See specific points below.]

Discussion Point: Research the facilities at Changi in relation to this quote:

“The dismay, the bitterness of disappointment which followed the first efforts of army cooks to cope with rice defy description. It appeared on the plate as a tight ball of greyish, gelatinous substance, nauseous in its lack of flavour and utterly repulsive. The fish, when it came, which was not often, proclaimed its arrival by an overpowering stench and массed squadrons of flies. To gaze on a sack of rotting shrimps moving slowly under the impulse of a million maggots was a poor prelude to the meals which followed, meals which were nothing but a series of gastronomical disasters.”

(Sweeting, 1968, p 513)

Activity: Due to the poor conditions, lack of sanitation, overcrowding and inadequate food available, diseases such as dysentery and malaria were rife. Research the health of these prisoners and the treatment they received.

Activity: Research the lives of Sir David Griffin CBE (8 July 1915–25 March 2004) who set up the Changi Literary Society, and Captain (Herbert) Leslie Greener (13 February 1900–8 December 1974), who managed the Changi Education Centre – the two men who wrote and illustrated the original The Happiness Box.

Activity: Study the lives of any other famous figures who fought in this conflict. For example, Colonel Sir Ernest Edward “Weary” Dunlop, AC, CMG, OBE (12 July 1907–2 July 1993) was a surgeon who was captured by the Japanese and was renowned for his leadership qualities while working on the Burma-Thailand railway. John George Glyn (9 April 1909–2 November 1987) was another physician tasked with transporting British and Australian wounded from Singapore hospitals to Changi prison and Indians to Bidadari Island. Writer and broadcaster, Russell Braddon (25 January 1921 – 20 March 1995) was a POW and wrote The Naked Island (1952) about those experiences.

Activity: Research the life of Sir Frederick Gallagher Gallegghan (11 January 1897–20 April 1971) known as “Black Jack” who was Commander of the 2/30th Battalion and “became a prisoner of war when the British surrendered on 15 February. With the removal of senior officers from Singapore in August, he assumed command of the AIF; from March 1944 he was deputy commander of all allied prisoners in Malaya. It was for his role at Changi that he was to achieve lasting fame.” (Griffin, 1996) Murray Griffin painted a portrait of him, which is available in the Australian War Memorial Collection online, as are photos.

Activity: Read the postcards written from Changi and Thailand by Keith Sheerim, 2/19th Battalion, AIF Archive number: 2191 Preferred name: Smiler. Date interviewed: 06 July, 2004 ‘Australians at War Film Archive’ UNSW Canberra >australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/2191-keith-sheerim> Invite students to write their own postcards.

Activity: Captain Greener commanded the Changi Education Centre. “Lectures and classes on a wide range of subjects were organised and a library was maintained.” (Sweeting, 1968, p 517) What subjects were taught there?

Activity: David Griffin and other poets were all members of the Changi Literary Group, 1942–45, formed out of the A.I.F. Education Centre, originally established at Selarang POW camp by Brigadier H.B. Taylor. Sir David Griffin arranged the first performance of a selection of these poems at the Selarang Barracks, Singapore, on 13 February 1992, to mark the 50th anniversary of the fall of Singapore. They were later presented in Australia and London and are included in “Poems from Changi prisoner-of-war camp”, Published 1942–1947. Manuscript reference no.: NLA MS 9164” National
Activity: Visit the website: The Changi POW Artwork of Des 1946. paintings of his time there at the Australian War Memorial in Malaya, and who taught art at Changi; he later exhibited January 1992) who had been an official Australian war artist as Australian (Vaughan) Murray Griffin (11 November 1903–1 CBE, RDI (3 March 1920–30 December 2011) and others such famous British illustrator Ronald William Fordham Searle, Activity: Research artists imprisoned at Changi, such as the

Here stand I

There at the gates of freedom,

Must we emerge? Aye, soldier, aye,

Beckon unchanging to the sunless,

The earth is quiet now,

And the sun and sky

Beckon unchanging to the sunless,

Must we emerge? Aye, soldier, aye,

There at the gates of freedom,

Here stand I

(Poem quoted in Doogue 2003)

Activity: Research artists imprisoned at Changi, such as the famous British illustrator Ronald William Fordham Searle, CBE, RDI (3 March 1920–30 December 2011) and others such as Australian (Vaughan) Murray Griffin (11 November 1903–1 January 1992) who had been an official Australian war artist in Malaya, and who taught art at Changi; he later exhibited paintings of his time there at the Australian War Memorial in 1946.

Activity: Visit the website: The Changi POW Artwork of Des Bettany <changipowart.com>, which offers a humorous visual insight into the experiences of POWs at Changi.


Activity: Visit the images on the National Library of Australia’s TROVE site: “Walter Andrew Sarkies (1923–2012) Collection” TROVE <trove.nla.gov.au/picture/result?q=text %3A%22Walter+Andrew+Sarkies+collection.%22> He was a member of the 2/29th Infantry Battalion interned at Changi where he began to draw and paint. What insights into prison life do his images give you?

Activity: Read about British couple Isobel and Donald Grist (Enoch, 2012) who were imprisoned in Changi and who left letters and paintings (done by Isobel) as a record.


Activity: Prisoners also produced two camp newspapers, The Changi Guardian and Changi Chimes, which contained writing and images (Nichols and French, 2015). Invite students to use the Bibliography to discover excerpts from these papers.


Activity: Prisoners played sport to occupy themselves and as relief from work. Research, for example, the “Changi Brownlow” – the medal awarded to the best football player at Changi.

Activity: Read about the role of the clergy at Changi, and of Army Chaplain Eric Cordingley and Staff Sergeant Harry Stogden’s legacy on the website The Changi Cross <thechangicross.co.uk/>

• Australians in World War II

Discussion Point: Australians fought in many regions during World War II. Research their involvement in the events before and after the fall of Singapore.

Activity: Research your family history to discover whether any of your great-grandparents or grandparents fought in World War II or were involved in the events described in this book.

Activity: Listen to some of the interviews in the “Australians at War Film Archive” UNSW Canberra <australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au> and discuss some of the facts you discover.

• Australia’s relationship with other countries, particularly Asian countries

Discussion Point: Australia is made up of Indigenous people as its first inhabitants and of those from many other cultures. We tend to identify with our European antecedents but actually have a long history of immigration by people from Asian cultures residing here. Research Australia’s links with Asian countries via immigration, diplomacy and foreign policies, and foreign trade.
**D. English Language & Literacy**

- **Plot & Structure**

**Activity:** This is a simple chronological narrative. It comes to a turning point when the book is lost, presumably destroyed, and is resolved by the book’s discovery. Imagine another possible ending for this story.

- **Voice**

**Activity:** This story is told in third person from Griff’s perspective. Rewrite a section in first person to discover how differently the book would read.

- **Style and Use of Language**

**Activity:** Examples of personification (“hardship lurked”), alliteration (“dollop of slop”) and simile (“worked like slaves”) appear in this text. Rewrite one of the scenes using these or other devices, such as metaphor.

- **Writing Exercises**

**Activity:** Write a diary entry as if penned by David Griffin about the rejection of his book by General Saitō.

**Activity:** Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the word “Happiness”.

**Activity:** Haiku is a Japanese form of poem. It consists of 3 lines; the first and last lines have 5 syllables and the middle line has 7 syllables. (The lines rarely rhyme.) Invite students to write a poem on the theme of feelings.

**Activity:** A tetractys is a five-line poem with 1, 2, 3, 4, 10 syllables in each line. Invite students to write a tetractys on the theme of war. [Use Worksheet 4 for these poetry exercises]

- **Comprehension**

**Activity:** Since the background to this story is likely to be unfamiliar to students, test their comprehension by asking them basic questions about the text. [See also Worksheet 3]

- **Further Reading Ideas for Class Discussion**

**Activity:** Read other picture books and novels about World War II and discuss and compare to this book. [See also Worksheet 3]

**Activity:** Encourage students to conduct an online search on TROVE <trove.nla.gov.au> to discover primary sources in newspapers and other digital materials about Changi Prison.

**E. Visual Literacy & Visual Arts Activities**

- **Cover**

**Activity:** Examine the cover of this book, which depicts the entrance gates of Changi Prison with lines of prisoners waiting to be taken inside. Create your own interpretation of this image. Then view this photo of prisoners cheering as they leave...
the prison: “1945, English, Photograph edition: Great moment arrives when cheering, happy British prisoners leave the huge iron gates of Changi prison behind [picture].”
<trove.nla.gov.au/work/156496611?q=changi+prison&c=picture&versionId=182152226>

- **Medium**

**Activity:** The medium used by Andrew McLean in this picture book is his distinctive pen and watercolour in subtle pastel hues. Captain Greener (in the story) makes his art “with colour collected from flowers, leaves and clay”. Experiment with students in making watercolours in this way.

- **Re-Imagine a Scene**

**Activity:** Invite students to choose a scene in this book to reinterpret in their own style and medium. Create a classroom display of the students’ responses.

- **Critical Literacy**

**Activity:** Critical Literacy may be encouraged by inviting students to examine the visual text carefully. For example, in the image of the men performing on stage, each of the five characters holds a letter that spells what word? (Answer: SMILE.) And what two words appear on the mat on the stage? (Answer: CARRY ON.) [See also Worksheet 2]

- **Graphic Images and Cartoons**

**Activity:** Cartoons were used by some Changi prison inmates such as Ronald Searle to explore a lighter side to their experiences. Create a cartoon illustrating some aspect of life in Changi.

**F. Creative Arts**

**Activity:** What would you put in a happiness box if you had one? Invite each student to share something that means a lot to them and create a box of happy things.

**Activity:** Create a book trailer for this book.

**Activity:** Act out a scene from the book, e.g. When the men are making gifts for the children, write a script of how they might have spoken to each other.

**Activity:** Research the songs of the 1940s which the prisoners might have performed in their concerts, e.g. “Chattanooga Choo Choo” (Glenn Miller and His Orchestra with Tex Beneke and the Four Modernaires); “White Christmas” (Bing Crosby with the Ken Derby Singers and Jon Scott Thomas and his Orchestra); “That Old Black Magic” (Glenn Miller and His Orchestra with Skip Nelson and the Modernaires); “Don’t Fence Me In” (Bing Crosby and The Andrews Sisters); “Sentimental Journey” (Les Brown and His Orchestra). Practise singing one of them as a classroom activity.

**Activity:** Create a model theatre like the one that the Australian soldiers make for the children. Use a box as your framework; decorate with curtains; and add a peaked roof to the stage, like the one in this book. Create figures dressed like the men who appear on stage in this book, as well.

**Activity:** Make a simple toy like those the soldiers created. [See Worksheet 1]

**G. Geography**

**Activity:** Investigate a map of Singapore, where the events described in this book took place during World War II.

**H. Further Ideas Using Technology**

**Activity:** Research any of the topics above online.

**Conclusion**

This is an inspiring work about fortitude in overcoming adversity; about care and compassion. It’s about the trials of war and how faith and hope have helped people to survive starvation, torture, disease and the most unimaginable horrors experienced during military conflicts. It’s about the power of books, reading and storytelling to overcome even the direst of circumstances and to create happiness, joy and hope.

**Worksheet Answers**

**Worksheet 1**

**Worksheet 2**

**Worksheet 3**
Answers: 1. 1942. 2. Singapore is surrendered to the Japanese by the British and their allies. 3. The Japanese flag. 4. On the eastern tip of the island of Singapore. 5. Sergeant “Griff” David Griffin. 6. They played football, staged concerts, wrote poetry and participated in education programs. 7. Winston the lizard, Martin the monkey and Wobbly the frog. 8. General Saitō. 9. They were trucked out to work building railways and bridges. 10. In the head of a broom. 11. In a box buried in the barracks’ garden. 12. 1945.

WORKSHEET 1 - *Critical Literacy: Identify the Hand-made Toys*

These images are of hand-made wooden toys, like those created by the soldiers in Changi. Identify each of them.

1. ________________________
2. ________________________
3. ________________________
4. ________________________
5. ________________________
6. ________________________
7. ________________________
8. ________________________

Image attributions:
1. ‘Tiny wooden army truck’ by Thom Quine, https://www.flickr.com/photos/91994044@N00/28461838334. Licence at http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0.
WORKSHEET 2 - Critical Literacy: Identify the Image

Identify the images below, and find examples of them in this book.

1. ________________________
2. ________________________
3. ________________________
4. ________________________
5. ________________________
6. ________________________
7. ________________________
8. ________________________
WORKSHEET 3 - *The Happiness Box Quiz*

1. In what year does this story open?

__________________________________________________________________________________

2. What ‘falls’ in the opening pages of this book?

__________________________________________________________________________________

3. What flag can you see in the second double page spread?

__________________________________________________________________________________

4. Where is Changi Prison camp?

__________________________________________________________________________________

5. What is Griff’s full name?

__________________________________________________________________________________

6. What pastimes which the men enjoyed are mentioned in this book?

__________________________________________________________________________________

7. What are the names of the three characters in Griff’s book?

__________________________________________________________________________________

8. Who forbade Griff to distribute his book and the presents?

__________________________________________________________________________________

9. What happened to many of the men in the camp in the later years of the war?

__________________________________________________________________________________

10. Where did the prisoners hide their radio?

__________________________________________________________________________________

11. Where was The Happiness Box discovered after the war?

__________________________________________________________________________________

12. In what year did World War II end?

__________________________________________________________________________________

Activity sheet © 2018 Walker Books Australia Pty Ltd. All rights reserved. Activity sheet may be copied for classroom use.
WORKSHEET 4 - Poetry Exercises

ACROSTIC POEM

H
A
P
P
I
N
E
S
S

HAIKU POEM

Feelings

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

TETRACTYS POEM

War

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________