



SHORT HEAD AND YARD

TEACHING NOTES



Genre: SHORT STORIES

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Theme 1: Rural life

Theme 2: People interactions

SYNOPSIS

This book of 18 short stories is designed to present a New Zealand agricultural flavour to complement other teaching and study resources. It provides an opportunity to explore various themes as each story has a rural hook as a basis to stimulate thought and later action.

The stories are grouped into six themes of LAND, ANIMALS, ROMANCE, INTERNATIONAL, LEARNING and NOSTALGIA, with three stories in each to introduce different aspects. Each story has a brief synopsis, introductory questions, and some points to be used if appropriate.

PEDAGOGY

These easy-to-read stories of five minutes each are particularly suitable to open and explore avenues for class discussion, debate, group or individual projects on various aspects and influences of rural life and related topics. Students will be encouraged to think about the issue and learn, rather than there being right or wrong answers. It could be helpful to involve a person with rural knowledge and understanding to assist teachers; there will be suitably qualified local retired farming folk who could welcome opportunities for such a casual role.

The individual wide-ranging stories are a particularly suitable resource to fit key learning areas for appropriate NCEA levels in English, Geography and Social Studies. The two questions set for each story are offered as a basis for development to range through Levels 1, 2, 3, and to open story lines to describe, explain and analyse. They can also be supplemented and rephrased to suit tasks, circumstances and associated resources.

THEMES

LAND: People regard and use land differently for different reasons.

CONTRASTS: Realities of rural and urban life contrasted during a Spanish summer holiday.

ICECREAM SUNDAY: Romantic picnic meets Maori land ownership dynamics.

GRANDPA'S GENES: Drought finally ruins three struggling farming generations.

ANIMAL: Farm animals reward care and responsibility with income and pleasure.

IT'S SNOW FUN: Weather conditions influence work with farm animals.

PERCEPTIONS: The beauties and pleasures of farm animals and plants seen through different eyes.

CALF LOVE: Different understandings of livestock farming responsibilities.

ROMANCE: Rural people find romance in different situations and places.

RHYTHMIC ROMANCE: Romance can have physical dimensions.

ACCEPTANCE: A farm upbringing develops resilience.

ROSE PETALLED DESTINY: Rural lives have different advantages and disadvantages.

INTERNATIONAL: Farming had different international aspects, issues and objectives.

EXOTIC GOATS: Goats have different roles in different countries.

THE SHEPHERDESS: NZ needs export markets for more farm products than it consumes.

ANZAC RITUAL -1983: There are equine links between Australia and New Zealand.

LEARNING: Lessons come from all directions, places and occasions.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG: Deer stalking can be a risky sport.

A COUNTRY EDUCATION: Country kids get a broad education.

PHYSICS: Farmers benefit from more education.

NOSTALGIA: Rural people have strong attachments to people, places and things.

THE MALTHOUSE: Heritage buildings are important.

DAD'S CHAIR: Farmers have a desire to keep links to their land.

A DYING COUNTRY SERVICE: Rural life has aspects worth preserving.

INDIVIDUAL STORY QUESTIONS AND SOME RELEVANT POINTS

CONTRASTS

Q1: Is city life better than rural life?

Positive: recreational opportunities, learning opportunities, costs of living

Negative: environmental issues of air and noise pollution, traffic competition, flexibility and variety of work, opportunities for social connections.

Q2: Are there significant technical changes in vegetable growing since manual gardening?

Precision planting seeds and seedlings, mechanical cultivation, matching fertiliser needs to soils and crops, chemical weed control, new plant varieties, computer-controlled irrigation and marketing.

ICECREAM SUNDAY

Q1: Are there differences between urban and rural land?

Urban small sections compared with large farms where access less able to be monitored. Maybe needs different accessibility conventions. Recreation available on rural land.

Q2: Is Maori owned land different from other NZ land?

Difficulties in knowing ownership, historic situations, some Maori land rights need different understanding – origins, urupa, rahui, battle sites.

GRANDPA'S GENES

Q1: What are the main risks for a farming business today?

Climate changes – droughts, floods, plant and animal diseases. Market changes, fluctuating exchange rates, increasing costs, regulations limits and costs. Animal and machinery theft, activists, negative media.

Q2: What encourages people to go farming?

Time with family, build up capital, work with different animals and machinery, work hours flexibility, variety of activities, outside/fresh air, exposure to Nature.

IT'S SNOW FUN

Q1: What farm working conditions are better than in town?

Flexibility, freedom, fresh air, working with animals and machinery, casual clothes and appearance, range of new skills and knowledge to learn on the job, further learning opportunities, career pathway with options, opportunities for initiative, some pay rates.

Q2: What farm working conditions are worse than in town?

Work hours and activities influenced by weather, adverse weather influences, physical demands, unpredictable animals, dangers from machinery and animals, health risks, isolation and distance from town facilities and attractions, some pay rates.

PERCEPTIONS

Q1: Why can farm gardens be better than town gardens?

Size and scope for layout opportunities, farm machinery for cultivation and weed and pest control, farmers' plant growing skills and knowledge, availability of better soils, fertilisers and farm manure, mutual social support as part of rural community life.

Q2: What could the farmer uncle and aunt have done to make their nieces' visit more enjoyable?

Ask what they would like to do/learn on the farm, tuition and responsibility for specific farm tasks – feeding lambs and baking biscuits, let the girls steer the ute in the paddock, confiscate phones.

CALF LOVE

Q1: What issues are raised by Deborah breaking into the farm?

For: believed she was saving the calves from cruelty, a justifiable protest of her beliefs.

Against: trespass issues, risks to herself, ignorance about calf-rearing, graffiti is vandalism.

Q2: What alternative actions could Deborah and the farmer have taken to avoid the confrontation?

Deborah: asked to visit the farm to learn, studied educational resources about animal behaviour.

Farmer: invited activists to visit the farm at various times, bring in a vet for independent expert information for visitors, improved property security, farmed differently.

RHYTHMIC ROMANCE

Q1: Why do some people love working in the high country?

To be part of NZ unique environment, challenge of elements and situations, solitude and few modern supports, working with dogs.

Q2: Is high country able to be farmed?

Yes: Farmers have knowledge, skills, tradition, high country is part of NZ social farming fabric, perpetual lease rights with responsibility to maintain the environment, control weeds/pests at their cost, provide support for visitors and other users of adjoining conservation land, produce fine wool for clothing.

No: Limit access for recreation, destroy biodiversity, freeholding under tenure review allows intensification with possible negative results.

ACCEPTANCE

Q1: Why can a farm upbringing be a good basis for life?

Gradual exposure to understanding and lessons from animals and plants relating to life and general knowledge, opportunities for increasing responsibilities helping parents with farm and home family tasks, more time with parents in a variety of situations to help personal development, part of the camaraderie of the rural community.

Q2: How can farm work be made more attractive to girls?

Improved introduction to opportunities for farm work and varied careers, more mechanisation of physical work, emphasis on specific areas more likely to appeal at various levels in the industry.

ROSE PETALLED DESTINY

Q1: Why did people want to keep farming and living on difficult WWI rehab farms?

Pigheadedness, no other skills, enjoyed the challenge, no other alternative, an escape from war horrors, opportunity to rebuild a future for family and country, cheap if basic living, opportunities to provide cheap food and housing.

Q2: Should small rural schools remain open?

Positive: serve the local community, avoid wasted travel time to larger schools, more personal tuition, greater opportunities for responsibilities, community use of school resources, rural centre.

Negative: limited pupil interactions, greater influence of bad children and teachers, limits on outside activities in sport and education because of costs, time and access, limited team activities.

EXOTIC GOATS

Q1: Are goats genuine farm animals?

Essential in some countries for meat, milk, skins, manure, festivals and gifts, able to utilise available feedstuffs not suitable for other animals, butchering is not possible with a large animal when no refrigeration is available. In NZ goats used to produce milk, meat, mohair and cashmere fibre, and for biological weed control.

Q2: What were the farming risks in Boer goat investment?

Failure of surgical multiplication technique, involvement in a possible Ponzi scheme, Boer goat enthusiasm could fade as fast as previous exotic animal investment schemes.

THE SHEPHERDESS

Q1: What is the significance of money exchange rates to overseas marketing of farm products?

Some countries more volatile than others, daily and longer-term rate changes make costing, quoting and business dealings uncertain and risky, discourages export business. Hedging currency has a cost that may be too expensive for perceived risk, a competitive edge is reduced by caution.

Q2: Is there a market for NZ meat in Mendoza?

Mendoza Argentina renowned for beef, but NZ chilled lamb cuts have market advantages with 60-day shelf life, grass-fed, hormones and disease free. Important for NZ to develop new markets to spread currency, access, distribution and political export risks.

ANZAC RITUAL – 1983

Q1: Is the equine industry important in NZ?

Employment for 5000 people with various career paths, multi-million export income from the sale of breeding and racing horses, GST on local sales, public entertainment and excitement at various levels of involvement, an alternative to Lotto and other gambling forms.

Q2: Why is the Australian Melbourne Cup important to NZ?

Historical rivalry between the two countries, success for past NZ horses and hopes for continuing entries,

world's richest handicap and staying race with prize money of \$A8m, successful promotion to involve public in a major sporting event.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG

Q1: Why is deer stalking a popular sport?

Challenge of outwitting a wild animal, satisfies inherent particularly male hunting instinct, shooting guns, opportunity to experience and enjoy outdoors and mountains, benefits of physical exercise, basis of memories and tales for others less fortunate.

Q2: How could he have been better prepared for hunting in the mountains?

Checked weather forecasts, locator beacon on his person, hunted with a companion, being better clothed for all weathers.

A COUNTRY EDUCATION

Q1: Should the teacher have tried to be more involved in the local community?

School is a vital rural community hub with resources, a universal meeting place for an ongoing common interest in children of various ages and families, teachers have a leading role with responsibility for these children.

Q2: Why is it important for farmers to control the breeding of animals?

Farmers constantly seek improvements in production and profit through genetic gains, pleasure in seeing, knowing and producing good animals, personal reputation as farmers is reflected in their stock, mating time is related to subsequent feeding and management months in advance.

PHYSICS

Q1: Is parental support helpful for children's' education?

Positive: provides additional information, moral adult support during difficult learning times, learning outcomes can improve with input of parental time, financial and other resources.

Negative: limited parental experiences, unreasonable expectations, ambitions to realise own perceived potential.

Q2: Compare the agricultural career differences between leaving school early for a secure paid job, with tertiary education and potentially better job prospects.

Relative costs in following years. Upper income limit for less skilled work, but fewer responsibilities and time demands. Farming will become increasingly complex needing better education. Unknown post-tertiary education pathway ahead, choosing wrong study choices, student loan liability, but wider opportunities for rewards as income, travel, responsibility, further education, stability.

THE MALTHOUSE

Q1: Why is preserving rural heritage important?

Lessons from history can have current relevance for sites, construction, permanence, versatility, activity. Provides interest and contrast in the environment as a basis for communities and for tourism.

Q2: Why can discussion and mediation produce better outcomes to disputes than protest?

Protests are based on polarised attitudes and understanding that seldom allows alternative views to be considered. Someone either loses in a protest or seldom wins everything they want. Compromising objectives can produce wins for everyone.

DAD'S CHAIR

Q1: Why is family farm ownership succession important?

Farmers want their invested time, money, skills and knowledge in the farm to benefit their family, the strong family bond with their farm to be maintained for their family and the community, residual knowledge to benefit them and newcomers of physical, governance and historical events.

Q2 Do older farmers need to keep up with technological advances?

Yes to get benefits, able to operate systems like internet banking, NAIT responsibilities, auction bidding, and understand changes. But it is important not to lose old skills and knowledge, and to pass those on in event of technology failures for whatever reason such as no electricity, no access, no services.

A DYING COUNTRY SERVICE

Q1: Why do farmers have a reputation for hospitality, and is it still needed?

Visitors are welcome to overcome negatives of relative rural isolation from human contact; they also bring both needed physical goods and verbal information that justifies reward and encouragement to repeat. Visitors have travelled some distance to the farm with financial and physical cost to be acknowledged and refreshed. Farm women in particular often have to provide food for farm workers so are skilled at providing that in quantity, quality and timing.

Q2: Why is the kereru considered a popular native bird?

Iridescent colours and varied plumage are visually attractive, and flying, swooping behaviour and relative timidity endear it to people. It represents part of our native rural environment of which we can be proud, and for our national values and interests. Scarce enough to make seeing one special.