

Simple sentences in 'A Jolly Swagman No More?'

Based on the poem *Waltzing Matilda* by AB Paterson

In identifying the simple sentences in the text, students may find it difficult to identify some, which are indicated in the text below.

Key:

- simple sentences that students can easily identify
- sentences containing dialogue
- sentences containing prepositional phrases

'Who'll come a waltzing Matilda with me?' The swagman trudged through the bush. His tuneless voice woke the bush animals who had been drowsing in the late afternoon heat.

'Waltzing Matilda! Waltzing Matilda!' the bushman yowled again, as he squatted down beside a deep billabong. He filled his billy. High above him on a bare branch of a coolabah tree, a kookaburra ruffled its feathers and seemed to laugh at the swagman's singing.

The tired, dusty old swagman sighed and began gathering twigs to make a small fire. He sat down on his swag and waited patiently for his billy to boil.

'No wonder I'm all worn out,' he thought. Tea and damper have been my only dinner for weeks. I've been shearin' sheep but not tastin' them! I haven't had decent grub or decent wages lately. I hope that the next station is better.'

The swaggie drank his tea then propped himself against the coolabah tree and began to doze. When he awoke, he heard a rustling sound. He stayed still. He watched as a scrawny young sheep approached. The swaggie's eyes widened. He held his breath. The jumbuck trotted towards the billabong for a drink.

The swagman didn't doubt for a moment what he would do next. He was hungry.

'Who will miss this silly lost sheep?' he thought. Tomorrow I'll be a long way from here.'

He grabbed his tucker bag. Crouching low, he retreated a little way and inched across the scrub, until he was directly behind the jumbuck at the water's edge. When it lowered its head to drink, the swagman leapt forward in a mad dance, grabbed the jumbuck and forced the poor creature right into his open tucker bag.

'Yes!' the swaggie gleefully cried. 'It'll be roast mutton tonight!'

Over the crackle and roar of the fire, the swaggie did not hear the approach of four horsemen. It was a squatter mounted on his thoroughbred, followed by three stern-looking troopers. They had seen the fire.

In the fading light, they dismounted in the clearing. The swaggie heard their footsteps and turned around in panic. He recognised the troopers' uniforms and knew immediately that he was in trouble. The penalty for stock theft was a long prison sentence. Heart thumping, he grabbed the tucker bag and flung it behind the coolabah.

'Baa-ahh!' protested the jumbuck.

'Hey you!' yelled the trooper. 'We need to talk to you.' He gestured to the squatter. 'This gentleman told us he is missing stock. Know anything about it?'

The swaggie backed away, closer to the edge of the billabong. The trooper moved towards him.

'What's in that tucker bag?' the trooper asked accusingly. The other men came closer too. In a minute, they would surround him and the game would be up.

The swagman saw his future. It was grim. He didn't know if he was up to a long stint in gaol.

'Is it better to die now?' he wondered.

'You'll never take me alive!' he yelled at the troopers. He jumped into the murky water.

The astonished troopers were about to dive in after him when their horses began neighing in terror. They spun around and saw a deadly snake slithering towards the horses. The horses bolted and in a mad panic, the troopers gave chase on foot!

An hour later, they returned to the billabong on their horses, but there was no trace of the swaggie. No one ever heard of him again and he was reported to be drowned.

Today, people who visit the billabong claim to hear the swagman's ghost. But they don't know the half of it. You see, the old swaggie managed to swim to the other side of the billabong and cling to the muddy edge. He hid as still as a statue when the troopers returned for him. After they left empty-handed, he lived undisturbed in the area until his death some years later.

In those last years, he led the life of a true Aussie bushman, fishing and collecting bush tucker. Every now and then, he would take a refreshing dip in that very special billabong. And if he ever saw a stray jumbuck taking a drink there, he left it well alone!

Reference: Paterson, AB 1895, *Waltzing Matilda*.