

THE
QUEENSLAND
READERS

澳大利
亚语文



AUTHORIZED BY
THE MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION

ISBN 978-7-309-07111-1
9 787309 071111



西方家庭学校原版教材与经典读物

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上海外语教育出版社
SHANGHAI FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRESS





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天津出版传媒集团
天津人民出版社

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

澳大利亚语文：英文 / 澳大利亚教育部编 . — 天津 : 天津人民出版社, 2013.1

ISBN 978-7-201-07812-0

I. ①澳… II. ①澳… III. ①英语—教材 IV. ① H31

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2012) 第 283938 号

天津出版传媒集团

天津人民出版社出版、发行

出版人：刘晓津

(天津市西康路 35 号 邮政编码：300051)

网址：http://www.tjrmcbs.com.cn

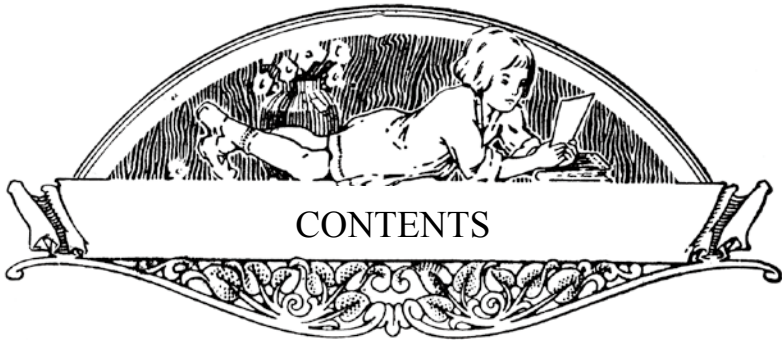
电子信箱：tjrmcbs@126.com

北京领先印刷有限公司印刷

2013 年 1 月第 1 版 2013 年 1 月第 1 次印刷

640×940 毫米 16 开本 78 印张 字数：1000 千字 插图：582

定 价：118.00 元 (全套 6 册)



LESSON	TITLE	PAGE
1	POPPET'S VISIT TO THE SCHOOL— I	1
2	POPPET'S VISIT TO THE SCHOOL— II	6
3	AFTER BLENHEIM	11
4	WHAT IS THE BEST DAY IN THE YEAR	15
5	THE QUEEN OF THE BEES	19
6	ABOU BEN ADHEM AND THE ANGEL	23
7	CHEERFULNESS	25
8	A KANGAROO AT BAY	29
9	THE MAGPIE'S NEST	32
10	CUPS THAT CHEER	35
11	ADVENTURE WITH A SHARK.....	39

12	THE SUNSHINE	43
13	GALLANT GORDON.....	46
14	TREE-HOUSES IN NEW GUINEA	51
15	THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH	54
16	THE GREAT FIGHT— I	57
17	THE GREAT FIGHT— II	60
18	WHICH SHALL IT BE?.....	65
19	FLOODS	69
20	THE GOLDEN APPLES OF THE HESPERIDES	74
21	LAMENT OF THE IRISH EMIGRANT	79
22	LITTLE COSETTE— I	83
23	YE MARINERS OF ENGLAND	87
24	LITTLE COSETTE— II	90
25	A JOURNEY TO THE MOON.....	96
26	BARBARA FRIETCHIE	102
27	SOME QUEENSLAND GOLDFIELDS.....	106
28	WHERE'S MOTHER?	112

29	DROUGHTS	114
30	THE GRAVES OF A HOUSEHOLD	119
31	HOW THE MONTHS ARE NAMED	121
32	A BRUSH WITH A BUFFALO	125
33	DAILY WORK	130
34	THE SICK SCHOLAR—I	132
35	THE SICK SCHOLAR—II	138
36	THE WIVES OF BRIXHAM	142
37	“WELL BOWLED”	148
38	LOVE OF COUNTRY.....	155
39	HOW THESEUS SLEW THE MINOTAUR	157
40	PIONEERING	163
41	A CHRISTMAS CAROL—I	168
42	A CHRISTMAS CAROL—II	172
43	TRAVELLERS’ WONDERS—I	175
44	TRAVELLERS’ WONDERS—II	179
45	A HEROINE AT SIXTEEN	182

46	DAFFODILS	186
47	THE SOLDIER'S REPRIEVE— I	188
48	THE SOLDIER'S REPRIEVE— II	191
49	A WONDERFUL BIRD	195
50	WHAT BALBOA SAW	199
51	A PSALM OF LIFE	204
52	HOW THE DAYS OF THE WEEK ARE NAMED	207
53	THE GREAT BARRIER REEF	210
54	THE AUSTRALIAN FLAG	215

LESSON 1

POPPET'S VISIT TO THE SCHOOL

I

ETHEL TURNER (Mrs. H. R. Curlewis); born at Doncaster, Yorkshire, in 1872; arrived in Australia in 1881. Wrote Seven Little Australians, The Little Larrikin, and numerous other interesting stories.

raised

criss-cross-ing

an-noy-ance

grat-i-tude

fright-ened

en-cour-a-ging

for-mid-a-ble

flut-tered

guessed

[John Woolcot (Bunty) is a big, awkward, selfish lad of thirteen. He is of a cowardly nature, and, on account of his meanness and his want of truthfulness, is at war with the world around him. Even at home, no one shows any sympathy for him and his troubles except his little sister Winifred (Poppet).

One day at school, when alone, he was tossing up a ball, and it went through a window. He crept into the room and got it, without, as he thought, being seen. The next day, when inquiries were made, he denied having broken the window; but a boy named Hawkins, who disliked him very much, had seen him coming out of the room with a ball in his hand, and informed on him. To make the matter worse, five sovereigns, which had been left on the table in the room, when the headmaster had been called away just before the accident, could not be found. Of course, every one supposed that Woolcot had taken them (several months afterwards it was

proved that he had not done so), and he was expelled from the school.

Knowing that nothing he might say would be believed by his father, and that he would be severely punished by him, he ran away from home, telling Poppet, however, that, though he had been a coward and had told a lie about the broken window, he had not stolen the money. The faithful little soul believed him; and in what follows we have an account of her brave attempt to clear his character in the eyes of his teacher.]

It was in the midst of morning lessons at the Grammar School that an odd thing happened.

The day was very hot; not a breath of wind came in at the open doors and windows—nothing but the blazing sunlight that lay in hot patches on the floor, and slowly baked blackboards, and slates, and desks. The room was a long one; half a dozen classes were at work in it, under as many masters; and, at the end, on a raised platform, sat the headmaster (Mr. Burnham) at his desk. He was looking through exercise books, and his brow kept **criss-crossing**¹ with lines of annoyance at the mistakes he met with and at the noise in the room. He scored a red line through an error in one of the exercises, and stood up, a heavy frown on his face.

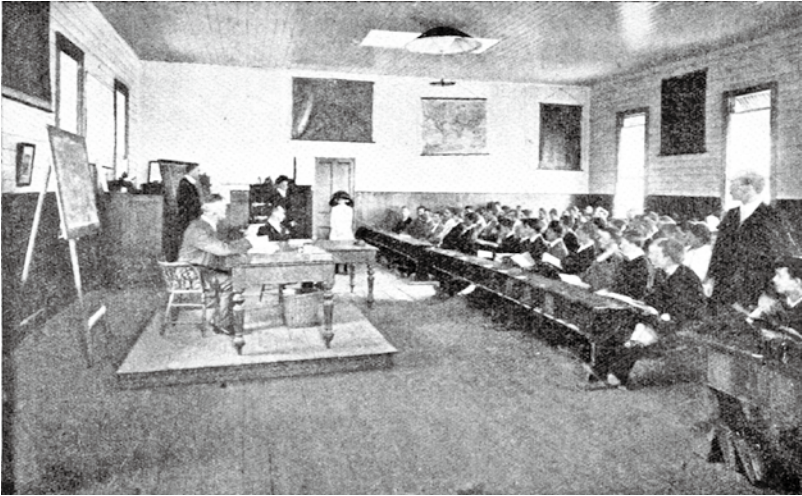
At the same moment, a very small shadow fell just inside the entrance door at the far end of the room, and a timid knock sounded there. Nobody said “Come in,” though a hundred and fifty pairs of eyes went in the direction with the **swiftness natural to gratitude**² for any break in the lesson. Then there

1 criss-crossing: *Wrinkling*.

2 swiftness natural to gratitude: *Quickness caused by thankfulness*.

stepped over the threshold a little, slight girl—a little girl with a short, holland frock, a great sun-hat, and no gloves; a little girl with a white, small face, great frightened eyes shining strangely, and soft lips very tightly closed. Up the long, long room she went, both little hands held tightly together in front of her. No one could tell from the way she walked how her poor little knees were shaking, and her poor little heart was beating.

For a minute, Mr. Burnham's frown did not disappear—not till he noticed how white her face was. "What is it, little girl?" he said, and really thought that he made his voice quite gentle and encouraging, though to Poppet it sounded terrible.



"THERE STEPPED OVER THE THRESHOLD A LITTLE, SLIGHT GIRL. "

"I—" she said—"you—." Something rose in her throat; her face grew even whiter, and her lips, white too, twitched a little; but the words would not come.

He took her hand—the little, trembling, shut, brown hand—and

held it between his own.

“There is nothing to be afraid of, my child; tell me what it is you want;” he drew her closer to the desk, and sat down. He seemed less **formidable**¹ in that position than towering above her—his eyes looked strangely kind; could it really be the terrible Mr. Burnham she had heard so much about? The hand he held fluttered a minute, then her lips moved again:

“Bunty didn’t do it,” she said in a whisper.

“Eh? what?” he said, mystified.

“He didn’t do it—Bunty didn’t do it—oh, *indeed*.”

“But who is Bunty? And who are you, my little maid?” Mr. Burnham said, with a smile that lit up his thoughtful eyes.

“He’s my brother,” she said, in a voice that had gained a little strength. Then it struck her Bunty was not so called at school. “His name’s John Woolcot,” she added, with down-cast eyes; “I’m Poppet.”

Then Mr. Burnham remembered everything, and his eyes grew stern as he thought of the boy there had been so much trouble with; but they softened as they fell again on the little, white, eager face.

“And his little sister is **taking up his cudgels**²; thankless work, I’m afraid—eh?” he said.

Poppet was calm now,—the worst part of the ordeal³ was over, and she had actually gained the dread headmaster’s ear; she must make the most of her time.

1 formidable: *Terrible; causing fear.*

2 taking up his cudgels: *Defending him; speaking in his favour.*

3 ordeal: *Severe trial.*

“Won’t you believe him?” she said; “indeed he didn’t do it—oh, indeed!”

“What?” he asked,—“break the window—
tell a lie—anything? Why, my little child, he owned to it.”

“Yes,” said Poppet; “he broke the glass, I know; and yes, he did tell one story.” Her face fell after the last sentence, and a little red crept into her cheek. “But he didn’t take the money—oh no, no!—oh, Bunty wouldn’t be a thief—oh, not for anything and anything— oh, indeed!”

The boys were staring at the little white- faced girl at the headmaster’s desk, though they could not hear what was being said.

“Would you like to come and talk to me privately?” Mr. Burnham said.

An “Oh-h-h !” was Popper’s only answer; but the gratitude in her eyes was so intense, he guessed a little what the ordeal had been to her.

LESSON 2

POPPET'S VISIT TO THE SCHOOL

II

slouch-ing	in-for-ma-tion	pre-ferred
con-vinced	in-no-cence	thought-ful-ly
hope-ful-ness	dis-proved	af-fec-tion
sov-er-eigns	ad-mi-ra-tion	quiv-ered

AWAY down the long room she went again, only this time her hand was being held in a firm, kindly grasp.

“Oh!” she said again, when near the door a great, slouching fellow with a big head moved to help another boy with a blackboard.

“What?” said Mr. Burnham, when they were outside; he had noticed her intense interest.

“Was that Bull-dog Hawkins—the fellow that told?” she said.

He smiled somewhat; Hawkins was not a favourite of his, and the fitting name sounded odd on the little girl’s lips.

“His name is Hawkins,” he said, “and yes; he **gave the information**¹; but that has nothing to do with it, my child. Now, tell me what it is you have to say.”

He had taken her into a little room the walls of which were lined with books; he drew up a chair for himself, and one for her, but she preferred standing against his knee.

¹ I gave the information: *Told what her brother had done.*

Almost she convinced him, so great was the belief in her shining eyes, **so utterly unshaken her trust**¹. She told him everything; and he listened with patience and attention even to the smallest **detail**², asking a question here and there, but, for the most part, letting her tell her story in her own way.

When she told of the good-bye kiss Bunty had given her at the staircase window, she broke down a little; but he slipped his arm round her waist, and she shed her tears on his coat-sleeve. How Bunty would have stared! She showed the dirty scrap of paper which she had found after her brother had left, and in which he had declared his innocence, and Mr. Burnham read it thoughtfully.

“If only he had never told a lie before,” he said, “then perhaps—”

Oh, if only she could have flung back her head, and said, “He has never told a lie in his life, sir; never—never!”

Shame at not being able to do so made the dear, curly head droop a little; and two more tears forced their way from under her eyelids, and fell sadly down her cheek.

“I’m sure he never will again,” she said, with sorrowful hopefulness. “But, oh, sir, he couldn’t be a thief! Oh, how could he?”

“Well, I don’t see how he could be altogether bad with such a sister,” Mr. Burnham said slowly. “What sort of a boy is he at home? Is he good to you?”

“Oh yes,” said Poppet,—“oh yes, indeed!”

And it is a fact that not a single act that **disproved**³ this came

1 so utterly unshaken her trust: *So entire her faith in her brother.*

2 detail: *A small part ; an item.*

3 disproved: *Brought proof against it.*

to the little girl's mind. She remembered nothing but the times he had been good to her.

“Twice I was sent to bed without tea, and he brought me all his pudding in some newspaper,” she said eagerly; “and, when my throat was so sore, and they wouldn't let him in, he used to climb up the creeper if no one was in the room, and smile at me through the window. And another time I was ill, he sat on the mat outside the door all night; Meg found him in the morning asleep with his head on the oilcloth. And, when it was my birthday—I was nine—and he had no money, he sold his guinea-pigs to one of the fellows—and he liked them better than anything he'd got—and he bought me a doll's pram, because Peter smashed mine through filling it with stones. Oh, and lots and lots and lots of things! He was *very* good to me—oh, indeed!”

Such a flushed, little eager face it was now—such a **fluent**¹ little tongue that told of Bunty's goodness! The child's beautiful trust, affection, and courage had quite touched the headmaster's heart.

He took a bunch of keys from his pocket.



“I WANT YOU TO GIVE THIS TO CAPTAIN WOOLCOT.”

¹ fluent: *Flowing; ready of speech.*