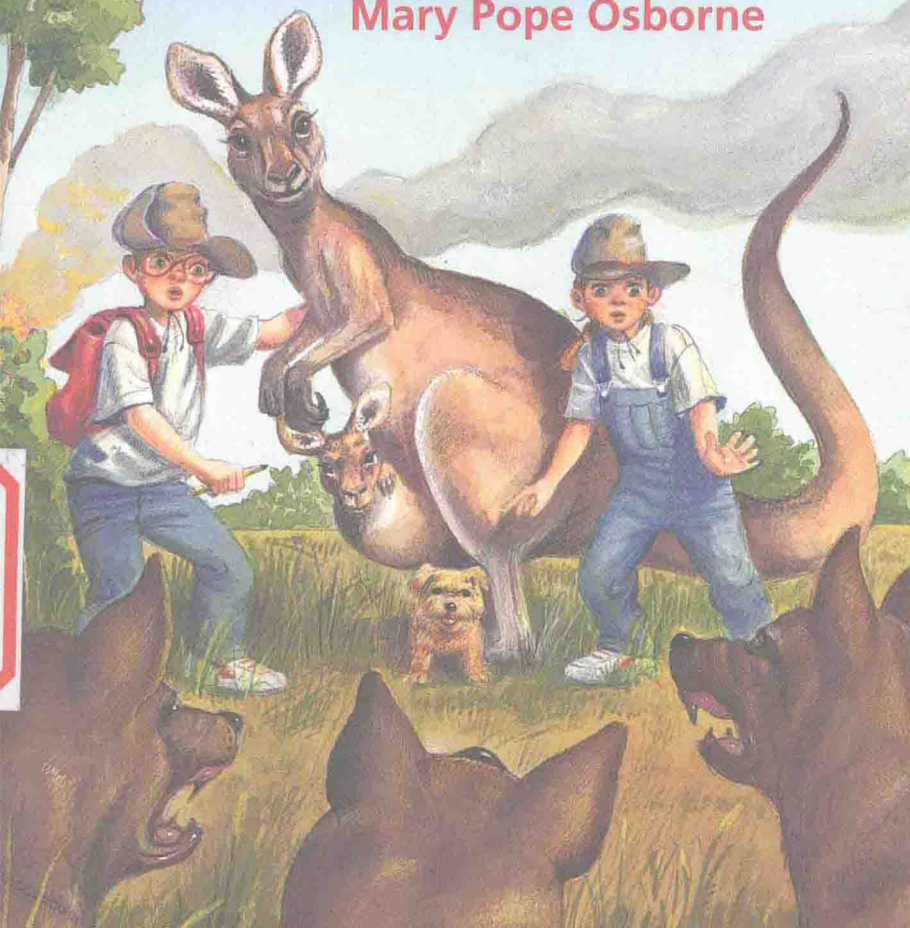


MAGIC  TREE HOUSE #20

Dingoes at Dinnertime

Mary Pope Osborne

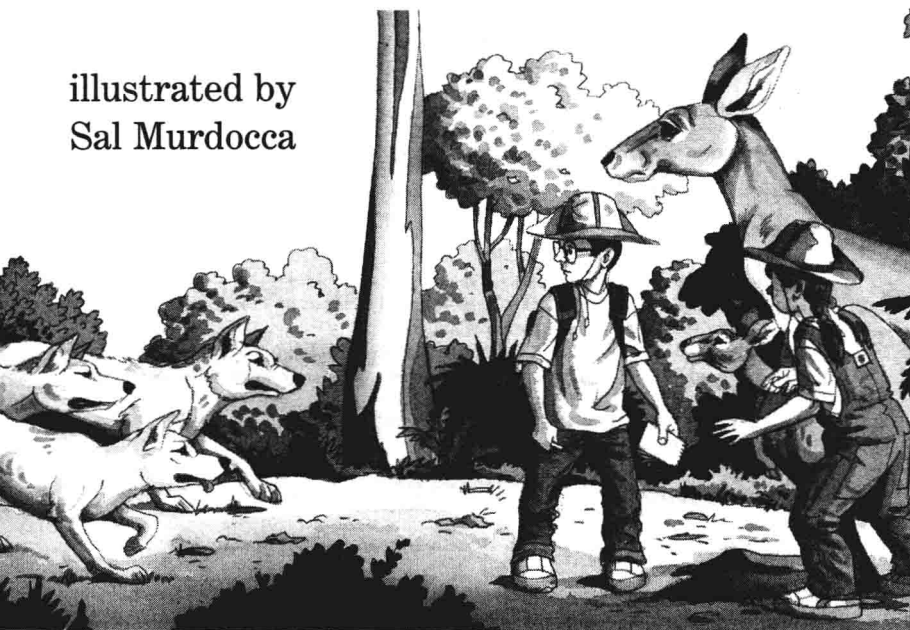


MAGIC TREE HOUSE #20

Dingoes at Dinnertime

by Mary Pope Osborne

illustrated by
Sal Murdocca



A STEPPING STONE BOOK™

Random House  New York

*For Ellen Mager, a great champion of
children's literature*

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Published in the United States by Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously
in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.

www.randomhouse.com/kids
www.randomhouse.com/magictreehouse

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Osborne, Mary Pope.

Dingoes at dinnertime / by Mary Pope Osborne ; illustrated by Sal Murdocca.
p. cm. — (Magic tree house ; #20) "A Stepping Stone book."

SUMMARY: The magic tree house whisks Jack and Annie away to Australia, where
they must save some animals from a wildfire.

ISBN 0-679-89066-1 (trade). — ISBN 0-679-99066-6 (lib. bdg.)

[1. Magic—Fiction. 2. Space and time—Fiction. 3. Zoology—Australia—Fiction.
4. Animals—Fiction. 5. Australia—Fiction.]

I. Murdocca, Sal, ill. II. Title. III. Series: Osborne, Mary Pope. Magic tree house
series ; #20. PZ7.081167Dg 2000 [Fic]—dc21 99-40598

Printed in the United States of America March 2000 10 9 8 7 6 5 4

Random House, Inc. New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, Auckland

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and colophon are trademarks of Random House, Inc.

Here's what kids have to say to
Mary Pope Osborne, author of
the Magic Tree House series:

The books you write are wonderful! They have so many interesting facts! I always imagine myself as Jack (I like to take notes!) and my sister as Annie, always daring and ready to do almost anything.—Samantha L.

I think your books are very cool and educational.—Connor P.

I can never find any of your books in the library because they're too popular. I plan to be an author like you someday.—Farrah K.

I am more than just a fan of your Magic Tree House books. I'm obsessed with them. I think you're the greatest children's author in the world.—Curtis V.

*All of my friends LOVED your books. So I tried one of your books and I LOVED it too.
—Emily M.*

Your books make me feel so good, I just don't know how to explain it!—Neha A.

Teachers love
Magic Tree House books, too!

I have taught for 31 years, and these are the first books I've ever used that have created such enthusiasm and results!

—H. Surprenant

[My students] have produced some marvelous research projects on the coral reef, tropical rain forests, extinct animals, and dinosaurs, using Jack and Annie's information as a starting point.—S. Martin

The Magic Tree House series has been an incredible source of motivation for my class. I have never seen children so excited about reading.—E. Gorzitze

Thank you from all teachers for providing excellent reading material for children.

—K. Hartwig

The adventures of Jack and Annie are fun, exciting, and appealing to my students. They enjoy learning the factual information that is so cleverly woven through each story....

I've also heard from many parents who enjoy reading your books with their children.—S. Eisenhuth

[My students], through your books, have truly found the excitement that will keep them reading into adulthood.—T. Muschler

Recently I overheard kids playing "Magic Tree House" at recess! Your books are also a great vehicle to discuss characters and setting. We made dioramas of one of your books. We have also pulled down the map many times to see the places where Jack and Annie have gone.—T. Doddridge

I want to let you know how motivating your books are for the children. Once we've read one or two of your stories, they continue to read more and more.—M. Purtell

My class has truly been turned on to reading your books! I have reluctant readers trying harder than ever now they know about your books and hear the other students talking about ones they have read.—J. Banner



Dear Readers,

I get many letters telling me how much kids learn from reading Magic Tree House books. But what you might not realize is how much I learn writing them. I'm not really an expert on any of the subjects I write about. So I have to do lots and lots of research.

Working on Dingoes at Dinnertime, I was surprised to discover how little I really knew about the continent of Australia. For example, I never knew why it was home to certain animals that lived nowhere else on earth, animals like kangaroos, koalas, wallabies, wombats, platypuses, emus, and black swans.

But after I did my research, I found out the answer. And when you read this book, you'll discover the answer along with Jack and Annie.

I hope that reading Dingoes at Dinnertime will be just the beginning of your Australian adventure. I hope that when you finish, you'll go out and do some research of your own and discover lots more about that wondrous land.

All my best,

A stylized signature of Mary Pope Osborne.

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Prologue

One summer day in Frog Creek, Pennsylvania, a mysterious tree house appeared in the woods.

Eight-year-old Jack and his seven-year-old sister, Annie, climbed into the tree house. They found that it was filled with books.

Jack and Annie soon discovered that the tree house was magic. It could take them to the places in the books. All they had to do was point to a picture and wish to go there.

Along the way, Jack and Annie discovered

that the tree house belongs to Morgan le Fay. Morgan is a magical librarian from the time of King Arthur. She travels through time and space, gathering books.

In Magic Tree House Books #5–8, Jack and Annie helped free Morgan from a spell. In Books #9–12, they solved four ancient riddles and became Master Librarians.

In Magic Tree House Books #13–16, Jack and Annie had to save four ancient stories from being lost forever.

In Magic Tree House Books #17–20, Jack and Annie must be given four special gifts to help free an enchanted dog from a spell. They have already received a gift on a trip to the *Titanic*, a gift from the Lakota Indians, and a gift from a forest in India. Now they are about to set out in search of their last gift...

1

The Last Gift

Annie sat on the porch steps. She stared down the street at the Frog Creek woods.

“Hey, Jack,” she said. “Do you hear it?”

Jack sat next to her. He was reading a book.

“Hear what?” he said.

“Teddy’s calling us,” said Annie.

“You’re kidding,” said Jack. But he looked down the street and listened, too.

A faint bark came from the distance.

Arf! Arf!

A big smile crossed Jack's face.

"You hear it!" Annie said.

"Yep," said Jack. "You're right. Time to go."

He stood up and grabbed his backpack.

"Be back soon!" Annie shouted through the screen door.

"Don't be late for dinner!" their dad called.

"We won't!" said Jack.

He and Annie ran down the street and into the Frog Creek woods.

Soon they came to the tallest oak.

There was the magic tree house. A little black nose stuck out the window.

"Hi, silly!" Annie called. "We're coming!"

Arf! came a happy bark.

Annie grabbed the rope ladder and started climbing.

Jack followed her up into the tree house.

A small dog sat in a circle of afternoon sunshine. His tail wagged.

“Hey, Teddy!” said Jack.

Jack and Annie hugged Teddy. And the dog licked both of them.

“Morgan’s note is still here,” said Annie.

“Yep,” said Jack. He knew the note by heart now.

This little dog is under a spell and needs your help. To free him, you must be given four special things:

A gift from a ship lost at sea,

A gift from the prairie blue,

A gift from a forest far away,

A gift from a kangaroo.

Be wise. Be brave. Be careful.

Morgan

Beside the note were the gifts from their first three trips:

1. a pocket watch from the *Titanic*
2. an eagle's feather from the prairie skies
3. a lotus flower from a forest in India

"We just need to get a gift from a kangaroo," said Annie, "and Teddy will be free from his spell."

"We must be going to Australia," said Jack. "That's where kangaroos live."

"Cool," said Annie.

Teddy whined and scratched at a book lying in the corner.

Jack picked it up.

"What'd I tell you?" he said.

He showed the cover to Annie. The title was *Adventure in Australia*.

"Great," said Annie. She looked at Teddy.

“Ready to meet a kangaroo?”

Arf! Arf!

Jack opened the book. He found a page with small pictures of different animals and a big picture of a forest. Jack pointed at the forest.

“I wish we could go there,” he said.

The wind started to blow.

The tree house started to spin.

It spun faster and faster.

Then everything was still.

Absolutely still.

2

Sleepyhead

Jack opened his eyes. Glaring hot sunlight flooded into the tree house.

“Neat hats,” said Annie.

She and Jack were both wearing hats.

“I think they will protect us from the sun,” said Jack.

He and Annie looked out the window. Teddy looked out, too.

The tree house had landed in a scrubby forest filled with droopy plants and dry brown trees.

“Man, this place needs rain,” said Jack.

He sat back on his heels and looked at the picture of where they had landed in the Australia book.

He read:

Australia's forests go through times of drought (say DROWT). A drought is a long period of time without any rain. The same forest can be flooded by heavy rains at other times of the year.

Jack pulled out his notebook and wrote:

drought = no rain

“Hey, Jack,” said Annie. “Doesn’t it smell like a cookout?”

Jack sniffed the air. It *did* smell like a cookout.

Jack looked out the window. A wisp of