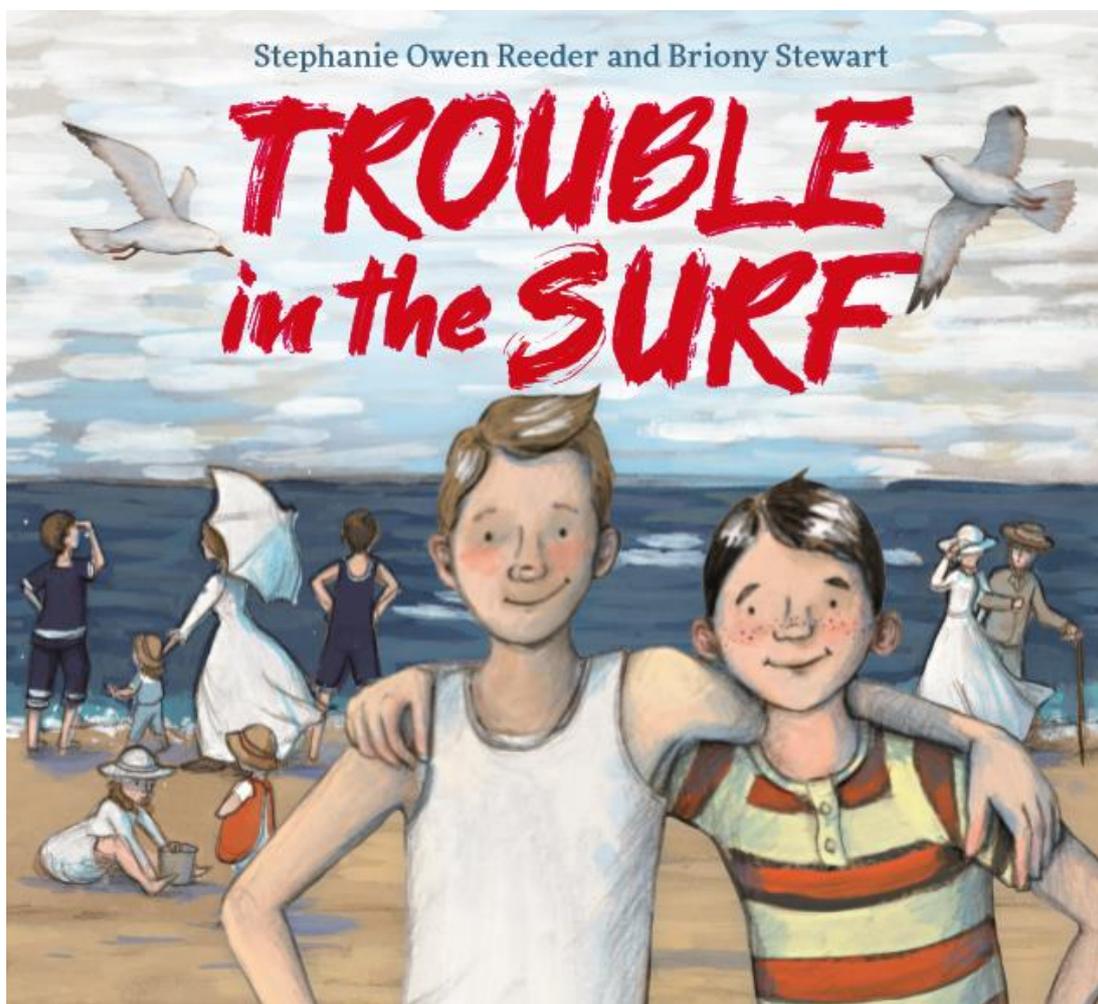


TEACHERS' NOTES

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**Trouble in the Surf**  
by Stephanie Owen Reeder  
illustrated by Briony Stewart



Published by National Library of Australia, October 2019, ISBN 978-0-642-27946-0  
Recommended Year Levels: 1–3

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**Author: Stephanie Owen Reeder** [www.stephanieowenreeder.com](http://www.stephanieowenreeder.com)



Stephanie Owen Reeder is a writer, illustrator, editor and reviewer who specialises in books for children. She is the author of the award-winning Heritage Heroes series, including *Lost! A True Tale from the Bush* and *Lennie the Legend: Solo to Sydney by Pony*.

**Illustrator: Briony Stewart** [www.brionystewart.com](http://www.brionystewart.com)



Briony Stewart is the author and illustrator of several award-winning books for children, including *Kumiko and the Shadow Catchers*, winner of the 2012 Queensland State Literature prize for children's fiction.

## About the Book

It's a hot summer's day in Sydney Town, and nine-year-old cousins Charlie Smith and Rupert Swallow can't wait to dive into the surf at Bondi Beach. But the day doesn't quite go according to plan ...

Travel back in time to 1907, and join Charlie and Rupert on their heart-stopping seaside adventure.

*Trouble in the Surf* is based on the real-life adventures of young Charles Kingsford Smith—who grew up to be one of Australia's most famous aviators. It includes fascinating facts about the characters' true lives and times.

### AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONTENT

- Learning Area(s)
  - HASS—History
  - English
- General Capabilities
  - Critical and Creative Thinking
  - Personal and Social Capability
  - Literacy
- Digital Classroom
  - [Year 3: Changing Streetscapes](#)
  - [Year 3: Emblems](#)
  - [Fanny Durack](#)

## Introductory Activities

These are activities to do before reading to prepare students for the concepts/themes explored in the book. They are not necessarily curriculum based.

- Look at the cover of the book with the class. What do you think this book will be about? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Look in particular at the title. What do the words, the colour and the shapes of the letters suggest might happen?

## YEAR 1

### HASS—History

#### Content Description

Differences in family structures and roles today, and how these have changed or remained the same over time ([ACHASSK028](#))

#### Elaborations

- considering a range of family structures (for example, nuclear families, one-child families, large families, single parent families, extended families, blended (step) families, adoptive parent families and grandparent families) as well as kinship groups, tribes and villages
- comparing families in the present with those from the recent past (the families of parents, grandparents or familiar older person) in terms of their size and structure (for example, the different types of family such as nuclear, single parent, blended)
- examining and commenting on the roles of family members over time (for example, listening to stories about the roles of mothers, fathers, caregivers and children in the past) and comparing these with family roles today (for example, work at home, work outside the home, child care, gender roles, children's responsibilities, pocket money)

#### Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- In *Trouble in the Surf*, Charlie Smith and Rupert Swallow are cousins and best friends. What role do your relatives—including grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins—play in your life? How often do you see them and what sorts of activities do you do together?

#### Activities

- Draw a large tree and write the names of members of your family on the branches. Include grandparents, parents, sisters and brothers, aunts, uncles and cousins. This is your family tree.
- Draw a picture of or write a story about an adventure you have had with one of the people featured in your family tree.

## Content Description

How the present, past and future are signified by terms indicating time, as well as by dates and changes that may have personal significance, such as birthdays, celebrations and seasons

[\(ACHASSK029\)](#)

## Elaborations

- predicting, using knowledge of the past and present (for example, what happened yesterday, what is likely to happen tomorrow, upcoming birthdays, celebrations and seasons) and ordering these references to time in sequence using terms such as 'before', 'after', 'next', 'then', 'a long time ago', and 'then and now'

## Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- When Charlie and Rupert visited Bondi Beach in 1907 there were no lifesaving clubs, and the only safety equipment was a rope lifeline and a cork belt, which were kept in a box on the beach. This box was often locked, as people sometimes stole the line to use as a clothesline. What equipment do lifesavers use today to save people who get in trouble in the surf?

## Activities

- Draw a picture showing your favourite activities during the summer months.
- Discuss why safety is important around water, whether you're swimming at the beach, in a pool or at a water park, or in a river, creek, billabong or dam. Make a class wallchart showing safety tips for swimming.

## Learning Area

### English

## Content Description

Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts [\(ACELT1584\)](#)

## Elaborations

- discussing features of book settings including time (year, season) and place (country or city, realistic or imagined)
- discussing how plots develop including: beginnings (orientation), how the problem (complication) is introduced and solved (resolution)

## Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- In *Trouble in the Surf*, the setting is mainly shown in the illustrations. Discuss how illustrator Briony Stewart shows that the book is set at the beach in the early 1900s. Look at the colours she has used, what the people are wearing and how they travel. Are there any other clues?

### Activity

- Find photographs of Bondi Beach today and compare them with the pictures in this book. Make a list of the things that have changed. Are there more buildings? In what ways has beachwear changed? What kinds of activities are people doing in the pictures in the book? How do they differ from the activities people do at the beach today?
- Select a character from one of the pictures of Bondi Beach in the book. Draw a picture of that person, showing how they would look if they visited Bondi Beach today. What would they wear and what would they take to the beach with them? Write a story about their day at the beach.

## YEAR 2

### HASS—History

#### Content Description

The history of a significant person, building, site and/or part of the natural environment in the local community and what it reveals about the past ([ACHASSK044](#))

#### Elaborations

- using the internet, newspapers, community information guides and local knowledge to identify and list the people and places promoted as being of historic interest in the local community
- suggesting reasons for the location of a local landmark (for example, community building, landmark or war memorial) before searching for resources that provide an explanation.
- investigating the history of a chosen person, building, site or landmark in the local community using sources (for example, books, newspapers, oral histories, audiovisual material, digital sources, letters, photographs) and relating a story which these reveal about the past

#### Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- *Trouble in the Surf* features three Australian icons: lifesavers, Bondi Beach and aviator Charles Kingsford Smith. Discuss what an icon is and how people, places, landmarks, buildings etc. can become iconic symbols of a particular country or place, and an important part of its history.

### Activity

- Identify some of the icons in your state or territory. Make a poster or wallchart with a map of your state or territory featuring iconic buildings, places and landmarks.
- Select and research the life of a famous person from your state or territory. Write a short biography about their life and draw a portrait of them.

## English

### Content Description

Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways ([ACELT1591](#))

### Elaborations

- describing features of text settings including time, colours used to portray year, season, and place (country or city) and how this impacts on the characters
- describing plots including beginnings (orientation), how the problem (complication) is introduced and solved (resolution), and considering how these features construct meanings

### Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- *Trouble in the Surf* is based on a true story, so both the author and the illustrator researched the characters before presenting them in this picture book. Discuss how Stephanie Owen Reeder and Briony Stewart have worked together in *Trouble in the Surf* to create Charlie's character. What words in the text and actions in the plot show you what sort of person he is? How has his personality been depicted in the illustrations?

### Activity

- Find images of Charles Kingsford Smith as a child and as an adult. Make a collage combining illustrations, photographs and other images to show what his life was like and what sort of person he was. Include key words that sum up his character (e.g. adventurous, cheeky, troublesome, brave, audacious).
- The plot in *Trouble in the Surf* was based on real events. Find information about another true event at a beach (e.g. Black Sunday at Bondi Beach in 1938) and create your own story about it using both words and pictures.

## YEAR 3

### HASS—History

### Content Description

How the community has changed and remained the same over time and the role that people of diverse backgrounds have played in the development and character of the local community ([ACHASSK063](#))

### Elaborations

- exploring photographs, newspapers, oral histories, diaries and letters to investigate how an aspect of life in the local community (for example, transport, entertainment, the natural and built environment, technology) has changed over time (for example, from the time of European settlement to the present day)

- comparing photographs from the past and present of a specific location to identify the change or continuity (similarities and differences over time) associated with people, events/developments, places or ecosystems
- identifying individuals and groups from the past of diverse backgrounds (for example, gender, culture, ability, age, socioeconomic circumstance) who have contributed to the community's development (for example, economic, social, cultural, civic or environmental contributions) and character (for example, culturally diverse, multi-faith, prosperous, helpful)
- exploring how the contributions of individuals, groups and organisations are recognised (for example, parades, Australia Day Awards, monuments)

### Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Charlie and Rupert got into trouble in the surf at Bondi Beach before there was a proper lifesaving club. Discuss how beaches like Bondi have changed since the early 1900s. Find photographs and descriptions of the beach at that time. How is it different from today? What has changed and why?

### Activity

- Create a 'Then' and 'Now' chart showing the following aspects of beach life at Bondi or a beach near you:
  - clothing and beach wear
  - beach activities
  - buildings and other constructions
  - surf lifesaving practices
  - people who visit the beach.
- Select one of the pictures of Bondi Beach in the book (for example, the image where Charlie and Rupert barrel into the surf). Recreate the image using the same characters and view, but setting it in the present rather than in the past.

### Content Description

Days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia (including Australia Day, Anzac Day, and National Sorry Day) and the importance of symbols and emblems ([ACHASSK064](#))

### Elaborations

- generating a list of local, state and national symbols and emblems (for example, club emblems, school logos, flags, floral emblems, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms) and discussing their origins, use and significance
- examining the symbolism of flags (for example, the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags) and recognising special occasions when they are flown (for example, all three flags are flown during NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week, National Sorry Day and

Mabo Day) and the roles, rights and responsibilities the community has when observing protocols around flag flying

### Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- The surf-bathers who saved Charlie and Rupert from the surf were not part of an official lifesaving club. The Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club was formed several weeks later. The new lifesavers were identified by a badge they wore on their neck-to-knee bathing costumes. Discuss the emblems and flags used by lifesavers today. What is their significance? Are there rules about when they can be used and who can use them? Discuss why lifesavers have become an important and recognisable emblem of Australia.

### Activity

- Identify significant Australian flags. Make a wall chart showing these flags and provide details about them. What do they stand for? When are they used? Who can use them? Why are they significant?

## English

### Content Description

Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others ([ACELT1596](#))

### Elaborations

- discussing relevant prior knowledge and past experiences to make meaningful connections to the people, places, events, issues and ideas in the text

### Discussion/Inquiry Questions

- Discuss what it was about Charles Kingsford Smith's personality that made him lead an adventurous life. Find out what happened to him after he survived the Bondi rip. How did the experience described in *Trouble in the Surf* affect him? For example, did he become more cautious or did he take a different attitude to life?

### Activity

- Write a story based on another dangerous incident from the life of Charles Kingsford Smith, and present it as a newspaper article, a blog written by him or a picture book.
- Interview someone you know who has been in a dangerous situation and retell their story as a newspaper article, a blog or a picture book.

### Concluding Activities

- Creative Responses
  - Create a mural, musical or play based on *Trouble in the Surf*.
  - Write about your favourite place to go for a swim. Where is it? Who goes there? Is it a beach, a pool, a swimming hole, a dam or a water park? What sorts of activities do you enjoy there? Who do you go with? Are there lifesavers or lifeguards? Are there rips or other dangers?

- Have you ever been in trouble in the surf (or in any other body of water)? Perhaps you've been dumped by a wave, stung by a blue bottle, snagged in a log, badly sunburnt, stung by flying sand, hit by a runaway umbrella or caught in a rip? Have you ever lost your bathers in a wave or burnt your feet on hot sand? Write a story or draw a series of images about your troublesome adventures at the beach.
- Charlie and Rupert caught the tram to Bondi Beach. Find out about the Bondi Tram. Where did it come from and where did it go to? When did it start running and when did it finish? Who rode on the tram? Create an advertisement for the Bondi tram.
- Write a story about the newspaper boy who is selling papers at the Bondi tram stop in *Trouble in the Surf*. In those days, newsboys as young as six would ride the trams selling newspapers. Describe a day in his life.
- Be a reporter for a local newspaper covering the story of Charlie Smith, the boy who nearly drowned at Bondi Beach in February 1907. Write your story based on an 'interview' with one of the following characters in *Trouble in the Surf*:
  - Charlie Smith
  - Rupert Swallow
  - Nurse Sadie Sweeney
  - one of the surf-bathers who rescued the boys (their names are mentioned in the back of the book)
  - the policeman who looked after Rupert
  - Charlie's mother.
- Illustrator Briony Stewart included lots of historical details in her illustrations to help bring Charlie and Rupert's story to life. She also created a large number of background characters who respond to what is happening in the story using facial expressions and body language.
  - Choose one of these characters and make a list of the emotions they portray throughout the book and the way this is shown in the illustrations.
  - Create your own character and draw pictures of them reacting in the same way to the main events in the story.

## Further Reading

- Books and articles:
  - 'Another Sensation at Bondi: Narrow Escape of Two Boys,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday 3 January 1907, p.4, [nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14797153](http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14797153)
  - Bedson, Jack and Peter Gouldthorpe, *Don't Get Burnt! The Great Australian Day at the Beach*. Sydney: Collins, 1986
  - Hathorn, Libby and Julie Vivas, *The Tram to Bondi Beach*. Sydney: Collins, 1989
  - Macinnis, Peter, *The Big Book of Australian History*. Canberra: NLA Publishing, 2017
  - Mason, Prue and Kerry, illustrated by Tom Jellet, *Amazing Australians in Their Flying Machines*. Sydney: Walker Books, 2017
- Websites:
  - [www.beachsafe.org.au](http://www.beachsafe.org.au)
  - <https://bondisurfclub.com/>
  - [www.bondivillage.com/thenow.htm#tram](http://www.bondivillage.com/thenow.htm#tram)

- <https://australianmuseum.net.au/about/history/exhibitions/trailblazers/sir-charles-kingsford-smith/>