

# The Night They Stormed Eureka

by Jackie French

## Historical Context

In 'The Night They Stormed Eureka' Jackie French tells us a lot about life on the Victorian goldfields. Sam, the main character in the book has travelled back in time and she observes many features of the year 1854. Let's examine how much we can learn about that time period from just one paragraph.

Mrs Puddleham stood by the hunk of tree that was her table, hacking the sheep carcass into small chunks of meat and bone. She wore an apron today, made of the same sacking as the bag that held the potatoes. Suddenly Mr Puddleham came into view, lugging a wooden bucket of water up from the creek. He still wore yesterday's suit, his hair slicked down and neat under his hat. (pg 58)

People on the Victorian goldfields didn't always have proper furniture and would make their own.

Women in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century wore aprons while working.

People living on the goldfields didn't always have access to supplies or enough money to buy them so they would make-do with what was available.

Ballarat had no plumbing in 1854.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, men wore hats as a standard part of their outfits.

The Puddlehams, like many others on the goldfields had a few key pieces of clothing and didn't change everyday.

1. The following paragraph also describes what the Victorian goldfields may have been like. Highlight or underline the parts that give historical information.

The road looked even busier in daylight. Bullocks heaved wagons through the dust. Horses panted in front of carts, or walked slow and dusty under their riders. There were people everywhere: men in rags; men in suits; old men crouched over walking sticks; and young men pushing barrows. (pg 78)

1. What was the level of activity on the goldfields?


2. What methods did people use to transport goods?


3. What was the road surface of the Victorian goldfields?


4. Why might the horses have been panting and walking slowly?


5. Rewrite the paragraph so that the story appears to be set in the modern day.
