



VEA
Bringing Learning to Life

Program Support Notes

Middle - Senior Secondary

26mins

The Drover's Dilemma

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Suitable for:

Geography

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The Drover's Dilemma

For Teachers:

Introduction

This program follows a modern-day drover, 64 year old Helen McCarthy, and her troubles with the drought situation in 2003. She “*went droving*” when she had to sell her farm and, eventually, the drought forced her to sell the remainder of her cattle before they suffer and die. However, Helen is a true Aussie Battler who does not give up until the last, and then vows to move on with her life. She is a truly inspirational character from the bush.

Program Timeline

00:00:00	Opening sequence
00:01:08	Title Screen
00:01:13	Helen’s story
00:04:50	The Drought
00:06:12	Lifting the cattle
00:08:58	Helen’s dilemma
00:09:39	3 weeks after lifting
00:12:15	2 months after the sale of the eighteen cattle
00:15:15	A reprieve for Helen
00:17:59	The move to another property
00:21:16	9weeks after the move
00:25:26	End credits
00:26:00	End

Other Relevant Programs Available from VEA

Water: The Drop of Life Series
The World's Water Crisis
The Farm - Steps Series
Global Warming is Caused by Human Activity - Truth Will Out Series
Managing Australia's Coastal Resources

Please visit our website for many more relevant programs www.vea.com.au

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Student Worksheet:

Before Viewing the Program

1. Find definitions for the following words and terms.

- a) Drought _____

- b) Droving _____

- c) Climate _____

- d) Water cycle _____

- e) Global warming _____

- f) Global dimming _____

2. Use an atlas to find the New South Wales towns of Tamworth and Gunnedah. Then mark them on the map of NSW below.



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While Viewing the Program

1. How old is the drover in this program?

2. At the making of this film it is 2003, according to the radio voice over, when did this area of Australia last have a drought this bad? So what are they calling this drought?

3. What decision are some farmers forced to make at this stage of the drought?

4. How long has Helen 'been on the road now'?

5. What reason does she have for taking such a small herd of cattle droving?

6. How many head of cattle does Helen have?

7. How did Helen come by these particular cattle?

8. How long has this particular drought be going on?

9. Why can't Helen move her cattle to another spot for grazing?

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10. Why are some of Helen's cows starting to die?

11. How are the cattle put back on their feet?

12. Lifting the cattle up looks cruel and painful but it's very necessary if the beast is to survive. What analogy does the grazier Malcolm Heath use to explain this?

13. What is the dilemma that Helen faces?

14. Why are cattle sold when they reach about 10 years old and start to lose their teeth?

15. What kind of profit did Helen make from the sale of the 18 cattle?

16. What grave issue does Helen discuss that indicates how very serious the drought is for those who work on the land?

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17. What eventually happens to Patches?

18. Helen is offered a reprieve from her plight from the farmer who has been selling hay to her. Why does he make this offer?

19. With no rain in sight, what is Helen finally obliged to do?

20. Why does Helen feel that she's "let them (the cattle) down terribly," and betrayed them?

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After Viewing the Program

1. Explain why you think Helen says, *“I couldn’t live in a house. I really couldn’t live in a house.”*
2. What does the term ‘Aussie Battler’ describe? Explain why Helen is an example of this term.
3. Throughout the program Helen keeps referring to how the cattle saved her after she lost the farm. What do you think she means by this?
4. What does it mean when Helen says, *“Our family have got a habit of dying with their boots on”*?

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Useful Resources

Books

- A collection of original bush ballads dealing with outback life.
Bruce Simpson: *Songs of the Droving Season*, ABC Books & Audio/ BBC Audio, ISBN: 0733310583
- Nathan Olson: *Droughts (Weather Update)*, Bridgestone Books (July 15, 2005) ISBN: 0736843310
- Michael Collier, Robert H. Webb: *Floods, Droughts, and Climate Change*, University of Arizona Press (November 2002) ISBN: 0816522502
- Karen J. Donnelly: *Droughts of the Past and the Future (Donnelly, Karen J. Earth's Changing Weather and Climate.)*, PowerKids Press (August 2003) ISBN: 0823962172

Article

- Brendan O'Keefe: *Paddocks Turn to Dust as Drought Bites Back*, Science and Nature – The Australian, 23 May, 2006.
<http://theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,19226003-30417,00.html>

Website References

- Practical Advice on Cattle Droving
<http://www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/beef/5490.html>
- The Art of Cattle Droving
http://australiansatwork.com.au/cattle/cattle_en7-8.php
- The Man from Snowy River: The Snowy Mountains
<http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/snowy/>
- The Man from Snowy River – poem by A. B. Paterson
<http://www.mountainman.com.au/mansnowy.html>
- Clancy of the Overflow – poem by A. B. Paterson
http://www.mountainman.com.au/clancy_o.html
- With the Cattle – poem by A. B. Paterson
<http://www.middlemiss.org/lit/authors/patersonab/poetry/withthecattle.html>