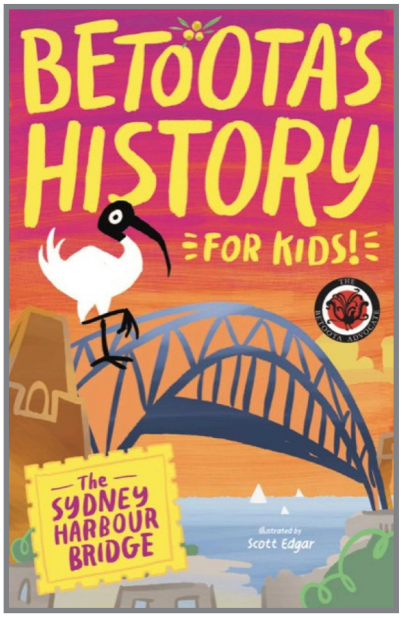
The Sydney Harbour Bridge (Betoota's History for Kids)



AUTHOR
BETOOTA ADVOCATE

ILLUSTRATOR
SCOTT EDGAR

SCIS: 5577858

ISBN: 9781923345225

RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Primary

SYNOPSIS

History will never be boring again! The Betoota Advocate bring their usual humour, knowledge and wit to this book, but this time they're writing for kids! This is a non-fiction historical adventure detailing the controversy and challenges of building the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge. No one can make the truth more engaging for kids than the Betoota Advocate. From the perspective of a curious ibis, Betoota provide a unique but historically accurate perspective of one of Australia's most magnificent landmarks in history.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Betoota Advocate is 'Australia's oldest' and favourite newspaper resonating with 1.2 million followers in Instagram. They pride themselves on reporting fair and just news with authenticity. Their bestselling books for adults include The Australian Dream and Betoota-isms. Their satirical documentary series The Betoota Advocate Presents (2023) is streaming on Paramount.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Scott Edgar or 'Scod' is best known as one-third of beloved Australian band Tripod, with whom he's won an ARIA and was nominated for a GRAMMY. He is a writer, composer and illustrator for video games, animation and kid's books.

THEMES

- Australian History
- Satire
- Newspapers
- Sydney
- Humour
- Sydney Harbour Bridge
- STEM
- Design
- Technology
- Materials

CURRICULUM LINKS

Australian Curriculum v9

- Learning areas:
  - History
    - Year 3 - AC9HS3K01, AC9HS3K02, AC9HS3K05, AC9HS3S01, AC9HS3S02, AC9HS3S05, AC9HS3S07
    - Year 4 - AC9HS4S01, AC9HS4S03, AC9HS4S05, AC9HS4S07
  - The Arts
    - Years 3 & 4 - AC9AVA4D01, AC9AVA4C01, AC9AMU4E01, AC9AMU4C01, AC9ADR4D01, AC9ADR4C01
  - English
    - Year 3 - AC9E3LA03, AC9E3LA04, AC9E3LE02, AC9E3LY01, AC9E3LY02, AC9E3LY05, AC9E3LY06
    - Year 4 - AC9E4LA02, AC9E4LA05, AC9E4LE02, AC9E4LE03, AC9E4LY02, AC9E4LY05
  - Design & Technology
    - Years 3 & 4 - AC9TDE4K01, AC9TDE4K02, AC9TDE4P01, AC9TDE4P03, AC9TDE4P04, AC9TDE4P05
- General capabilities:
  - Critical and Creative Thinking
  - Literacy - Reading & Viewing - Understanding texts
  - Literacy - Writing

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Questions to ask:
  - What do you think this story might be about?
  - Can you point out the following features of the book? (Spine, title, illustration, front page, back page, blurb, end papers).

DURING READING

- Questions to ask:
  - Have you ever seen the Sydney Harbour Bridge?
  - What do you know about the Betoota Advocate?
  - Have you ever thought about how a bridge is built?
  - If you could design a bridge, what shape would it be?
  - Do you think building the Sydney Harbour Bridge was a good idea?
  - How do you feel about the narrator of this text?
  - Have you noticed some of the highlighted words in blue? Why do you think the author or designer has done this?
  - Can you make any connections to the story so far?

AFTER READING

- Questions to ask:
  - What did you enjoy most about the story?
  - What did you like about the way it wad written? Why?
  - Did you learn anything new?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Chapter One

- Draw a topographical map of Sydney in the early 1920s. Include the North Shore, The Rocks, Surry Hills, Tasman Sea, Darlinghurst, Paddington, Circular Quay, the Blue Mountains, Bennelong Point, Dawes Point, Milton's Point, Bondi Beach, Mosman, Neutral Bay and any other locations mentioned in the text. Compare the drawn maps to current maps of Sydney using Google Earth or an atlas.

- Research the ferries and punts that have been used over the years and create an information poster or google site exploring these forms of transport.
- Create a swing tag with information all about the Moreton Bay Fig Tree.

Chapter Two

- Create a brochure exploring different types of bridges that are of interest.
- Design an information page about John Bradfield. It could be hard copy or digital.
- In teams, build a bridge from Lego, Duplo, recycled materials, newspaper and masking tape. Have your bridge, connect two points, eg. two chairs or two desks. Base the designs on the bridges mentioned in the text, New York, Hell Gate Bridge, London Bridge, Anzac Bridge and the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Chapter Three

- Create a hanging mobile of information, using wire a coat hanger to display. The coat hanger can be bent into the arched shape and have snippets of information hanging from string.
- Create a timeline of significant events from approximately 1923-1930, showing what happened while the bridge was being constructed.
- Explore the Great Depression, watch some video clips from this time and discuss as a class.

Chapter Four

- Create a reenactment showing people from both sides, those who were protesting against the building of the bridge (the NIMBYs) and those who were for the bridge. Create placards and signs in support and opposition of the bridge. Act out your scene at assembly.
- Design an information page about Premier Jack Lang. It could be hard copy or digital.

Chapter Five

- Using Trove (trove.nla.gov.au) or similar, watch some footage of the opening of the bridge. Explore Captain Francis De Groot, the homing pigeons or Lennie the Legend. Select one of these or another fascinating story from this period of time to write a paragraph about. Draw a picture to highlight what you have written.
- Research some of the songs that were written about the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Write your own song.

Chapter Six

- Create an artwork showing the bridge exploding in colour with fireworks. Use examples of images from New Years' Eve celebrations to guide your artwork.
- Create an information poster about the tolls and the toll system. Base your poster on a time period to show how much it would cost to use the Sydney Harbour Bridge at that time.
- Explore the tunnel system now present in Sydney. Use Google Maps as a guide. Draw a system of tunnels and bridges in your own suburb or school.

Copyright 2026 © Scholastic Australia Pty Limited.