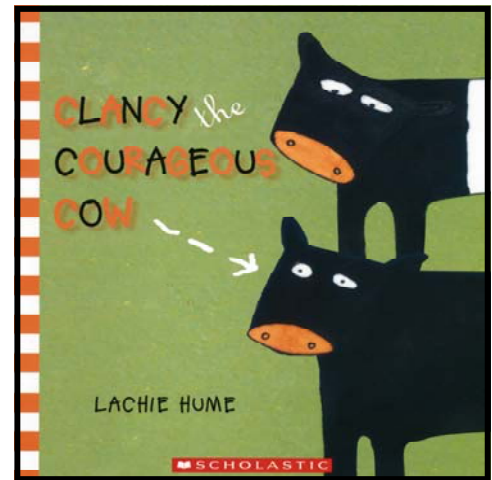


# TEACHER'S BOOK NOTES

## Clancy the Courageous Cow

Written & Illustrated by Lachie Hume



### Synopsis

Clancy is a calf born into a herd of Belted Galloways. Unlike his parents and the rest of herd, however, Clancy is a Belted Galloway without a belt. Clancy is upset by this and tries different ways of giving himself a belt. They all come to nothing. One night he finds that being black is an advantage, because it means that he can sneak into the Herefords' rich pasture and gorge himself on their lush grass. The Herefords own grazing rights to this land by winning the annual cow wrestle. The Belted Galloways, being small and feeding on poor pasture are trapped in a vicious cycle, but they are about to break out of it, because Clancy is now a big, beefy cow. Clancy wins the Cow Wrestle and the grazing rights, but instead of turning against the Herefords, he puts forward the idea that all the cows should live together side by side. Clancy and his friend Helga, a totally red Hereford, live happily ever after.

### About the Author/Illustrator: Lachie Hume

Lachie Hume grew up on a farm in Victoria and spent most of his early years riding his horses, playing sport, and looking after his pet cow Xena. Lachie attended local schools and boarding school in Melbourne. During a year off between school and tertiary education Lachie worked as a fencer, shed builder and vineyard hand before driving to Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. He stopped at Gunbalanya and worked there at the community medical centre, cleaning floors during the day and driving the ambulance at night. Now 20 years old, he is studying Agricultural Science at Melbourne University.

Lachie loved drawing as a little boy, but by the time he finished primary school, he wasn't drawing at all. The illustrations he did for his story 'Clancy the Courageous Cow' in Year 7 were the first he'd

# TEACHER'S BOOK NOTES

## About the Author/Illustrator cont...

done in many years, and it is partly this rawness that gives them their charm. The story came to him after his family had driven past a herd of Belted Galloways and a discussion about the cows followed, especially the question: 'If your parents were Belted Galloways and you were born without a belt, would you still be a Belted Galloway?' Lachie's dry sense of humour turned the question into a very funny book.

For the story to be published commercially, the illustrations had to be redone in watercolour. Lachie's mum, a children's author, was able to show him how to mix colours and paint. The story evolved over this period too, and became a more multi-layered book than the original Year 7 project.

## Points for teachers

Clancy is different, and is at first made fun of because of it. Teachers might prompt discussion by asking students: Why does Clancy try to change himself? Was that the right thing to do? What else could he have done to make it OK to be all black? What are some other ways that he could have given himself a belt?

Further discussion could explore what happens at the end of the story: Who thinks that Clancy should have taken the grazing rights and kept them for the Belted Galloways? What has he achieved in the end?

A reading of the book could also lead to a discussion about fairness: Was it fair that the grazing rights were determined by a wrestling competition between unequal partners? (Herefords are much bigger cows than Belted Galloways.) Are there any parallel situations in our society, where one group is treated unfairly when it comes to the division of resources? Did Clancy use his power fairly? Why did he share his good fortune with his own herd, when they were mean to him in the beginning because he was different?

Older students could study the 'naive' painting style and compare it to other works in this style. The book is based heavily on the original that Lachie made when he was in Year 7, but with different materials - watercolour paint rather than colour pencil. Students might perhaps revisit an earlier work of their own, or look at examples of picture books created by students that may be available in the school library. It is rare for such books to be published. Students might be asked to consider what this story had that made it suitable for being published and presented to a wider audience.