

## WALTZING MATILDA - BANJO PATERSON

### Life:

- ❖ **Full Name:** Andrew Barton "Banjo" Paterson
- ❖ **Born:** February 17, 1864, in Narrambla, New South Wales, Australia
- ❖ **Died:** February 5, 1941, in Sydney, Australia
- ❖ Grew up on a **rural property near Yass, New South Wales**, where he developed a love for the Australian countryside.
- ❖ Educated at **Sydney Grammar School**, excelling in academics and sports.
- ❖ Trained as a **lawyer**, working as a solicitor before becoming a full-time writer and journalist.
- ❖ Married **Alice Walker** in 1903, with whom he had two children.
- ❖ Had a deep passion for **horses, bush life, and Australian identity**, which greatly influenced his work.

### Career:

#### Poet and Writer:

- ❖ Began writing poetry under the pen name "**Banjo**", taken from the name of a racehorse.
- ❖ Published his first well-known poem, "**Clancy of the Overflow**" (1889), in *The Bulletin*, an Australian magazine.
- ❖ Gained national recognition for his romanticized depictions of bush life.

#### Journalism and War Correspondence:

- ❖ Worked as a **journalist** for various newspapers, including *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Argus*.
- ❖ Served as a **war correspondent** during the **Second Boer War (1899–1902)**, covering events from South Africa.
- ❖ Reported on the **Boxer Rebellion (1900)** in China.
- ❖ Served in **World War I (1914–1918)** as an **ambulance driver** and later as a **remount officer**, training horses for the military.

#### Broadcasting and Later Years:

- ❖ Continued writing and working as a journalist after the war.
- ❖ Became involved in **radio broadcasting**, sharing stories and poetry.
- ❖ Lived a quiet life in Sydney until his death in 1941.

### Works:

#### Poetry:

- ❖ Wrote many **famous bush ballads**, celebrating **Australian landscapes, outback life, and heroic figures**.

**Notable poems:**

- ❖ *Waltzing Matilda* (1895) – Australia's most famous folk song, telling the story of a wandering swagman.
- ❖ *The Man from Snowy River* (1890) – A legendary tale of a skilled horseman chasing a runaway colt.
- ❖ *Clancy of the Overflow* (1889) – A nostalgic poem about a drover's carefree life in the bush.
- ❖ *A Bush Christening* (1893) – A humorous tale about an unconventional baptism.
- ❖ *Rio Grande's Last Race* (1896) – A thrilling poem about a horse race.

**Poetry Collections:**

- ❖ *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses* (1895) – His first poetry collection, which gained widespread popularity.
- ❖ *Rio Grande's Last Race and Other Verses* (1902) – Another collection of bush ballads and adventure stories.

**Prose and Short Stories:**

- ❖ *An Outback Marriage* (1906) – A novel about life in rural Australia.
- ❖ *Three Elephant Power and Other Stories* (1917) – A collection of short stories about bush life and humor.

**Legacy:**

- ❖ **One of Australia's most iconic poets**, celebrated for his ability to capture the spirit of the outback.
- ❖ His work helped shape the **national identity of Australia**, romanticizing the bush lifestyle.
- ❖ *Waltzing Matilda* became Australia's unofficial national anthem.
- ❖ Honored on the **Australian \$10 banknote**, featuring his portrait alongside an illustration from *The Man from Snowy River*.
- ❖ His works continue to be studied, performed, and loved across Australia.

**WALTZING MATILDA****Introduction to the Poem**

- ❖ **"Waltzing Matilda"** is one of Australia's most famous ballads.
- ❖ It was written by **A.B. "Banjo" Paterson** in 1895.
- ❖ The song tells the story of a **swagman** (a traveling worker or wanderer), who sets up camp by a **billabong** (a small lake or waterhole), and ends up stealing a sheep.
- ❖ The poem is written in a **light and sing-song style**, but it has **sad and serious themes** like **poverty, survival, and death**.

- ❖ The title "Waltzing Matilda" is a **slang expression** in Australia. It means **carrying your belongings in a bag and walking around looking for work**.

### DETAILED SUMMARY

#### First Verse

*"Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong,  
Under the shade of a coolibah tree,  
And he sang as he watched and waited 'til his billy boiled,  
Who'll come a-waltzing, Matilda, with me?"*

A cheerful wandering man (called a swagman), who carries all his belongings on his back, sets up camp beside a **billabong** (a waterhole) under the shade of a **coolibah tree** (a type of Australian eucalyptus tree). While waiting for his **billy can** (a metal pot used to boil water for tea) to boil, he sings a song to pass the time. The line "You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me" means he is inviting his bag, "Matilda," to keep wandering with him. It reflects his **lonely but content life** on the road.

#### Chorus

*"Waltzing Matilda, Waltzing Matilda,  
Who'll come a-waltzing, Matilda, with me?"  
And he sang as he watched and waited 'til his billy boiled,  
"Who'll come a-waltzing, Matilda, with me?"*

The chorus is a **refrain** that repeats throughout the poem. It emphasizes the swagman's lifestyle – wandering the countryside, carrying his few possessions, and living simply.

#### Second Verse

*"Along came a jumbuck to drink at the billabong,  
Up jumped the swagman and grabbed him with glee,  
And he sang as he stowed that jumbuck in his tucker bag,  
"You'll come a-waltzing, Matilda, with me."*

While the swagman is resting, a **jumbuck** (an Australian word for sheep) comes to drink water at the billabong. The swagman sees a chance to get food and **quickly catches the sheep** with joy. He **puts it into his tucker bag** (his food bag) to take it away. As he does this, he again sings the same line, still using cheerful words to describe what is actually a **crime**. He is **stealing the sheep**, but the happy tone hides the seriousness of the act.

### Third Verse

"Up rode the squatter, mounted on his thoroughbred,  
Down came the troopers, one, two, three,  
"Whose is that jumbuck you've got in your tucker bag?"  
"You'll come a-waltzing, Matilda, with me."

A **squatter** (a wealthy landowner) arrives on horseback, alongside **troopers** (policemen). The squatter likely owns the sheep and has summoned the troopers to **arrest the swagman** for theft.

The troopers confront him, asking about the stolen sheep. Their **authority and power** contrast sharply with the swagman's **lowly status**. He is cornered and faces the possibility of imprisonment.

### Fourth Verse

"Up jumped the swagman, leapt into the billabong,  
"You'll never catch me alive," said he,  
And his ghost may be heard as you pass by the billabong,  
"Who'll come a-waltzing, Matilda, with me?"

The swagman realizes he has been caught and does not want to be arrested or punished. So he **jumps into the billabong** and **drowns himself**. Before he dies, he shouts that they will **never catch him alive**. The poem ends with a ghostly image. It says that if someone passes by that same billabong today, they might still hear the swagman's **ghost singing the same song**, "You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me." This gives the poem a **haunting and sad ending**, showing that his spirit lives on.

### Historical & Cultural Significance

#### 1. Unofficial National Anthem

- ❖ *Waltzing Matilda* is considered **Australia's most famous folk song**.
- ❖ It was nearly chosen as Australia's **national anthem** in 1977.

#### 2. Inspired by Real Events

- ❖ The song is believed to be based on **the 1894 Shearers' Strike**, where workers fought against unfair labor conditions.
- ❖ A real-life swagman, **Samuel Hoffmeister**, was said to have **drowned himself to avoid capture**, similar to the song's ending.

#### 3. Enduring Popularity

- ❖ The song has been recorded by **dozens of musicians** and played at **Olympic Games, sporting events, and political rallies**.
- ❖ It remains a **symbol of Australian identity**, representing the **bush spirit** and resilience.

## Structure

The poem is written in a **ballad form**, which is a traditional style of storytelling through song or verse. Here's how it's structured:

- ❖ The poem consists of **four main stanzas** (each with 4 lines), and after each stanza comes a **chorus** (also of 4 lines).
- ❖ This **alternating pattern of stanza and chorus** continues throughout the poem.
- ❖ Each stanza tells a part of the story, while the chorus repeats the **main refrain**, which reinforces the theme and rhythm of the poem.
- ❖ The **language is simple and conversational**, in keeping with folk ballads, making it easy to sing or recite. The tone shifts from **light and cheerful** at the beginning to **ironic and tragic** by the end.
- ❖ The poem uses a **regular and musical rhyme scheme** (ABAB in stanzas, AABA in chorus) to make it catchy and suitable for singing.

## Literary Devices

### Imagery:

Paterson uses **vivid imagery** to evoke the Australian bush and its unique elements:

- ❖ **"Billabong"** and **"coolibah tree"** paint a clear picture of the landscape.
- ❖ The description of the **swagman's life**, his interactions with nature, and his encounter with the troopers all evoke strong visual impressions.

### Symbolism:

- ❖ The **swagman** himself is a symbol of **rebellion and freedom**, representing the independent, itinerant spirit of the Australian bush.
- ❖ **"Matilda"** is used as a term for the swagman's bundle, symbolizing his only companion and the impermanence of his life on the move.
- ❖ The **billabong** symbolizes a haven or a temporary resting place in a harsh, unyielding landscape.

### Repetition:

The recurring refrain, **"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda, with me,"** not only enhances the song's musical quality but also emphasizes the core idea of journeying and the call to join in that wandering lifestyle.

### Alliteration & Assonance:

Paterson employs **alliteration** (e.g., **"billy boiled"**) and **assonance** (repeating vowel sounds) to create a pleasing sound pattern that enhances the lyrical quality of the song.

### Personification:

The natural elements and even the billabong itself are imbued with a sense of life and character. For example, describing the swagman's interaction with the environment (singing, waiting) gives the landscape a **human-like presence** that deepens the connection between the character and his surroundings.