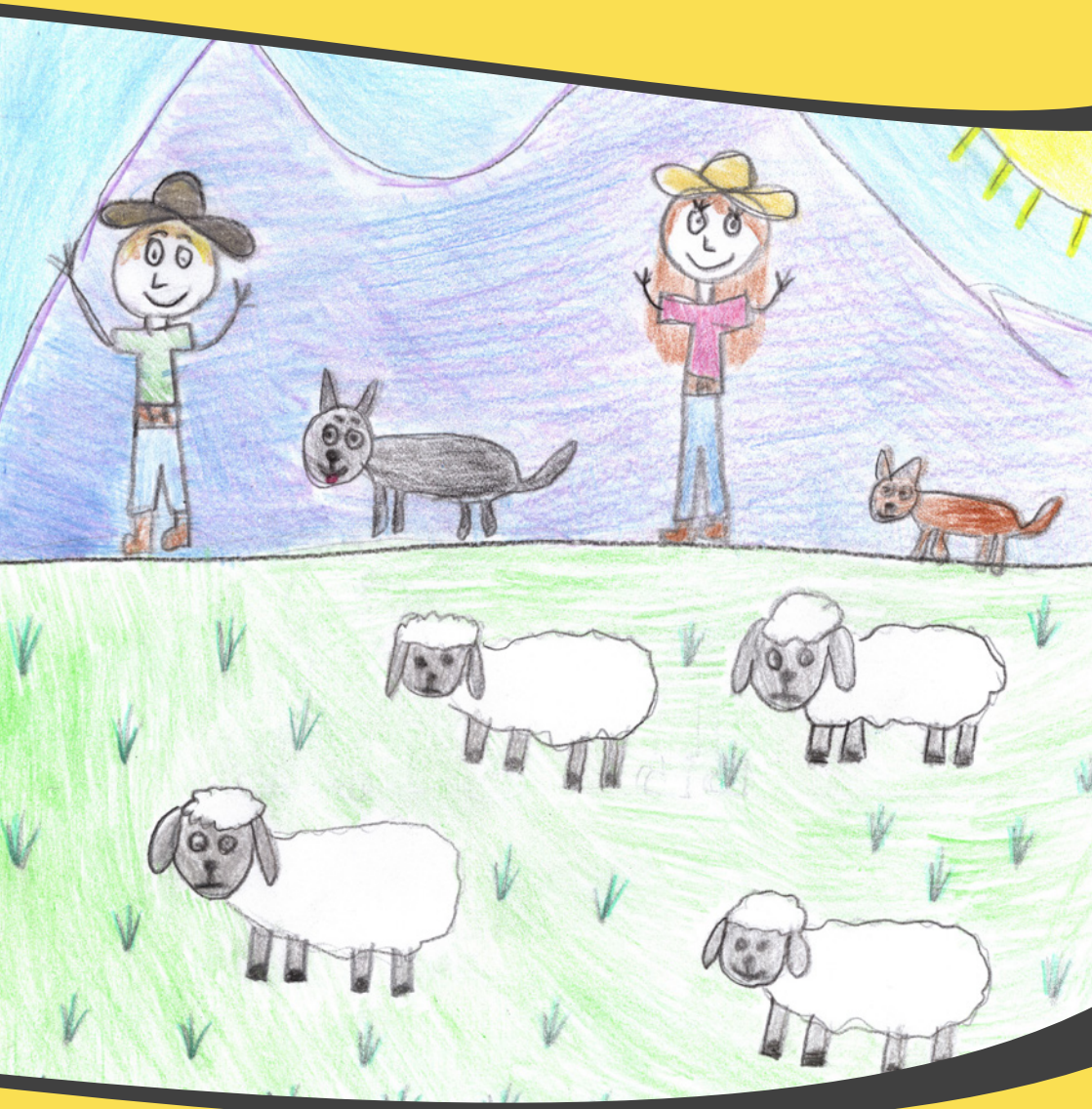
# Marvellous Merinos



Eileen Murphy
Fairfax Public School

ENVIRO stories

## Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by PeeKdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

www.envirostories.com.au

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# Marvellous Merinos

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This book has been published as part of the 2021 Fabulous Fibres Enviro-Stories program. Students used their imagination to write and illustrate stories that highlight the where natural fibres come from and how they have been a part of our everyday lives for thousands of years. This program was supported by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation and CSIRO.

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Enviro-Stories is a PeeKdesigns initiative, www.peekdesigns.com.au.

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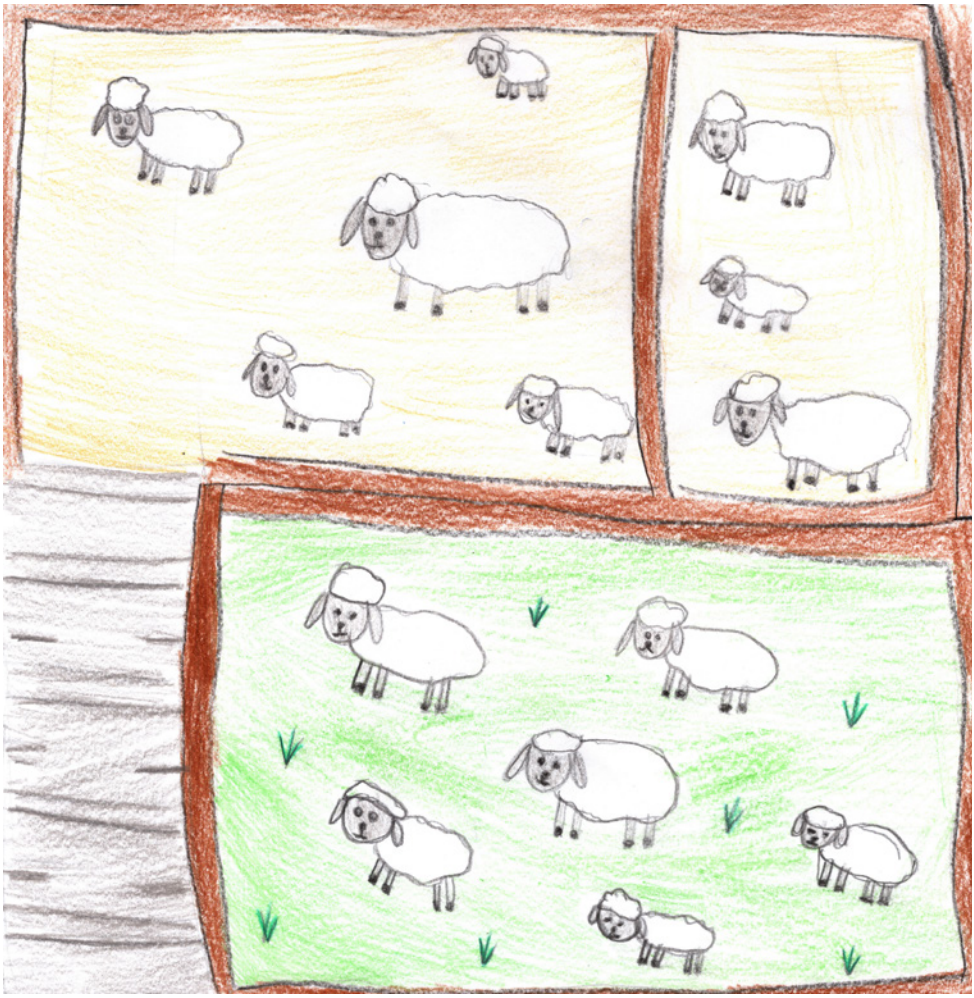
The burning, blazing, golden sun shone over the merino sheep like a glittering, white gem. Farmer John walked steadily up the hill in his faded green working shirt and grey Akubra hat, which shaded his face from the bright sun.

His two faithful kelpies, Pepper and Kitty, trotted by his side.

Farmer John cast the dogs out to his left and they rounded the sheep up in the steep and treacherous hills.

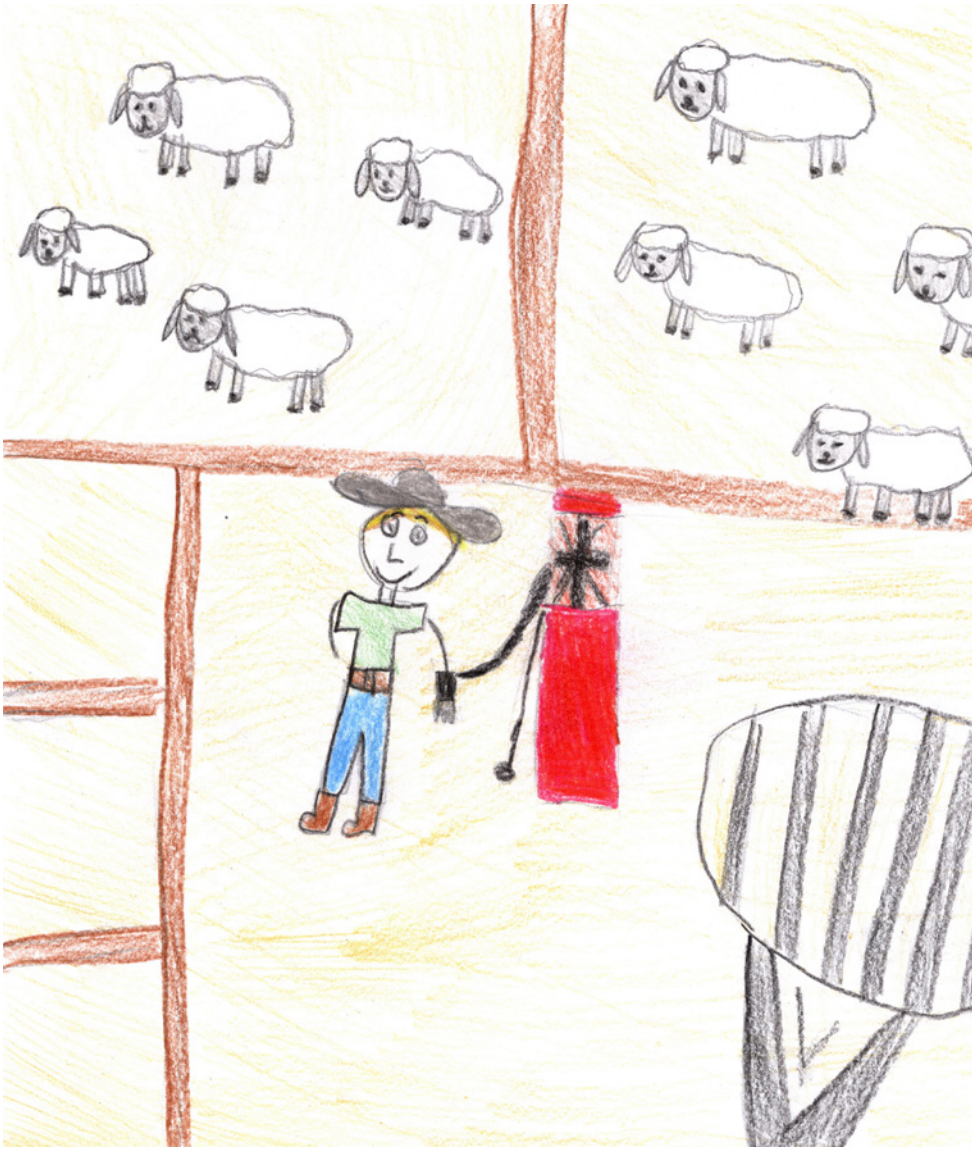
Pepper and Kitty guided the merinos away from the edge of the hill through the blades of luscious, green grass.



Finally, after a long, hard day of mustering in the steep hills, Kitty and Pepper retired back to their kennels.

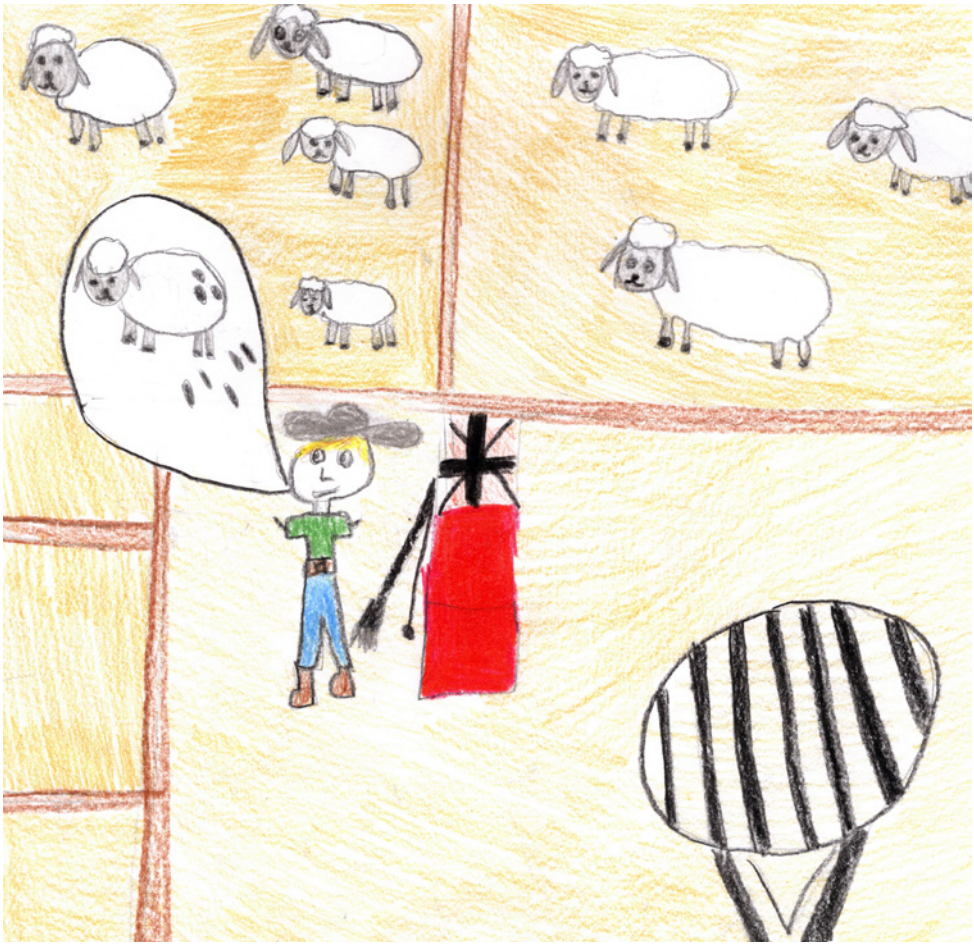
Farmer John excitedly went back to the yards where his superior merino sheep were waiting. He hunted them up into the holding pens and carefully secured the gates so the sheep wouldn't escape.

Early the next morning, Farmer John grabbed his handpiece, oiled the joints, turned on the power and began shearing.



Grabbing his first sheep, which was a gigantic ewe, he wrapped his bony hand around the sheep's chin and his other hand pushed the sheep to the ground. Farmer John then dragged her slowly out of the pen.

This year, Farmer John was hoping that his wool would be of better quality and have greater quantity.

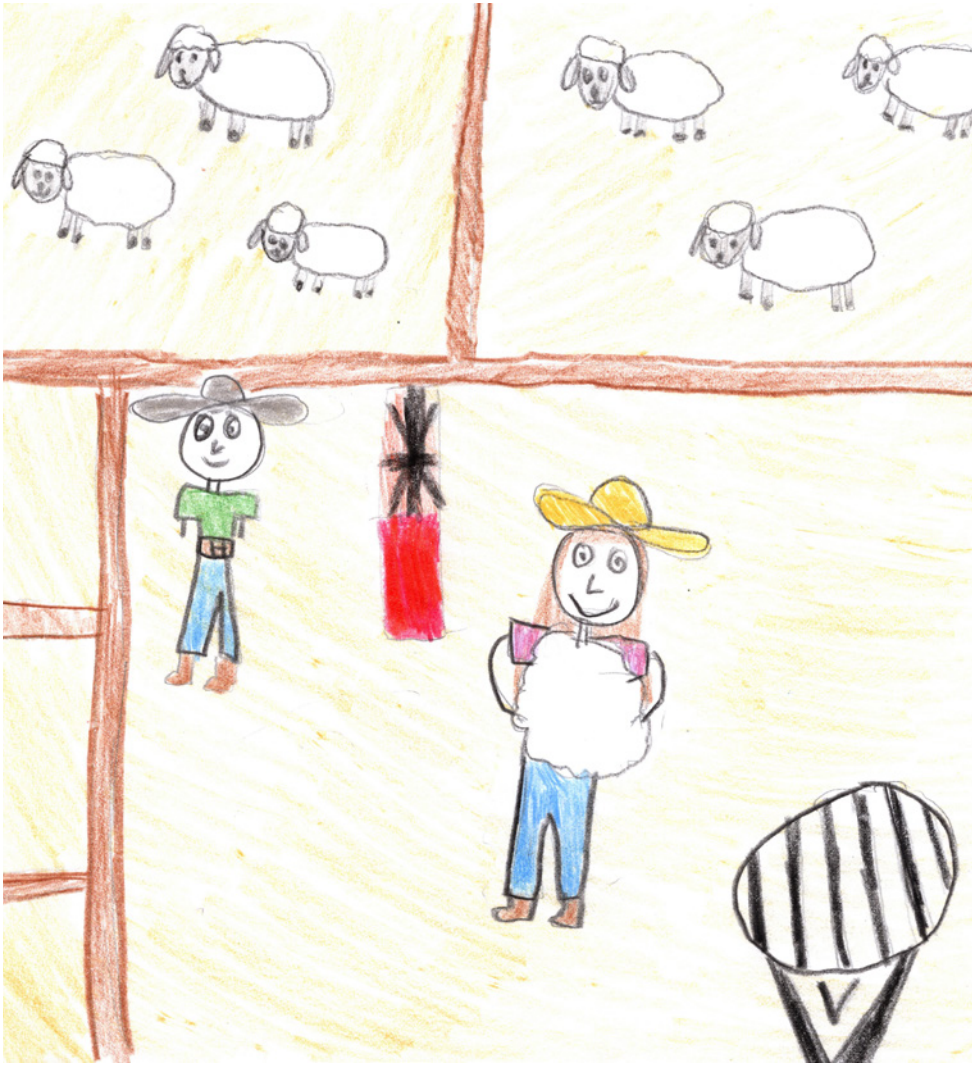


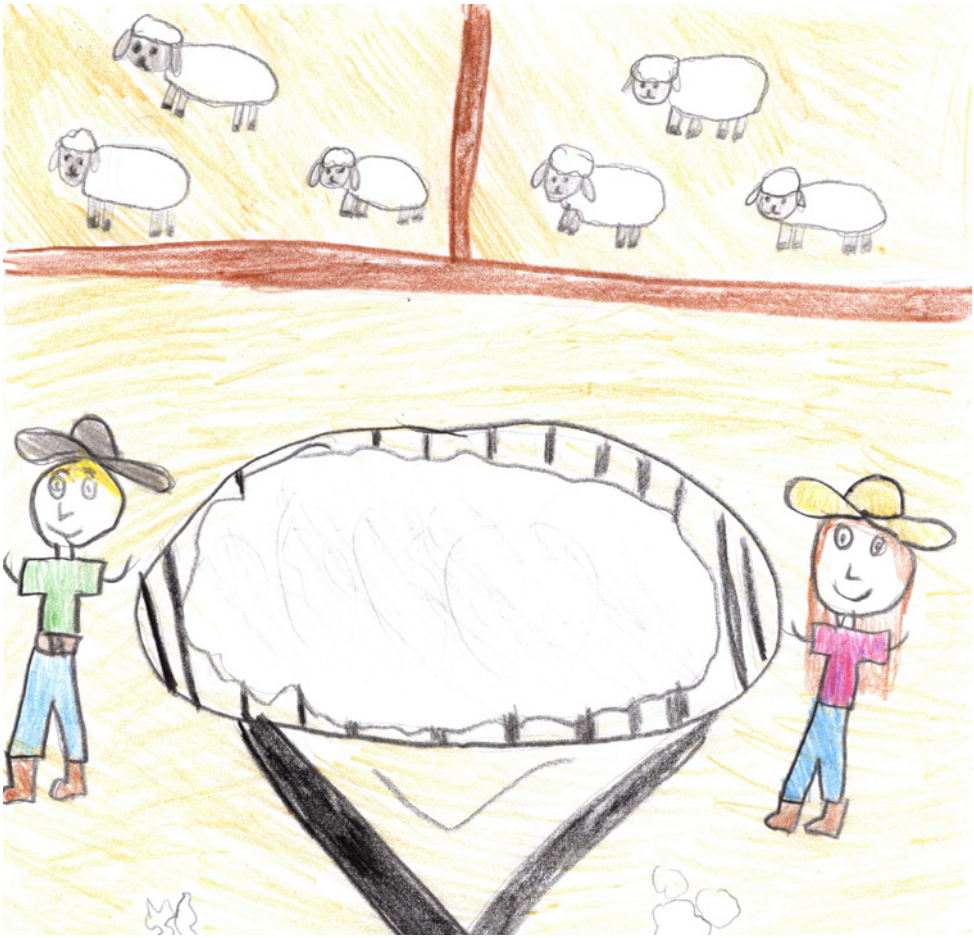
Last year things went downhill with his sheep being struck by a big fly wave. With a sudden shudder, Farmer John remembered the big, black maggots crawling and wriggling down the sheep's back.

Holding the sheep steadily between his two legs, he first shore off the belly wool and threw it to one side.

He then shore the wool off the neck, shearing with long blows and finally coming down to shear the whipping side.

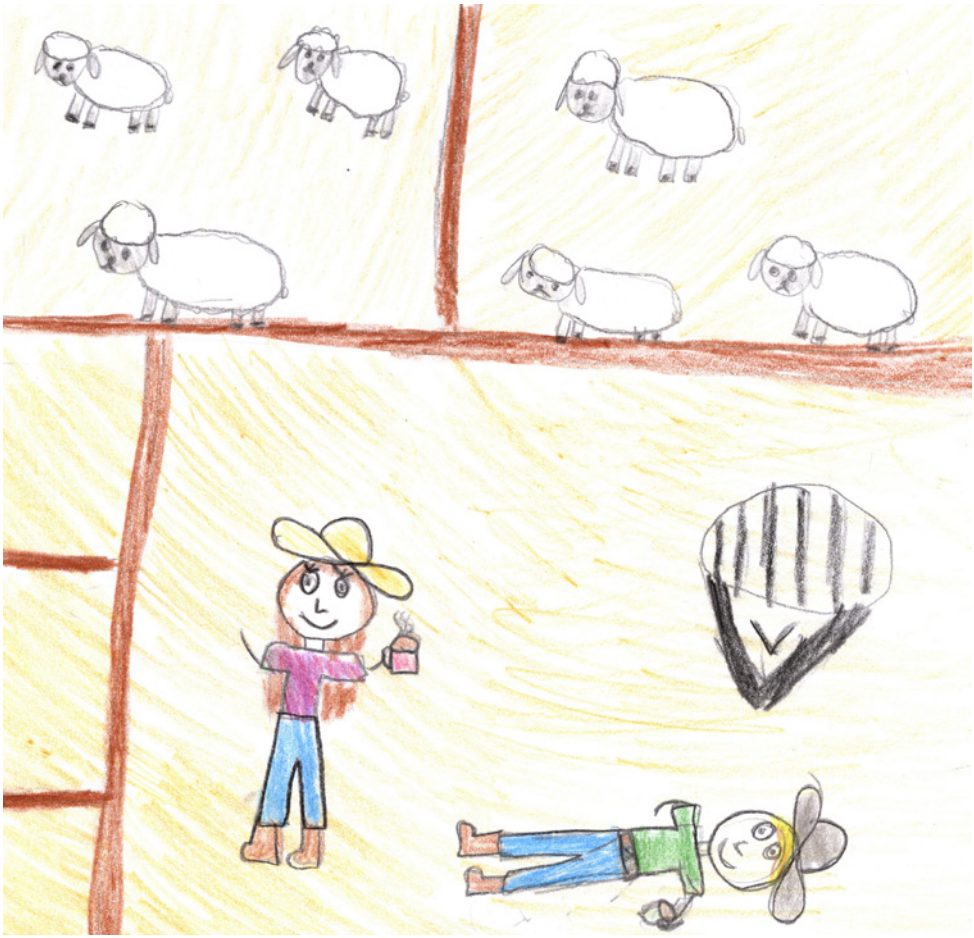
Farmer John's wife Betty came up to gather the wool tightly in her arms, making sure her hands gripped the wool that was shorn off the sheep's back legs.





She threw the wool high into the air making sure it landed perfectly on the wool table. Then Farmer John and Betty walked around the table taking off the stain and throwing it into one wool bin. They also pulled off the skirting and put it into the wool bin for pieces.

Once all that was done, the medium-fine fleece was thrown into the wool press.



Wiping the sweat from his brow, Farmer John said, “Smoko time,” to Betty. Betty quickly glanced at her watch and realised that it was 3 o’clock already!

“That was a good run, we’ll be done in a few days,” Farmer John exclaimed as he stretched his weary body out as he lay on the board and drank a cup of steaming, hot black tea.

After five more days of solid shearing, and twenty full, bulging wool bales lying on the board, a truck arrived to pick them up.

Farmer John and Betty loaded the wool bales with a front-end loader onto the back of the truck. This truck was going to take their lustrous wool to a factory where it would be spun into clothes, knitting wool and furnishings.

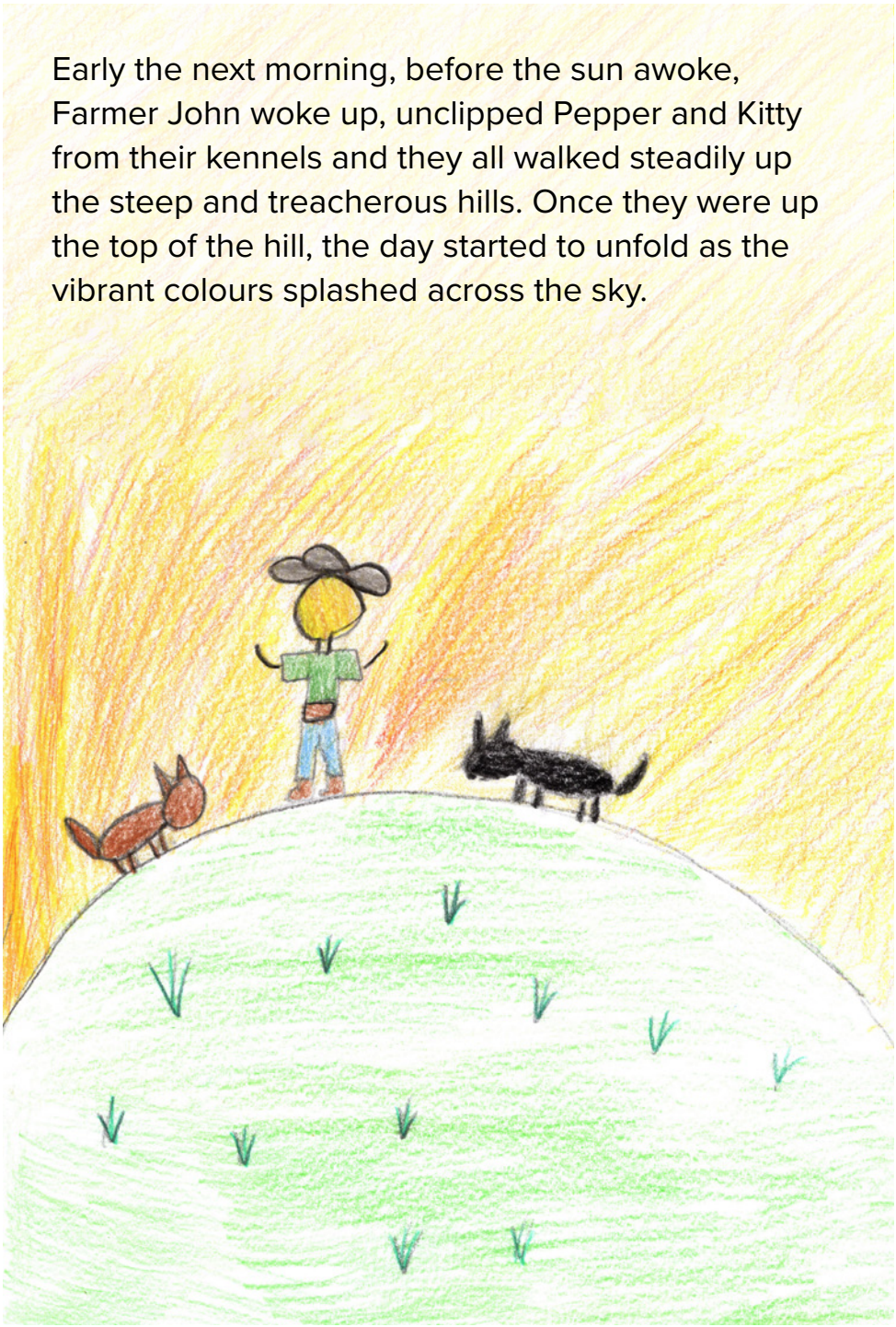
Farmer John then collected Pepper, his red and tan kelpie, and Kitty, his black and tan kelpie, to herd the sheep out into the grassy valley below the hills, where they would have plenty of food.

That night, Farmer John and Betty sat by the fire drinking tea and reflecting on this season's wool harvest.

"It's always a relief seeing the wool getting loaded onto the truck," Betty stated.

"Merino wool is a great fibre isn't it? Especially seeing that we still use it over 200 years since it was introduced into Australia in 1797," Farmer John replied.

Early the next morning, before the sun awoke, Farmer John woke up, unclipped Pepper and Kitty from their kennels and they all walked steadily up the steep and treacherous hills. Once they were up the top of the hill, the day started to unfold as the vibrant colours splashed across the sky.



Looking down the hill to the valley below, Farmer John admired his magnificent merino sheep as they grazed in the luscious, green grass.

“How lucky I am,” Farmer John murmured. “Living here with these wonderful sheep and their remarkable wool!”

Eileen Murphy
Fairfax Public School, Year 6 2021

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