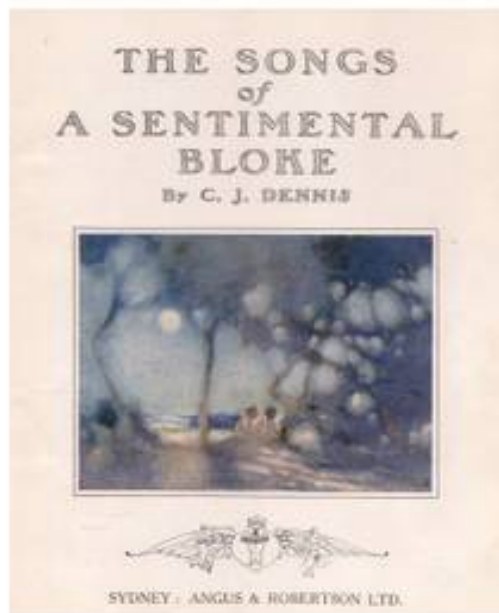


May 2018



At our May meeting, we discussed [Songs of a Sentimental Bloke](#) by C. J. Dennis.

The poem tells the story of Bill, a Melbourne larrikin, and is the age-old story of boy-meets-girl, boy-loses-girl, boy-wins-girl-back, they-all-live-happily-ever-after.

What's different about Songs of a Sentimental Bloke is that it's told in rhyming prose and is written exactly as it's spoken – in the language of a young working class man at the start of the 20th century. Of course, this takes a bit of getting used to – even the Australian-born

members struggled with some of the slang, but if you just went with the flow, you could pick up the gist of what was being said.

That being said, some of the language is just beautiful and, even though rough-spoken, shows Bill is a romantic at heart and has a feeling for finer things. The description of the play 'Romeo & Juliet' is perfection. It's a language very much of its time, though. Women are 'tarts', 'skirts' and 'bits of fluff', which doesn't sit well with us now, but would have resonated with the audience at the time. It seems to be very much a piece written for the working classes, who embraced it wholeheartedly.

Originally published in 1915, the poem became the most popular book of poetry ever published in Australia – the first edition sold out in a month. It was made into a (silent) movie in 1919, a play in 1922, a (talking) movie in 1932, ballets (!) in 1952 and 1985 and musicals in

Originally published in 1915, the poem became the most popular book of poetry ever published in Australia – the first edition sold out in a month. It was made into a (silent) movie in 1919, a play in 1922, a (talking) movie in 1932, ballets (!) in 1952 and 1985 and musicals in 1961 and 1986. Songs of a Sentimental Bloke made C. J. Dennis Australia's most commercially successful poet. This didn't translate into critical acclaim – and we thought this might have been because it was considered a bit too 'low-brow' to be taken seriously.

Songs of a Sentimental Bloke was for a long time on the curriculum of Australian schools but seems to have fallen out of favour, which is a shame. It probably doesn't have the same meaning to modern young people, many of whom are likely to struggle with the language. The poem evokes a lost, but fondly remembered, era of Australian history and life. Some of us loved it, some hated it but it was a wonderful and welcome re-immersion into a bygone age.

Summary by Di.

Ratings: Claudia DNF, Denise 3.5, Di 3.5, Judith 3 , Kim 3 and Margie 5.

Next month we will meet on the 8th (8/6) at 6:30PM at [Preece House, 50 Nerang St Bischof Pioneer Park, Nerang \(next to 54 Nerang St. shops\)](#) to continue with this years' list of Australian books. The book will be [Talking to my Country](#) by [Stan Grant](#).

Hope to see you all there and happy reading!

Other Books We Read

May 2018

Our books of the month was [Songs of a Sentimental Bloke](#) by [C. J. Dennis](#), but we also read other books.

Maximum rating is 5.

The Last Tudor by Philippa Gregory, 3.5.

A Manual for Cleaning Women by Lucia Berlin, 4.5.

Drums of Autumn by Diana Gabaldon, 3.5.

Manhattan Beach by Jennifer Egan, 3.5.

Middlemarch by George Eliot, 4.5.

A Kind of Freedom by Margaret Wilkerson Sexton, 2.5.

A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles, 4.

The News by Alain de Botton, 3.5.

A Long Way from Home by Peter Carey, 3.5.

The Secret Keeper by Kate Morton, 3.5.

Quarterly Essays by David Malouf, 4.

Dear Mrs Bird by A.J.Pearce, 1.

The Queen Of Bloody Everything by Joanna Nadin, 2.

The End of Loneliness by Benedict Well, 3.5.

The Shepherd's Hut by Tim Winton, 4.

The Town by Shaun Prescott, 3.

Ghachar Ghochar by Vivek Shanbag, 2.5.