

MAGIC  TREE HOUSE #20

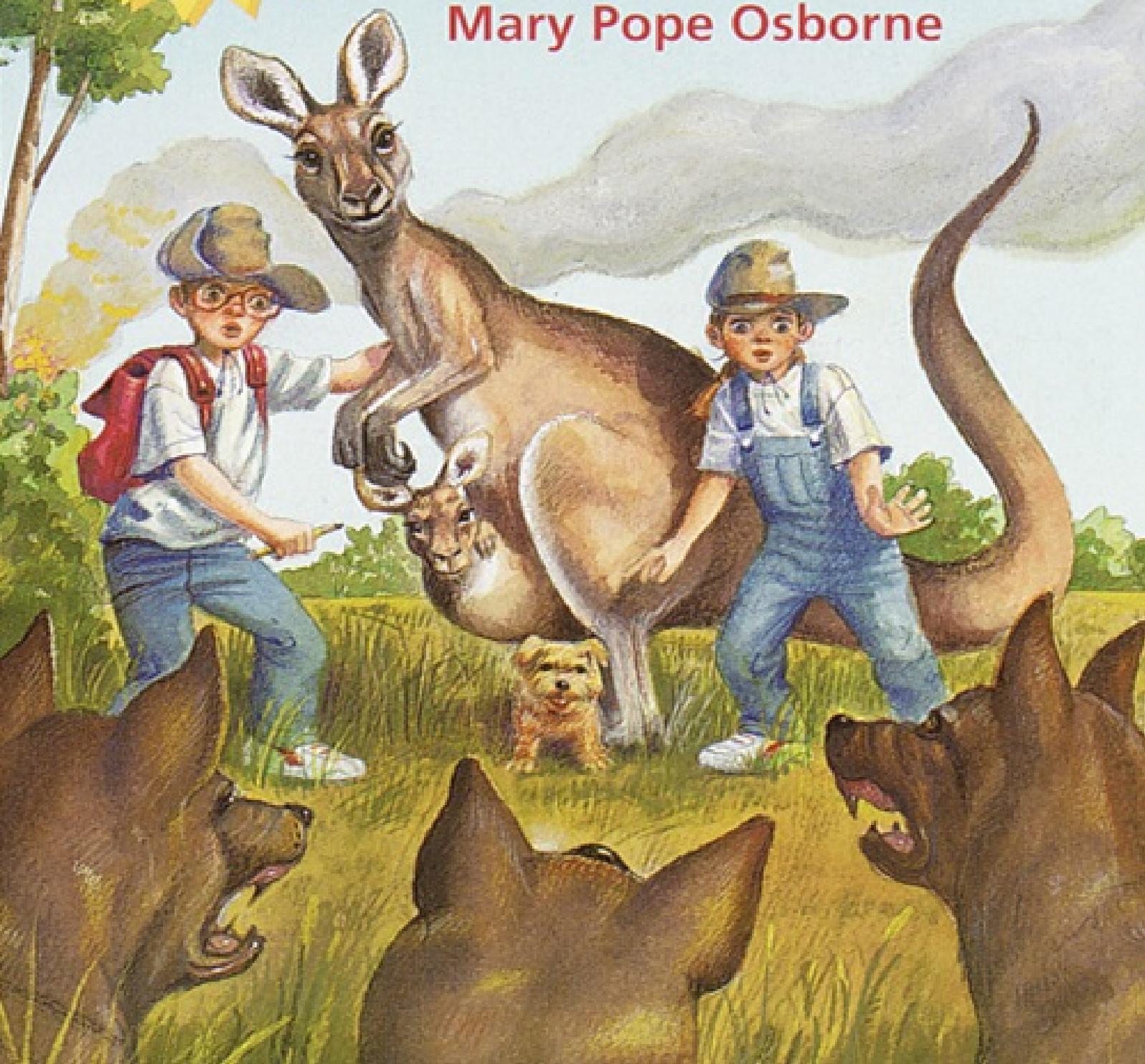
Dingoes at Dinnertime

Mary Pope Osborne

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MAGIC TREE HOUSE!

See details inside!



Here's what kids have to say to
Mary Pope Osborne, author of
the Magic Tree House series:

WOW! You have an imagination like no other.—Adam W.

I love your books. If you stop writing books, it will be like losing a best friend.—
Ben M.

I think you are the real Morgan le Fay. There is always magic in your books.—
Erica Y.

*One day I was really bored and I didn't want to read ... I looked in your book. I
read a sentence, and it was interesting. So I read some more, until the book was
done. It was so good I read more and more. Then I had read all of your books,
and now I hope you write lots more.*—Danai K.

*I always read [your books] over and over ... 1 time, 2 times, 3 times, 4
times ...* —Yuan C.

*You are my best author in the world. I love your books. I read all the time. I read
everywhere. My mom is like freaking out.*—Ellen C.

I hope you make these books for all yours and mine's life.—Riki H.

Teachers and librarians love
Magic Tree House® books, too!

Thank you for opening faraway places and times to my class through your books. They have given me the chance to bring in additional books, materials, and videos to share with the class.—J. Cameron

It excites me to see how involved [my fourth-grade reading class] is in your books ... I would do anything to get my students more involved, and this has done it.—C. Rutz

I discovered your books last year ... WOW! Our students have gone crazy over them. I can't order enough copies! ... Thanks for contributing so much to children's literature!—C. Kendziora

I first came across your Magic Tree House series when my son brought one home ... I have since introduced this great series to my class. They have absolutely fallen in love with these books! ... My students are now asking me for more independent reading time to read them. Your stories have inspired even my most struggling readers.—M. Payne

I love how I can go beyond the [Magic Tree House] books and use them as springboards for other learning.—R. Gale

We have enjoyed your books all year long. We check your Web site to find new information. We pull our map down to find the areas where the adventures take place. My class always chimes in at key parts of the story. It feels good to hear my students ask for a book and cheer when a new book comes out.—J. Korinek

Our students have "Magic Tree House fever." I can't keep your books on the library shelf.—J. Rafferty

Your books truly invite children into the pleasure of reading. Thanks for such terrific work.—S. Smith

The children in the fourth grade even hide the [Magic Tree House] books in the library so that they will be able to find them when they are ready to check them out.—K. Mortensen

My Magic Tree House books are never on the bookshelf because they are always being read by my students. Thank you for creating such a wonderful series.—K. Mahoney



Dear Readers,

I get many letters telling me how much kids learn from reading Magic Tree House books. But what you might not realize is how much I learn writing them. I'm not really an expert on any of the subjects I write about. So I have to do lots and lots of research.

Working on Dingoes at Dinnertime, I was surprised to discover how little I really knew about the continent of Australia. For example, I never knew why it was home to certain animals that lived nowhere else on earth, animals like kangaroos, koalas, wallabies, wombats, platypuses, emus, and black swans.

But after I did my research, I found out the answer. And when you read this book, you'll discover the answer along with Jack and Annie.

I hope that reading Dingoes at Dinnertime will be just the beginning of your Australian adventure. I hope that when you finish, you'll go out and do some research of your own and discover lots more about that wondrous land.

All my best,

MAGIC TREE HOUSE® #20

Dingoes at Dinnertime

by Mary Pope Osborne

illustrated by
Sal Murdocca



A STEPPING STONE BOOK™

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SUMMARY: The magic tree house whisks Jack and Annie away to Australia, where they must save some animals from a wildfire.

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Special Preview of Magic Tree House #21: Civil War on Sunday

For Ellen Mager, a great champion of children's literature



Prologue

One summer day in Frog Creek, Pennsylvania, a mysterious tree house appeared in the woods.

Eight-year-old Jack and his seven-year-old sister, Annie, climbed into the tree house. They found that it was filled with books.

Jack and Annie soon discovered that the tree house was magic. It could take them to the places in the books. All they had to do was point to a picture and wish to go there.

Along the way, Jack and Annie discovered that the tree house belongs to Morgan le Fay. Morgan is a magical librarian from the time of King Arthur. She travels through time and space, gathering books.

In Magic Tree House Books #5–8, Jack and Annie helped free Morgan from a spell. In Books #9–12, they solved four ancient riddles and became Master Librarians.

In Magic Tree House Books #13–16, Jack and Annie had to save four ancient stories from being lost forever.

In Magic Tree House Books #17–20, Jack and Annie must be given four special gifts to help free an enchanted dog from a spell. They have already received a gift on a trip to the *Titanic*, a gift from the Lakota Indians, and a gift from a forest in India. Now they are about to set out in search of their last gift ...

1

The Last Gift

Annie sat on the porch steps. She stared down the street at the Frog Creek woods.

“Hey, Jack,” she said. “Do you hear it?”

Jack sat next to her. He was reading a book.

“Hear what?” he said.

“Teddy’s calling us,” said Annie.

“You’re kidding,” said Jack. But he looked down the street and listened, too.

A faint bark came from the distance.

Arf! Arf!

A big smile crossed Jack’s face.

“You hear it!” Annie said.

“Yep,” said Jack. “You’re right. Time to go.”

He stood up and grabbed his backpack.

“Be back soon!” Annie shouted through the screen door.

“Don’t be late for dinner!” their dad called.

“We won’t!” said Jack.

He and Annie ran down the street and into the Frog Creek woods.

Soon they came to the tallest oak.

There was the magic tree house. A little black nose stuck out the window.

“Hi, silly!” Annie called. “We’re coming!”

Arf! came a happy bark.

Annie grabbed the rope ladder and started climbing.

Jack followed her up into the tree house.

A small dog sat in a circle of afternoon sunshine. His tail wagged.

“Hey, Teddy!” said Jack.

Jack and Annie hugged Teddy. And the dog licked both of them.

“Morgan’s note is still here,” said Annie.

“Yep,” said Jack. He knew the note by heart now.

This little dog is under a spell and needs your help. To free him, you must be given four special things:

A gift from a ship lost at sea,

A gift from the prairie blue,

A gift from a forest far away,

A gift from a kangaroo.

Be wise. Be brave. Be careful.

Morgan

Beside the note were the gifts from their first three trips:

1. a pocket watch from the *Titanic*
2. an eagle’s feather from the prairie skies
3. a lotus flower from a forest in India

“We just need to get a gift from a kangaroo,” said Annie, “and Teddy will be free from his spell.”

“We must be going to Australia,” said Jack. “That’s where kangaroos live.”

“Cool,” said Annie.

Teddy whined and scratched at a book lying in the corner.

Jack picked it up.

“What’d I tell you?” he said.

He showed the cover to Annie. The title was *Adventure in Australia*.

“Great,” said Annie. She looked at Teddy. “Ready to meet a kangaroo?”

Arf! Arf!

Jack opened the book. He found a page with small pictures of different animals and a big picture of a forest. Jack pointed at the forest.

“I wish we could go there,” he said.

The wind started to blow.

The tree house started to spin.

It spun faster and faster.

Then everything was still.

Absolutely still.

2 **Sleepyhead**

Jack opened his eyes. Glaring hot sunlight flooded into the tree house.

“Neat hats,” said Annie.

She and Jack were both wearing hats.

“I think they will protect us from the sun,” said Jack.

He and Annie looked out the window. Teddy looked out, too.

The tree house had landed in a scrubby forest filled with droopy plants and dry brown trees.

“Man, this place needs rain,” said Jack.

He sat back on his heels and looked at the picture of where they had landed in the Australia book.

He read:

Australia’s forests go through times of drought (say DROWT). A drought is a long period of time without any rain. The same forest can be flooded by heavy rains at other times of the year.

Jack pulled out his notebook and wrote:

drought = no rain

“Hey, Jack,” said Annie. “Doesn’t it smell like a cookout?”

Jack sniffed the air. It *did* smell like a cookout.

Jack looked out the window. A wisp of smoke floated above some trees in

the distance.



“Maybe people are camping over there,” Jack said.

“Let’s go see,” said Annie.

Jack put his notebook and the Australia book into his backpack.

“Put Teddy in there, too,” said Annie.

Jack slipped the little dog into the pack. Then he followed Annie down the ladder.

When they stepped onto the ground, the hot wind nearly blew their hats off.

“The campers must be over there,” said Annie.

She pointed at the smoke in the blue sky. They started walking across a sun-baked clearing.

They passed bushes and scrawny trees. Lizards ran over the dry, cracked ground.

Arf! Arf! Teddy barked from Jack’s pack.

“Whoa!” said Jack.

A pair of huge, funny-looking birds walked out from behind a bush.

They were taller than Jack. They had fat bodies, long, skinny legs, and long, skinny necks.

“Who are *you*?” Annie asked the strange pair.

Jack opened his pack and took out the Australia book. He found a picture of the birds.

“They’re emus,” he said. He read aloud:

The emu (say EE-myoo) is a large bird that doesn’t fly. It can run as fast as thirty miles per hour.

“Wow, that’s fast,” said Annie.

Arf! Teddy jumped out of Jack’s backpack and barked at the strange birds.

The emus gave the little dog a haughty look. Then they turned and walked proudly away.

Jack wrote in his notebook:

Emus
proud birds
don't fly

“Look, a *live* teddy bear!” said Annie.

Jack looked up.

Annie ran to a tree at the edge of the clearing. The “live teddy bear” was nestled in the fork of the tree.

“Aww, it’s so cute!” whispered Annie.

The creature was fast asleep. He had large round ears, a black nose, and a furry body. His feet had long, curved claws.

“It’s a koala bear,” said Jack.

“Hi, sleepyhead,” Annie said to the koala.

She patted his soft fur. He opened his big eyes and looked calmly at her.

Jack found a koala picture in the Australia book. He read:

The koala is actually not a bear at all. It's a marsupial (say mar-SOUP-ee-ul), like a kangaroo. A marsupial mother carries her babies in a stomach pouch.

"That's neat," said Annie.

Jack kept reading:

Koalas mostly eat the leaves of gum trees, so cutting down gum trees to clear land has hurt them. Wildfires are also a threat. Koalas are slow-moving and can't escape the smoke and flames.

Jack pulled out his notebook and wrote:

wildfires are a threat to koalas

"What's wrong, sleepyhead?" Annie asked the koala. "Don't you feel well?"

"Don't worry," said Jack. "Listen to this—"

He read more from the book:

Koalas, like kangaroos, are active at night and sleep during the day, when the sun is hot. The name "koala" means "no drink," because koalas rarely drink water. They get moisture from the leaves they eat.

Jack licked his lips. His mouth felt dry.

"Speaking of water," he said, "I'm thirsty."

"Me, too," said Annie.

Teddy was panting, as if he was thirsty, also.

"Let's find those campers," said Jack, sighing. "Maybe they can give us some water."

Jack put Teddy back into his pack. He tucked the book under his arm, in case he needed to look something up.

They began walking again. Suddenly, there was a loud, harsh cackle.

“Yikes,” said Annie.

“What was *that?* ” said Jack.

3

Big Foot

The loud cry rang again through the dry air.

Teddy barked.

Jack and Annie turned around in the clearing. It was hard to tell where the sound was coming from.

The terrible cackle came again.

“There!” said Annie.

She pointed at a bird in a gum tree. The bird had brown feathers and a large head with a long beak.



It stared down at Jack and Annie. Then it let out another cackle.

“Weird,” said Jack.

He found the bird in his book and read:

The kookaburra (say KOOK-uh-burr-uh) is the best-known bird of Australia.

There is even a popular song about it. The kookaburra is also called the