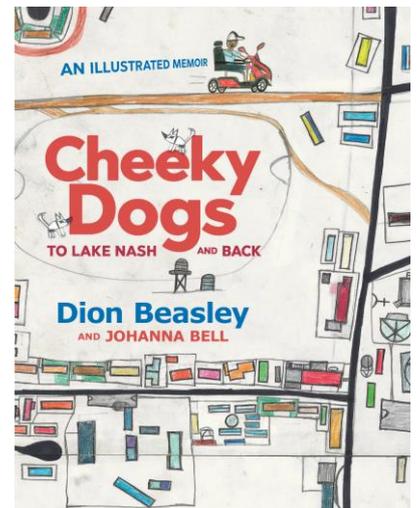


Cheeky Dogs: To Lake Nash and Back

By Dion Beasley and
Johanna Bell



June 2019 ISBN 9781760528119
Hardcover, 128 pages
Recommended for 8-14-year-olds

Summary

In this exuberant illustrated memoir, action-packed images and poetic words trace Dion Beasley's fascination with cheeky dogs and his unconventional journey into the world of contemporary art.

*Every morning
Is it time yet?
Nearly Joie says.
Out of the freezer comes the meat.
Bones and sausages and chicken necks.
Butcher knife on the bricks, me chopping up.
Be careful! Or you'll cut your finger off.
We can't have that Joie says.*

Meet deaf artist, Dion Beasley, and the people he calls family. Dodging road trains by day and giant blue monsters at night, Dion weaves his way through life on an electric scooter, collecting rocks and dogs to make art. In his dreams he sees animals from overseas and his mother's country, Lake Nash, but every morning, without fail, he puts on his favourite socks and gets ready to feed the dogs. Is it time yet?

Dion Beasley and Johanna Bell have collaborated on two other books, *Too Many Cheeky Dogs* and *Go Home, Cheeky Animals!* which won the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award for Early Childhood in 2017.



Styled like a visual diary, and crammed with Dion Beasley's wild and expressive art, *Cheeky Dogs: To Lake Nash and Back* delves into the world of the artist's imagination and showcases his mapping skills and extensive memory for people, places and dogs. It also gives an insight into life in Indigenous communities in remote Australia; it's a creative 'own voice' story about someone with a disability; and it is a story showing that art is a powerful form of communication. Above all, *Cheeky Dogs: To Lake Nash and Back* is a story of love, family and community, perseverance and dedication – but without a scrap of worthiness. Dion Beasley's infectious sense of humour imbues the book with his expressive artwork, and Johanna Bell's brilliant text offers a poetic window into understanding a truly imaginative world.

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Authors' inspiration



'When you meet Dion, you can't help being inspired by his story and the way he has overcome disability and distance to do the things he loves most in the world – drawing and feeding the cheeky camp dogs at Mulga Camp.

When Erica Wagner, our publisher at Allen & Unwin, suggested that she'd like to read Dion's memoir one day, I couldn't stop thinking about what that might look like. I had no idea it would become such a beautiful fusion of art and poetry and take so long to create! Because Dion is deaf, he doesn't have a conventional voice, so for me, it was a creative challenge to work out how to translate the way Dion sees the world into words. Dion's first language is drawing and his second language is Auslan. I went to stay with him in Tennant Creek and we spent most of the time looking back at the thousands of drawings he's done over the last fifteen years and talking about the stories behind them. My Auslan is pretty basic so Dion's carer, Joie, helped with interpreting. What came out was a longer version of the story that's in the book. For me, the rhythm was a surprise but it's very much aligned with Dion's way of telling stories. He uses a lot of repetition with a focus on the big moments in the life of his family.'

— Johanna Bell

Use in the curriculum

The activities and questions below could be adapted for Primary School Years 4/5/6 and Secondary School Years 7/8/9.

Subjects/areas to explore with this book: English, social inclusion/diversity, Geography, Art, growing up Aboriginal, connection to place and family

Themes

- counting
- community
- animals
- disability
- colour
- humour
- Indigenous life

Discussion questions and activities

Pre-Reading

Go to [allenandunwin.com](https://www.allenandunwin.com) and open the *Cheeky Dogs: To Lake Nash and Back* product page. <https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/childrens-non-fiction/Cheeky-Dogs-To-Lake-Nash-and-Back-Dion-Beasley-and-Johanna-Bell-9781760528119>

Scroll to the bottom of the page, click on the video link and watch a short feature on Dion Beasley, his life and work. After watching the video, write a paragraph on the challenges Dion faces in his day-to-day life and how he meets and overcomes these challenges.

Cover

Look at the cover of *Cheeky Dogs: To Lake Nash and Back* and answer the following questions:

- What is an illustrated memoir?
- How might a memoir differ from an autobiography?
- Most of the cover image is from an aerial perspective, with the exception of several elements. Name the elements NOT depicted from an aerial perspective on the cover.
- How has the sense of movement and speed been conveyed around the image of the scooter? How does this make you feel about the man riding it?
- How does this cover make you feel? Does it make you want to read the book?

Language

How would you describe the language used in this book? [**Hint:** discuss whether the language is formal or informal; prose or poetry; uses present or past tense.]

What effect does this language have on the way you read Dion's story?

Creative writing

I'm three, maybe four. I walk to the shop to buy flour. Three big angry dogs are following me. Hair up. Sharp teeth. I am screaming SCARED. Looking, looking for somewhere to hide. The sign outside the shop says NO DOGS ALLOWED.

Write a poem based on a special place or memory from your childhood. A good way to generate ideas is to set a timer, and write a series of sentences, all starting with the words 'I remember...'

Art

Create a character profile of a dog (or other animal).

- Pick a dog from your life or your imagination and draw a simple outline
- Describe the dog's external characteristics – how it looks, sounds, smells, feels
- Describe the dog's internal characteristics – what it thinks/ is scared of/ how it feels/ what it wants
- Place the dog into a special place that is significant to you – maybe a local playground, street, house, supermarket or school – and describe what happens when the dog goes there.

Dion's drawing often express emotions. Can you find pictures in the book of people or animals experiencing love, loneliness, fear, excitement, sadness or pain?

Typography

Words in the book are presented in different sizes, colours and fonts. Why do you think the book's designer chose to do this? Find examples from the book that you really like and explain why they had an impact on you.

Auslan language

Dion communicates through his art and through a sign language called Auslan. Go online to the Auslan Signbank website and find out how to say simple words and phrases such as *hello, how are you?, work, school, sport*. Try some signs for cheeky animals – e.g. *donkey, horse, bull, dog, lion* (and other African animals depicted in the book).

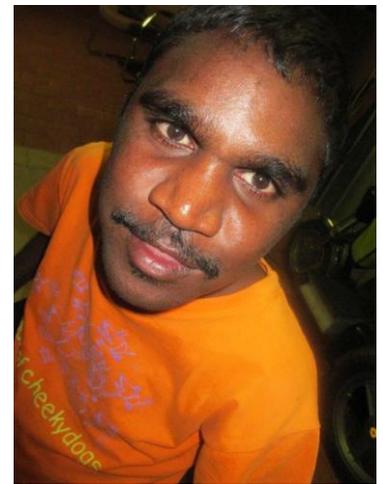
<http://www.auslan.org.au/dictionary/words/video-1.html>

Mapping

Create an aerial map of your school grounds, making sure to include all classrooms, toilet blocks, your library, school hall and playing areas. Go to <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-School-Map-for-a-Class-Project>) for a simple step-by-step guide. (Tip: the map does not have to be to scale.)

The authors

Dion Beasley lives in Tennant Creek and is well known across the Northern Territory as the artist behind the much-loved Cheeky Dogs brand T-shirts and other merchandise. Dion's formal art career started in 2006 when the first Cheeky Dogs T-shirt line was launched. Since then, his reputation as an accomplished visual artist has grown from strength to strength. Dion's talents are particularly remarkable given he has muscular dystrophy and is profoundly deaf. His art has been exhibited in galleries and his prints have been bought by the National Gallery.



Johanna Bell lives in Darwin with her partner, daughter and a backyard full of green tree frogs. Her writing career got off to a bumpy start when she was so busy composing a story in her head that she accidentally drove into the back of a taxi. It was while driving on a bumpy stretch of road outside Alice Springs that the beginnings of the Cheeky Dog books took shape. Working with Dion has changed the way Johanna sees the world and tells stories. Johanna and Dion's books include *Too Many Cheeky Dogs* and the CBCA Book of the Year for Early Childhood, *Go Home, Cheeky Animals!*