

An Australian fairy tale retold by Moira Andrew

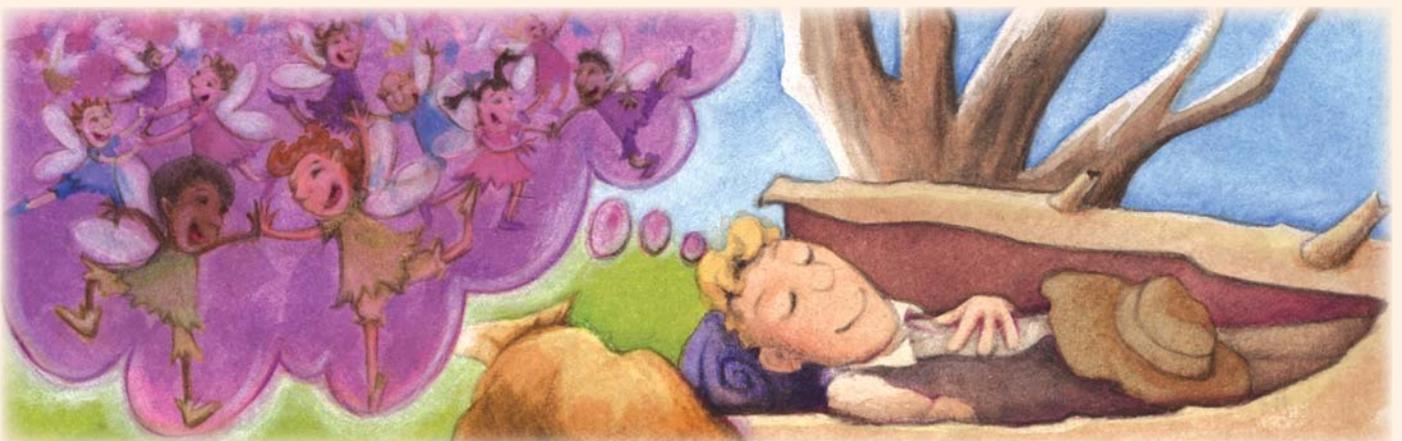
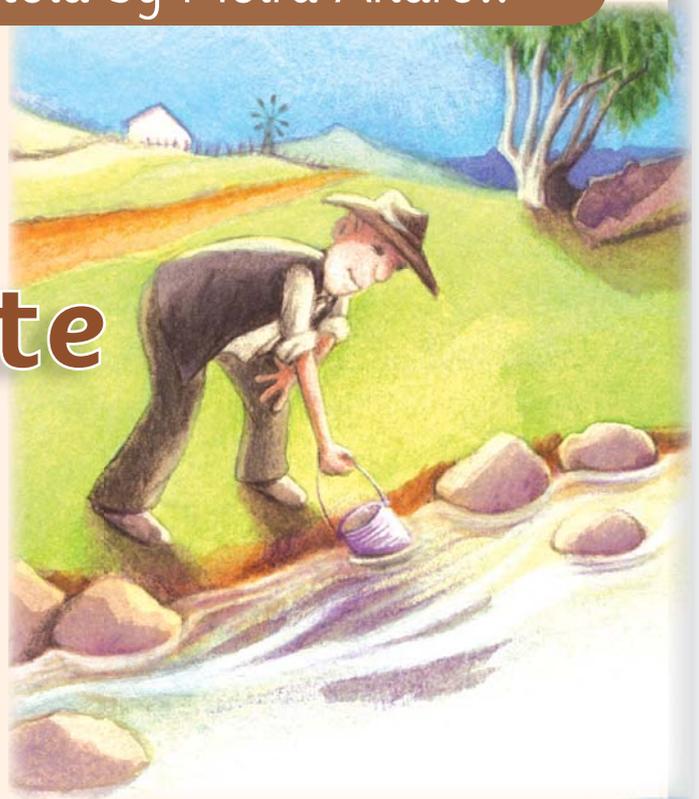
The Magic Flute

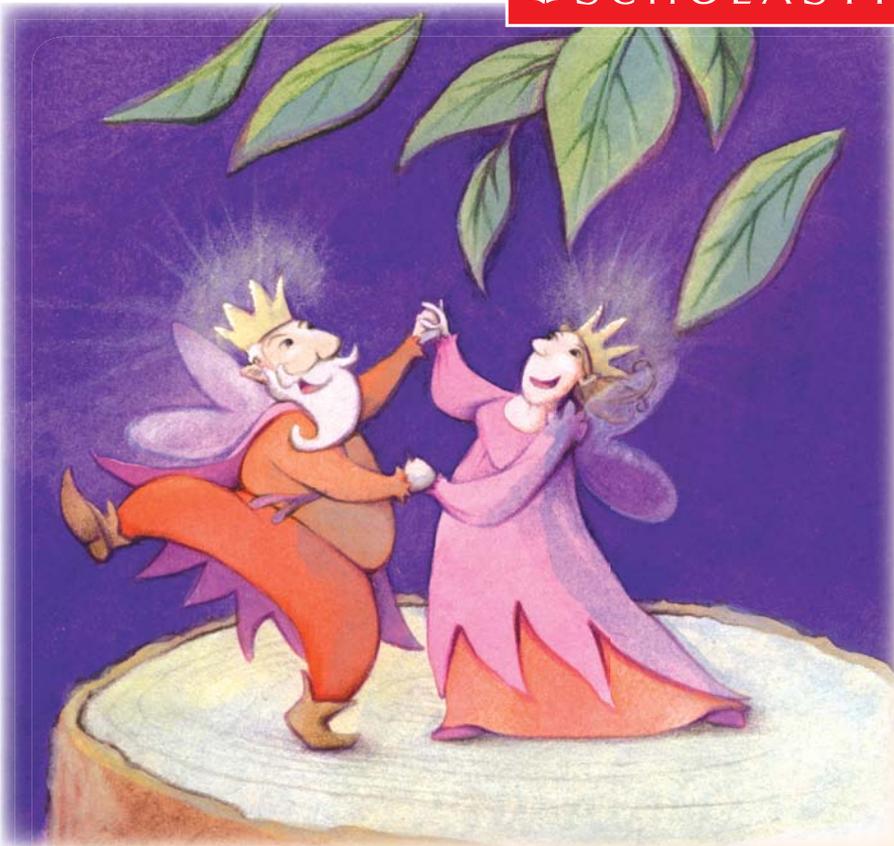
One hot day, Jack the swagman was walking from farm to farm looking for work. But no one needed him.

He was tired and hungry. He had no money to buy food. So he filled his billy-can with water from the river and made some strong hot tea. Then he lay down in a hollow log under a eucalyptus tree and fell asleep.

In his dreams he saw hundreds of little people dancing to the music of the forest. Faster and faster, they danced, until Jack's head was in such a whirl he woke up.

"Silly me," he said to himself. "They are not fairies. They must be fireflies and glow-worms dancing about the branches of the tree." And he went back to sleep.





This time he saw the fairy king and queen. Their crowns shone in the moonlight as they danced.

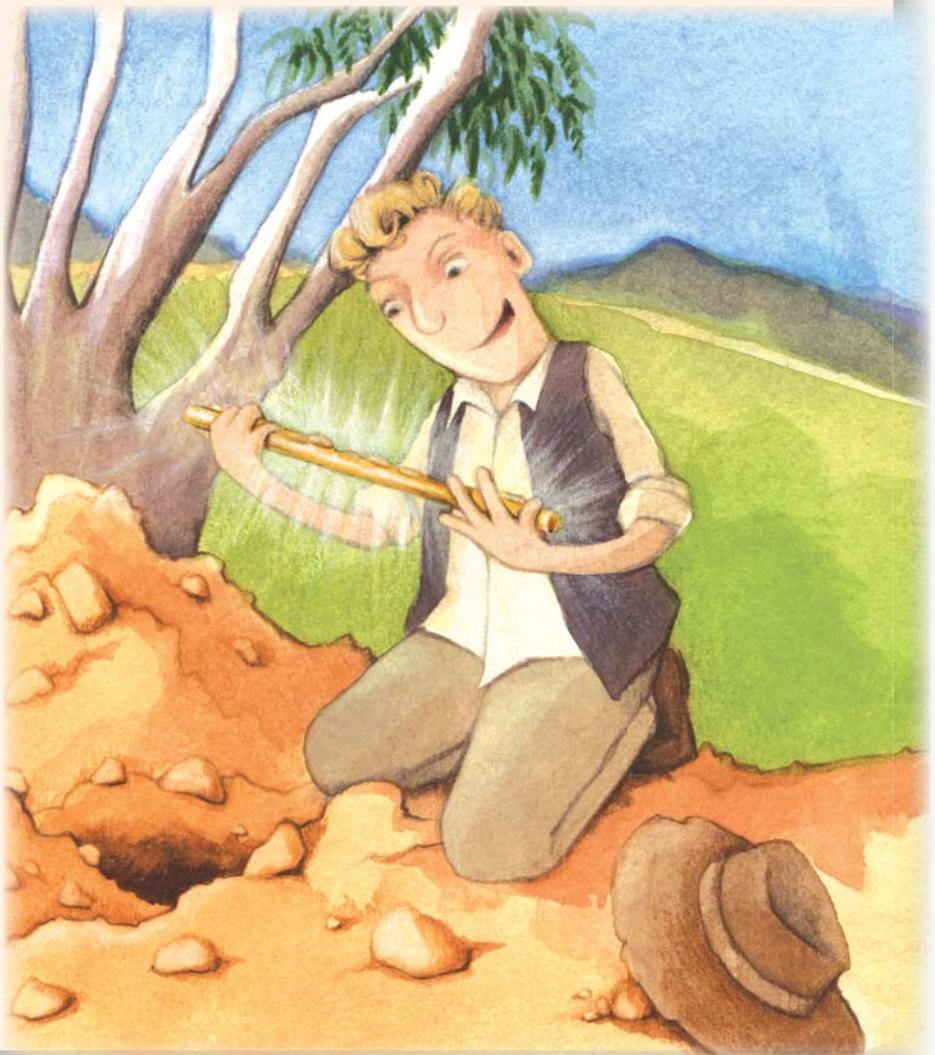
When they stopped, the fairy king whispered, "I've hidden the magic flute under the roots of that

old eucalyptus tree. No one will ever find it."

"Good," whispered the queen, "because anyone who hears its music will not be able to stop dancing."

When Jack woke up, he dug under the roots of the tree. His dreams came true. He found a flute made of gold.

He put the flute in his swag-bag and went off to look for work. He was now very hungry indeed.



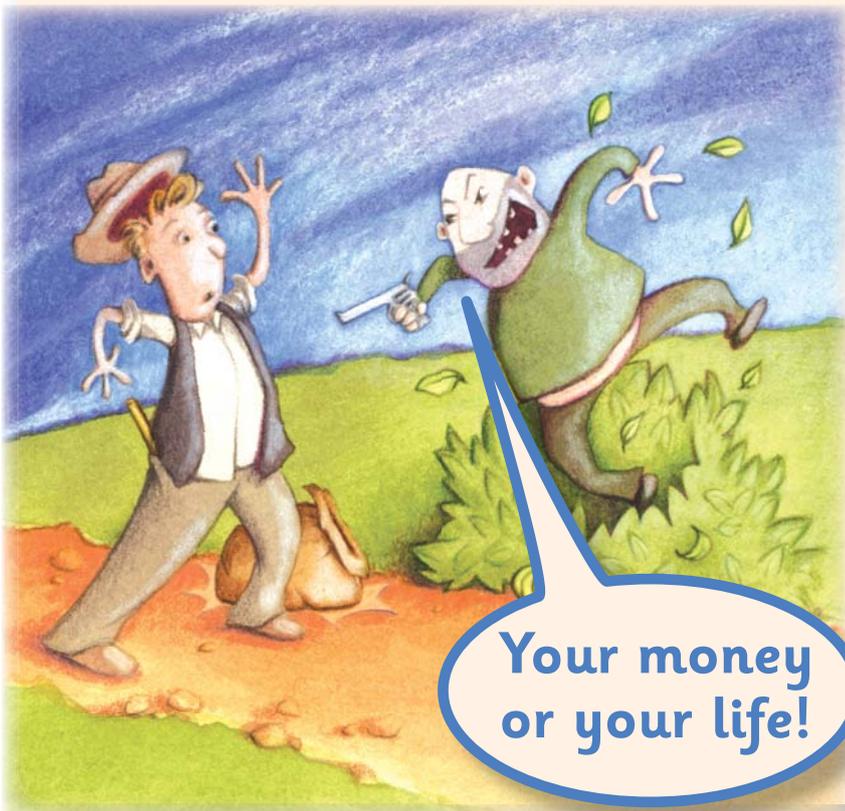
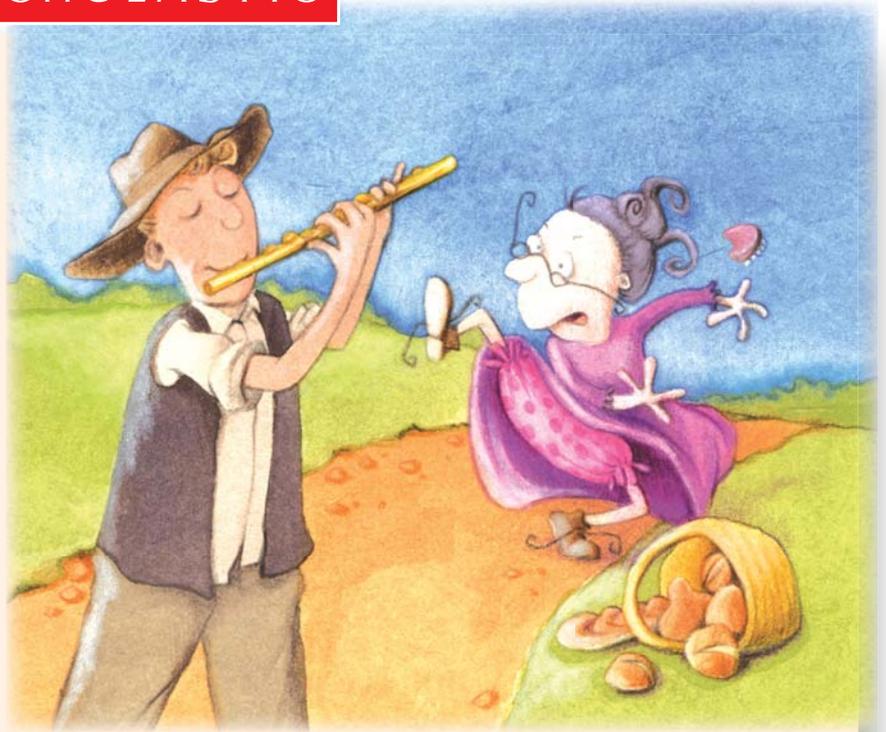
Soon he met an old woman carrying a basket of bread. Jack asked her if he could have some.

“Go away!” she shouted.

So Jack took out the flute and played. The old woman dropped her basket and began to dance. She couldn't stop.

“Take as much bread as you need,” she cried. So Jack stopped playing and the old woman stopped dancing.

Jack ate the bread and went on his way. Just then, a robber with a gun jumped out of the bush. “Your money or your life!” he shouted.



So Jack took out the flute and played. The robber dropped the gun and began to dance. He couldn't stop.

“Take my horse and my gun and all my gold,” he cried. So Jack stopped playing and the robber stopped dancing.

Jack put the flute and the gold into his swag-bag. Then, so the story goes, he jumped on the horse and rode away, singing 'Waltzing Matilda' as he went.



* A **swagman** is someone who travels around looking for work shearing sheep, carrying all their belongings with them in a bundle, called a *swag*.

