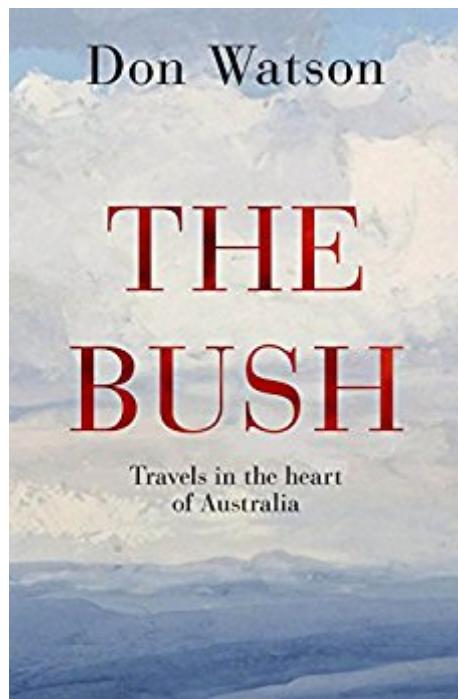


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# The Bush



## Synopsis

Most Australians live in cities and cling to the coastal fringe, yet our sense of what an Australian is â “ or should be â “ is drawn from the vast and varied inland called the bush.Â But what do we mean by 'the bush', and how has it shaped us?Â Starting with his forebears' battle to drive back nature and eke a living from the land, Don Watson explores the bush as it was and as it now is: the triumphs and the ruination, the commonplace and the bizarre, the stories we like to tell about ourselves and the national character, and those we don't.Â Via mountain ash and mallee, the birds and the beasts, slaughter, fire, flood and drought, swagmen, sheep and their shepherds, the strange and the familiar, the tragedies and the follies, the crimes and the myths and the hope â “ here is a journey that only our leading writer of non-fiction could take us on.Â At once magisterial in scope and alive with telling, wry detail,Â The BushÂ lets us see our landscape and its inhabitants afresh, examining what we have made, what we have destroyed, and what we have become in the process.Â No one who reads it will look at this country the same way again.Â 'Nothing he has written quite matches the wonders ofÂ The BushÂ . . . There is no dull page or even lifeless sentence between its covers and my urge is that if anyone wants a full blast of what Australia is, was, or might be, thrustÂ The BushÂ into their hands. Watson seems to have been preparing to write it all his life, from when he was a small boy (born 1949) open to wonders on his family's Gippsland dairy farm . . . It's the unalloyed wonder of that small boy . . .Â that guides the reader most of all . . .Â a fountaining freshness of spirit that gives everything he sees and does the vivacity of being sighted for the first time.'Â Roger McDonald, *The Age* 'Flawlessly elegant writing . . . But this is excellent, hard-headed history, too . . . Utterly mesmerising and entrancing . . . A challenge to contemplate what it really is about this country that makes us who we think we are . . . A literary-historical odyssey.'Â Paul Daley,Â *The Guardian*Â (Australia) 'A loving rumination on Australia, the landmass, and those who live on it and from it . . . Watson refuses to be captured by easy categorisations or received opinion . . . The writing is crisp, witty and sardonic . . . Watson is an original, with an authentic, prophetic voice.'Â John Hirst,Â *The Monthly* 'An overwhelmingly affectionate portrait, one that's never sentimental or indulgently nostalgic, and one that defiantly resists lamentation . . . There is no doubt thatÂ The BushÂ stands with Bill Gammage'sÂ *The Biggest Estate on Earth*Â as one of the most important books published on the history of this country in recent years . . .Â The BushÂ is the crown in Watson's oeuvre, a magnificent, sprawling ode to the best in Australia, a challenge to us all to find new ways of loving the country.'Â *The Saturday Paper* 'Don Watson's magnificent, celebratory, contradictory study of the Australian bush will challenge the national imagination . . . An amiable, learned, playful and engrossing book . . . [A]

great, succulent magic pudding of a book . . . Most of what we read is nothing like we would have expected . . . There is a sense that an amiable and eloquent uncle is telling us everything piquant he knows about theology and culture and land use and the beasts and flora and families of the bush.'Â Thomas Keneally,Â Weekend Australian 'The power of this book does come from the way Watson positions himself as both an insider and outsider to the Australian bush . . . A meditation on Australia itself through a reflection on the bush.'Â Frank Bongiorno,Â Australian Book ReviewÂ 'A sprawling, fascinating book . . . Watson has pulled off a marvel, a book that educates and fascinates at the same time as it...

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

â ^The Bushâ ™ offers an expansive narrative in appreciation of Australiaâ ™s bush heritage. Don Watsonâ ™s book encompasses the roles and impacts of Indigenous peoples, convicts, settlers and migrants as well as native and introduced flora and fauna. There is no single Australian bush: the country is too big and diverse, and peopleâ ™s uses and experiences of it are too different for there to be any singularity.â ^The bush could gulp you, or your children, much as the dread interior swallowed explorers, drovers and prospectors.â ™The first European farmers and settlers experienced the Australian bush as quite alien, and saw it as something to be tamed and brought

under control. In the main, they tried to impose European practices, with limited success. But there were those who learned to appreciate its difference and diversity, and who tried to understand it. ^Farming is like playing a piano: it is measured violence. It teaches a man willing to learn that there is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything. ^The bush is seen as part of Australiaâ™s national identity which is ironic, given that most Australians live in cities on or near the coast. The bush is an iconic ideal, yet few of us have much experience of it in any form and the people from the bush have been migrating into city suburbs for 50 years. ^So long as people of the country are the real Australians, other people are less real. This might be only to say less distinctively Australian, or it might mean out of touch with reality and real people, and not knowing which side their bread is buttered on. ^This book describes the roles of farmers, timber workers, miners, shepherds, squatters and selectors.

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