

think the country
ay, I'll stay at present at a boarding-house
ing beer on squashes, taking cooling down.



WHAT WAS THE “DUEL OF WORDS”?

The “**duel** of words” took place at a difficult time in Australia’s history. In the lead up to Federation (the joining of state colonies into the Australian nation) on 1 January 1901, Australia was struggling to build its **identity**. The gold rush was over, sheep farmers couldn’t sell their wool and the country was in severe drought.

Swaggies and other homeless people wandered the country looking for work, and became the subject of many stories and poems by great Australian writers.

I am back from up the country - very sorry that I went
Seeking for the best there, but I am now to pitch my
I have had a hard time of it on the tract
I am now

The two main participants in the “duel” were Henry Lawson and Banjo Paterson, through their writing they helped shape public opinion at the time. They believed that the heart of the Australian spirit came from the characteristics of people from the bush—determination, **comradeship** and willingness to have a go. (By “the bush” they meant rural areas away from the big cities.)

Lawson and Paterson’s duel of words, published in *The Bulletin* (Australia’s most widely read newspaper at the time), was a series of poems about life on and around the land. Both writers wanted to be truthful about what they saw and experienced. As Lawson and Paterson were from very different backgrounds, they interpreted things quite differently. The duel of words was about whose view of the bush was the right one, Paterson with his somewhat **idealistic** view of life on the land or Lawson with his more true-to-life opinion.



Henry Lawson

The duel of words started on 9 July 1892 with Lawson’s poem, “Borderland”, later titled, “Up the Country”. Over the next few months other poets including, Edward Dyson, AG Stephens and Joseph Furphy got involved in the **debate**.

The battle of words raged for months, ending with Lawson’s, “The Poets of the Tomb”, published on 8 October 1892.



Banjo Paterson