



***Middle School: Going Bush* by James Patterson illustrated by Martin Chatterton**

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Another entertaining novel in the Middle School series that finds Rafe Khatchadorian in a heap of trouble in the Australian outback. Rafe has turned 13-years-old and is discovering the inconvenience of hormones, particularly when he tries to impress down-to-earth Ellie Watts.

Because of his artistic skills, Rafe has been chosen to attend a Cultural Camp with nine other arty kids from various countries around the world (including Ellie). First, he has to survive a flight in a tiny plane to Bigbottom Creek with Johnno the pilot who *"hadn't shaved since he was in diapers and looked like he cut his own hair with a butter knife."*

The camp is led by Brushes McGarrity who wore *"a full-length leather coat and a leather hat that matched his leather skin. His beard was made from wire and his teeth were a cheesy yellow."* Brushes turns out to be a shady character and his large cousin, Vern, isn't much better.

Naturally, the dialogue is peppered with Aussie slang such as: *"Cop an eyeful of that, mate!"* *"- ya bewdy!"* *"Grab your swags..."* and, *"...unless you're a total drongo with a few kangaroos loose in the top paddock, you shouldn't cark it..."*

The plot zips along and includes over-size crocodiles, our hero getting lost in the night-time desert, Aboriginal cave paintings, baddies in sunglasses, a huge diamond, toilet humour, and skulduggery. It's also very funny.

Black-and-white sketches accompany the storyline and exaggerate the dramatic situations with visual wit. Maps, comic strips, and Rafe's dream-time imaginings add variety.

This latest Middle School title will be enjoyed by upper primary and intermediate-age readers.

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Reviewed by children's book author, Jean Bennett

