



Larrikins: A History

By Melissa Bellanta

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Australia has often been said to possess a “larrikin streak,” from the *Stiffy and Mo* cartoons and the true-blue Crocodile Hunter to the characters in the silent film *The Sentimental Bloke*. When it first emerged around 1870, *larrikin* was a term of abuse, used to describe teenage, working-class hell-raisers who populated dance halls and cheap theaters, and this account journeys through the street-based youth subculture known as larrikinism between 1870 and 1920, swerving through the streets of Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney. Offering a glimpse into the lives of Australia’s first larrikins—and discussing bare-knuckle fighting, football-barracking, and knicker-flashing teenage girls—it charts the development of Australia’s larrikinism and presents fascinating historical perspectives on current youth issues, including gang violence, racist riots, and raunchy culture among adolescent girls.

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Larrikins: A History By Melissa Bellanta Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #5952983 in Books
- Published on: 2012-10-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.80" h x .90" w x 5.90" l, .80 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 256 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Melissa Bellanta is a Queensland-based historian who has written about popular theater, masculinity, and class. Her work has been published in journals such as *Australasian Drama Studies*, *Australian Historical Studies*, *Labour History*, and the *Journal of Social History*. She also recently edited a special issue of the *Journal of Australian Studies*.

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