

Magpie Mischief

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INTRODUCTION

The activities suggested will suit a range of ages and reading and writing abilities. They range from simple comprehension activities to more open ended tasks. If the novel is read in stages, it will be possible to complete some of the work as a way of gauging student understanding and to use the language of the text for vocabulary and word building skills. It would be useful for students to keep all work in a Reading Response journal so that on balance judgements can be reached on the strand levels achieved at the end of the package.

PRE-READING

1. Discuss experiences students have had with magpies. Some of them will have had positive and some negative. It should encourage them to orient their thinking before reading the story.
2. Using the cover of the novel, ask students to make three predictions about the characters in the story, the plot and complications which could occur. Do this in pairs. Keep these in a reading journal to be reviewed later. Some sharing of ideas could take place following this.

EXPOSITION

Ask students to:

1. Draw the opening scene of the story showing the Bird Lady at the crosswalk.
2. By taking a close look at the drawings on the first and second pages, find evidence which tells them that the Bird lady is a likeable character.
3. List the names of the birds they meet in this chapter and next to their names something about each bird.

COMPLICATIONS, CHARACTERS AND CONFLICTS

Ask students to:

1. Imagine that they are either Reuben or Hayley. In three sentences say what they like about the magpies.
2. Find dictionary meanings for the following words... (refer to the following page)

T E A C H I N G N O T E S

| WORD | MEANING |
|----------------|---------|
| Totem | |
| Menace | |
| Procedures | |
| Inconvenienced | |
| Motion | |
| Permanent | |
| Nomination | |
| Candidate | |
| Eradication | |
| Campaign | |
| extravaganza | |

4. Complete this table

| Character | Likes | Dislikes | Thinks that... |
|------------------|-------|----------|----------------|
| Reuben | | | |
| Marcel | | | |
| Ben | | | |
| The Bird lady | | | |
| Councillor Stott | | | |
| Hayley | | | |

5. Match the character to the descriptions.

- Born talking
- Loves birds
- Brought ice cream containers of bugs
- Tried to steal magpie eggs
- Banana cake maker

Mrs Abernathy, Hayley and Nic, Ben, Reuben, The Bird Lady

6. After reading the chapter *The Big Meeting*, in small groups students role play the scene taking on the various characters and using some of their own words.

7. Predict what will happen after the children read the eradication poster. Record prediction in reading journals.

RESOLUTION

1. Ask students to record their reactions to the solutions that the children came up with and their feelings about the story's ending in their reading journals.

2. Make a list of the good things that happened after the crosswalk was moved and record this in reading journals.

3. Ask students to go back to original predictions and discuss with a partner how close or how far they were from the story's plot.

T E A C H I N G N O T E S

EXTENSION

1. Discuss with students what they have learnt about the lives of magpies by reading this story. Write or discuss answers under the headings:
 - Habitat
 - Feeding
 - Handling
 - Intelligence
 - Care of the injured
2. There are many texts of aboriginal myths about native animals. Organise with your school librarian to source some of these and set up a reading circle in the library so that students can read or share readings of aboriginal myths about native animals.
3. Investigate aboriginal traditional art and use their design aspects to create a drawing of an aboriginal myth about a native animal.
4. Ask students to make up their own myth explaining why magpies are black and white. Alternatively, ask students to write a story about another native Australian. Some suggestions are:
 - why snakes have no legs
 - why the kookaburra laughs
 - why echidnas have spikes
 - why wombats are timid
5. Construct a survey with the students about their own school in terms of the hazards and possible problems students encounter. Discuss how these problems could be brought to the school community's attention and how they might be dealt with in a creative and constructive way so that a solution could be reached.
6. Write a letter to a local wildlife rescue park and invite a speaker to come to the school to tell you about their work.
7. Make your own banner with a rhyming slogan that the children could have used at their school rally.
8. In groups, produce a report on a native animal. Include information about the animal's life-cycle, habitat, diet and any interesting things you can find out about them.



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