

Hollie Chips

Author: Anna Gowan

Synopsis

Hollie Chips is an unusual girl. Not only does she have one blue eye and one brown eye but she is incapable of telling a lie. She has always had trouble making friends and her mother is starting to despair of her. When Hollie overhears the unscrupulous Barry Buckscud making plans to build a dog food factory in her quiet neighbourhood she is determined to thwart his plans. She devises an elaborate scheme that sees her befriend three of her neighbours in the hopes that she can encourage them to get to know each other and develop a connection with the neighbourhood so that they won't sell their houses to the developer.

Hollie's plan is complicated and takes her a number of weeks to put into action but it works much better than she could have hoped. She manages to enrich the lives of her neighbours Ethel, John and Phillipa and develops a strong friendship with each of them. But she doesn't count on how unscrupulous Barry Buckscud actually is. Unlike Hollie, he is able to lie and does so to the residents of Puriti road, telling them that he wants to buy their houses in order to build an orphanage. Under the impression that they are going to be helping poor, underprivileged children and with the offer of big money from Buckscud, the trio agrees to sell their property. Will Hollie be able to reveal Buckscud's deception before it is too late?

Text Type

Hollie Chips is the 2010 winner of The Tom Fitzgibbon award. Written by New Zealand author Anna Gowan the story is fast-paced and would appeal mainly to young girls. This light-hearted and humorous novel has short chapters and uses easy to understand colloquial language, which will keep even reluctant readers engaged.

Hollie Chips, the main character in the novel, is a quirky and endearing young girl whose superior intellect sets her apart from her peers and makes it hard for her to make friends. Her honest, straightforward approach makes her engaging to adults however, and a great deal of the story centres round the friendships that she makes with her neighbours. Hollie is a determined and enterprising young lady who has an uncanny ability to think outside the square. The novel teaches us about the importance of persevering, the triumph of good over evil and the importance of accepting people for who they are.

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 7- 20), Chapters 3- 16 (pp. 21- 102) and Chapters 17- 34 (pp. 103- 219)

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of words and ideas raised in the novel. Have them make inferences and predict what will happen in the story. Students should familiarise themselves with the character of Hollie and wherever possible relate her experiences to their lives. Encourage students to identify themes and messages in the novel, focussing particularly on the importance of accepting people for who they are, not what you would like them to be.

Introducing the Novel

Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- What award has the novel won?
- What kind of novel do you think this is going to be?
- Who is the main character? What is unusual about her?
- What does "unscrupulous" mean?
- What do you think Barry Buckscud has been lying about?
- How do you think Hollie will get even with Buckscud?

Teacher reads Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 7- 20) aloud to the class. Students follow along in their books

Comprehension Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 7- 20)

- What happened to Mr Chips?
- Why does Mrs Chips think that Hollie is not an ordinary baby?
- Why does Mrs Chips hope that Hollie will grow out of her curiosity?
- How does Hollie know when her mother is lying?
- Why does Hollie distance herself from other children?
- What is Hollie's "frustrating problem"?
- What does Hollie spend so much time playing outside?
- Where do Mrs Chips and Hollie move to?
- What are two things that Ethel really hates? Why does she bully children? Why is Ethel so interested in the lives of others?
- Why does Hollie like her new house so much?



- How does Hollie feel about school?
- Why does Hollie decide not to talk to the man she sees through the bushes? What is the man's name? Why does Hollie decide to keep returning to the reserve?

Discussion

- Is it important for children to have friends their own age? Why/why not?
- Are Mrs Chips' concerns about her daughter justified? Why/why not?
- Describe Hollie. What do we know about her likes and dislikes in the first two chapters of the novel?
- What do you think Barry Buckscud wants with Puriti road?

Students read Chapters 3- 16 (pp. 21- 102) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 3- 16 (pp. 21- 102)

- Why does Barry think that Puriti road is a "dream position" to put his dog food factory? Why isn't he worried about gaining consent?
- Why is Barry so adamant that the owners of three houses will want to sell up?
- Why is Hollie so upset about the idea of living so close to a dog food factory?
- What does Hollie notice about her neighbours as she watches them from up in the tree?
- Why doesn't Phillipa complain to Ethel about the dog poo? Why does she believe that her life is cursed? In what area of her life is she lucky?
- Why does Hollie believe that her neighbours have no reason to stay on Puriti road? What is Hollie's 3 step plan? What is the most important point in the plan?
- How does Ethel react when Hollie knocks on her door? Why do you think she reacts in this way?
- What does Hollie do to try and endear herself to Phillipa? Why does Phillipa think she is such a strange little girl?
- Why is Phillipa reluctant to play her cello? How does Hollie encourage her to play? Why doesn't Phillipa want to teach Hollie how to play the cello?
- Why is Mrs Chips so excited when Hollie asks her to make cookies for her friend? Who does Hollie take the cookies to?

- Why is Phillipa so surprised when she reads the card that Imogen Gerard gives her? Where did Toby find the letter? Who else turns up on her doorstep?
- Why is Hollie suspicious when she sees the van parked outside Phillipa's house? Why is she so anxious to get away from the man in the shed? Where does she hide?
- Why does Hollie call John Johns Mr Oblivious? What are the 3 things in John's life that spark his attention? Why is his life so boring and predictable?
- What is John's favourite meal? What does Hollie notice in John's house when she invites herself for lunch? What did John enjoy doing when he was younger? When did he decide to "fade into the background"?
- Why doesn't John think that he would have been friends with his granddad?
- What does John learn when Mr Burton calls him? Why does Mr Burton have trouble remembering who he is? Why is John terrified at the idea of having so much free time on his hands?
- Why does John decide to fix up his house? How does embarking on the project make him feel? What colour does he decide to paint his house?
- What conclusions does Hollie draw from the fact that John isn't working and has time to fix up his house?
- Why is Mrs Chips so excited about making John a cake?
- Who does Hollie discover sitting in her lounge when she comes home from school? What shocking news does her mother give her?
- Why does Hollie think that she urgently needs to research Ethel Bainbridge? What does she learn about her routine?
- What strange goings on has Ethel noticed around the neighbourhood lately? Why does Hollie make Ethel nervous?

Discussion

- Is omitting to tell someone something the same as lying? Why/why not?
- Why is Hollie able to befriend Phillipa and John so easily? In what ways do their lives change for the better after they meet their neighbour?
- Why is Mrs Chips so worried about her daughter? What does she perceive to be her failings? Are her concerns warranted? Why/why not?
- Are there any flaws in Hollie's plan? If so, what?
- Does pretending to be brave work? Why/why not?
- Predict what will happen next in the story.

Students read Chapters 17- 34 (pp. 103- 219) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 17- 34 (pp. 103- 219)

- Why is Ethel so astounded when she finds Hollie on her lawn? How does Hollie trick her into allowing her to continue working on the garden? What does Hollie use on the tulips to help them grow?
- How does Ethel react when Hollie tells her that Phillipa's dog is dead?
- Why is Hollie reluctant to plant the flowers at the front of Ethel's house? How does she solve her problem?
- Why does Ethel decide to help Hollie in the garden?
- Why does Hollie bring John over to Ethel's house? Why is Ethel so surprised by his appearance?
- What does Hollie take Ethel for her birthday? How do you know Ethel's attitude towards Hollie is softening?
- What does Mrs Chips notice when she goes for a walk down Puriti road? Why does she change her mind about knocking on the door of number 8?
- How does Mrs Chips react when Phillipa comes and visits her? Why do you think she reacts like this? Why does she regret her behaviour after Phillipa leaves?
- Why does Mrs Chips burst into tears when she meets John Johns?
- Why doesn't Mrs Chips talk to Hollie when she gets home from school?
- What realisation does Mrs Chips come to about her daughter when she visits Phillipa? Why does she feel remorse?
- What proposal does Phillipa put to Mrs Chips?
- How does Hollie react when she realises that her mother knows her friends are adults? Why does she think that her mum might have gone a bit crazy?
- How does Ethel react when Mrs Chips waves to her? How does Mrs Chips win her over?
- How does Ethel "apologise" to Phillipa when she drops off the lemon slice?
- Why does Barry Buckscud order 5 banana cakes?
- Why is Hollie so invested in stopping Buckscud from building the dog food factory?
- How does Barry win the neighbours over at the meeting? What offer does he make John, Phillipa and Ethel for their houses? How does everyone react when Hollie tries to say that Barry is really building a dog food factory?
- What does Buckscud threaten to do to Hollie's mum if she doesn't keep out of his business? How does Hollie feel after the confrontation?

- Why does Hollie decide to research Buckscud? What does she find out about his routine?
- What does Hollie overhear Buckscud talking about on the phone?
- What does Hollie do to Buckscud's washing? What is step 3 of her plan? Why is Hollie so nervous about executing her plan?
- How does Buckscud feel the day after his sleep is interrupted by Sooty? Why is he so convinced that there is a phantom cat in his house? What other problem does Buckscud have to contend with?
- Why does John feel torn about Buckscud's offer? Why does Phillipa think the 3 neighbours should discuss the issue together? What finally convinces them to sell their properties?
- Describe Buckscud's meeting with John. How does he react when he learns that John has a cat? Why does John have concerns about Buckscud after this meeting?
- Why does Ethel change her mind about selling her property when Buckscud comes to visit? Why does she tell him that she will sell? What does she find out about the man during their conversation?
- What does Ethel find out when she rings the number on the business card that Buckscud left behind?
- How does John verify that Hollie's story is true? What does he reveal to the others about his job?
- Why does Mrs Chips tell Hollie that she might have to tell her things that she doesn't think to ask?
- What does Phillipa tell Buckscud would make her feel more comfortable about selling the house? How does Buckscud react to this idea?
- How does the neighbourhood prepare for the party?
- Who does Buckscud bring with him to the party? Why is it immediately clear that these children aren't orphans? How does Hollie get Buckscud back for his deception?
- What do John and the others give Hollie as a thank-you present?
- Who moves into Buckscud's house? What do you think her first impression of Hollie would be?

Discussion

- What does Hollie mean when she says "sometimes people don't look for things they're not expecting"?
- Why is it important to accept people for who they are and not try to change them? Is there such a thing as "normal"?
- Explain how Hollie helps the other characters in the story and how their lives have changed because of her.

- Why do you think the adults in the story have so much trouble believing Hollie's story? Have you ever been ignored just because you are a kid? How does the response of the adults affect Hollie?
- Identify the climax of the story. Why is this event important?

Activities

Static Image - Design a static image that illustrates an important theme or idea from the novel. Use verbal and visual features to convey your idea. Include a written commentary that explains the theme that your static image depicts and the reasons why you chose to display your ideas the way you have.

Plot - Design a story board that shows 10 important events from the story in the order that they occur. Under each illustration include a brief description about what is happening.

Writing - Write an epilogue for the story a year after the original events took place.

Review - Write a book review for Hollie Chips. Include a brief plot summary. Explain the setting and the themes of the story. Include information about the characters in the story. Remember to include your personal opinion about the novel.

Character - Draw a picture of Hollie on a piece of cartridge paper. Around her picture write as many adjectives as you can that describe her character.

Writing - Rewrite a Chapter in the novel from a different character's point of view.

Character - Write a paragraph about how Hollie's character develops and changes throughout the course of the book.

Theme - Complete a collage that illustrates an important theme from the story. Use words and images from the novel to convey your ideas.

Notes written by Vicki Ladd