

Pick 'n' Mix: Assorted Kiwi Stories

Authors: Well-known New Zealand Authors

Text Type

Pick 'n' Mix is an eclectic assortment of short stories written by a range of well-known New Zealand authors. Suitable for boys and girls aged 7-11 the stories are short, entertaining and engaging. The collection is humorously illustrated by Jenny Cooper and the stories range in genre from science fiction, slice of life New Zealand stories to modern-day takes on fairytales. There is something to suit everyone's taste in Pick 'n' Mix.

Official Welcome by Janice Marriott

Questions

- What is unique about the point of view of this story?
- How do the dog and cat view the vacuum cleaner?
- Why is the animals' owner so keen to get them out of the house?
- How do the dog and cat decide to welcome Aunt Muriel to the house? How does Aunt Muriel react to the welcome?
- Why is the human secretly pleased by what his pets have done?

Activities

- Rewrite the story from the human's point of view.
- Write a character profile on Aunt Muriel based on what we learn about her in the story.

Donkey's Revenge by Elizabeth Pulford

Questions

- Who is the main character in the story?
- Who volunteers Thomas for the job of being the donkey's behind? Who offers to be the front? Why is Thomas so upset by this?
- What job does Mrs Hamos give Bernie?
- Who comes in to watch and videotape the rehearsal?

- What happens when the donkey costume is zipped together? Where is the smell coming from?
- Why is Thomas so pleased when he twists his ankle?
- Why does Thomas offer to take over the video camera?
- How does Bernie react when he is forced to take over from Thomas?

Activities

- Write a paragraph explaining how this story illustrates the idea that 'what goes around comes around'.
- Design a storyboard that shows five important events that occur in the story. Underneath each picture write a brief explanation about what is happening.

Wopwops and Colliewobbles by Heather McQuillan

Questions

- Who is the narrator of the story? What is the effect of the first person point of view?
- Where is the story set?
- How does the narrator feel about going to stay at the bach?
- Why does Grant feel sad?
- Why does the bach need so much work? Describe the narrator's bedroom.
- Why is the narrator so worried about using the dunny?
- Describe what happens when the narrator uses the dunny. What does the 'wet a' turn out to be?

Activities

- There is a glossary provided at the end of the story that provides explanations about the colloquial language used in the story. Add five more words and definitions to the list. These can be from the story or you can include phrases that you have heard previously.

- The story is set in rural New Zealand. If you lived in a place like the one described in the story what would you miss the most and why?
- Design a poster to be tacked on the dunny door warning people about the wetas.
- Imagine that you are the narrator. Write a diary entry that tells what happened on your first day at the bach and your thoughts and feelings about it.

Smart Soup by Melinda Szymanik

Questions

- Why is the narrator of the story worried about the test? What advice does Miss Spelt give her?
- What happens when the narrator whispers, "I wish I was smarter"?
- Describe the Maths Godmother. What does she give the narrator? What does she tell her to do with it?
- Why doesn't the Godmother's soup recipe look like ordinary recipes?
- What happens when the narrator tastes the first pot of soup?
- Why doesn't the narrator have to keep buying ingredients for the soup?
- What does the narrator do every night before she goes to bed?
- What happens on the last night before the Maths test?
- Why does the narrator find the Maths test so easy?

Activities

- Write a paragraph that explains the main message of the story.
- Write your own recipe for success.

Stig and the Space Rats by Tania Hutley

Questions

- Where is the story set?
- What are the names of the two space rats? Why are they on the spaceship?
- Why is it stupid to use a blaster on a spaceship?
- Why don't the space rats know that Stig is on the ship?
- What do we learn about Stig and his background in the story? How does his special ability help him in life?
- Why do the space rats decide to steal the spaceship?
- Who does Stig tell the space rats he is?
- What do the space rats do to Stig's parents?
- How does Stig outwit the space rats?

Questions

- Identify three puns that are used by Stig in the story.
- Design a poster for Stig and the Space Rats that would be suitable to display in your school library.
- Write an alternative ending for the story.
- Change Stig and the Space Rats from a story into a play script. Remember to include a cast of characters and stage directions.

Hansel and Gretel by Joy Cowley

Questions

- Who are Hansel and Gretel? Who is their owner? Why does he like them so much?
- How does life for Hansel and Gretel change when Wanda comes on the scene?
- How does Wanda try and get rid of Hansel and Gretel? How do they thwart her efforts?
- What does Wanda tell the manager of The Home for Lost Dogs to do to Hansel and Gretel? How do the dogs escape?
- What story does Wanda tell Hugo about the dogs? How does Hugo react when he thinks his dogs are gone forever? How does

Wanda react when the dogs come back? What ultimatum does she give Hugo?

Activities

- Describe Wanda. What sort of person is she? How would you describe her actions? Do you believe that Hugo makes the right choice at the end of the story? Why/why not?
- Find a copy of the original Hansel and Gretel story. Read the story and explain any similarities or differences between this story and Cowley's version.
- Write a paragraph about the positive aspects of owning a dog.

Time for a Cuppa by Jaqualine Chapman

Questions

- Who are the main characters in the story?
- Why does Mum drink so much tea?
- What is special about Sarah?
- How do William and Zane deal with Sarah and Marlena?
- Why does Zane decide that they should busk? What does Sarah say they are basking for?
- How does Sarah get her mother into trouble? How do the women react when Sarah talks about Marlena and baby Jazz?
- Why does Zane drag William and Sarah away when he sees his mother?
- Why does Zane think his mum will be drinking lots of tea later?

Activities

- Write a paragraph explaining why somebody might have an imaginary friend. What would the advantages and disadvantages be of having an imaginary friend? What would your ideal imaginary friend be like?
- Write an epilogue for the story explaining what happens after Mum gets home.

Cold Stranger by Bill Nagelkerke

Questions

- What is the name of the Bed and Breakfast in the story? Why do people enjoy staying there? Who runs the Bed and Breakfast?
- Where is the narrator's father?
- Why is the narrator's mother beginning to feel anxious about the business?
- Why does the narrator let the stranger in?
- Why does the narrator start to feel oppressed inside the Bed and Breakfast?
- Describe what the narrator sees when he opens the door. Why does the stranger make the narrator feel uncomfortable?
- How does the narrator's mother react when she meets the stranger? Why does she react like this?
- Why does the narrator lie about the Korean tourists?
- Why does the narrator go up to speak to the man? What does he discover when the man opens the door?
- Why does the narrator think it is strange that the man has no luggage?
- What does the man tell his hosts that he does?
- What does Mum notice when she goes back into the lounge after it starts snowing?
- What happens to the boy and his mother?

Activities

- Rewrite the story from the mysterious stranger's point of view.
- Write a letter to a friend explaining why they should read Cold Stranger.
- Write an alternative ending for the story.
- Design a poster for Cold Stranger that would be suitable for displaying in your school library.

The Santa Fairy by Feana Tu'akoi

Questions

- Who is Selina? What is her job? Why has business been so slow?
- Why is Selina sick of her job?
- Why does Selina go to the fairy market? Who does she meet there?
- Why is Santa looking for a change? What suggestion does he make to Selina?
- What difficulties does Selina encounter when she tries to take on Santa's job? Why does her confidence grow after a few deliveries?
- Why does Selina decide that she likes being a tooth fairy after all?
- What twist is revealed at the end of the story?

Activities

- Write a job description for the tooth fairy.
- Rewrite The Santa Fairy as a picture book for young children, and illustrate it.

Friend Rat by Jill Brasell

Questions

- Who is telling the story? What kind of creature is he? Who is he talking to?
- What does the rat notice when he comes out of his hole at night?
- How does the girl react when she sees the rat? What is unusual about her reaction?
- How does the girl gain the trust of the rat?
- How does the rat know that the girl is upset?
- What happens to the rat when the strange woman appears? What does she tell him to do?

- What does the fairy call the girl who has befriended the rat?
- To where does the coachman drive Cinderella?
- Why doesn't the rat do all of the things that he wants to when he becomes human?
- What happened when the rat woke up the next day?
- How did the rat end up under the ballroom?
- When did the rat see Cinderella again? Who did she marry?

Activities

- Rewrite another well-known fairy tale from one of the character's point of view.
- Design a storyboard that shows ten important events in the story in the order that they occur. Under each illustration write a brief explanation about what is happening.
- Imagine that you are a reporter. Write a news article about the night of the ball.

Fairies in the Computer by Moira Wairama

Questions

- Who is the main character in the story?
- How is Narita's new school different from her old one?
- Why were Narita and her brother apprehensive about moving?
- Why does Paora's teacher suggest that he should be put down a class? How does Paora's mother deal with the situation?
- What do Paora and Narita like about living in Fernvale?
- Where did Paora see the fairies? Why do Narita and Paora argue when Paora shows her the picture on the computer?
- Why are Narita and her parents so surprised when they see Paora's picture?
- What happens when the sun touches the lavender bush?
- Why does Narita think that she and Paora should keep quiet about the fairies? Why does she decide to write the story and post it online?

- How does Narita's teacher react when she offers to read her story to the class?

Activities

- Write a paragraph explaining why it is important for Maori students to retain their language and culture.
- Explain the prejudice that Narita and Paora face in their new school. Why do you think this kind of prejudice exists and how can we help stop it?
- Write Paora and Narita's story.
- Conduct a research assignment on an aspect of Maori mythology. Present your research as a poster or a speech.
- Use the Internet to write a glossary for the Maori words used in the story.

Taking the Lead by Vicki Hall

Questions

- Why are Jill and Shani so upset?
- What is the name of Jill and Shani's business? Who is their competition?
- Why is Jake dubious about the dog-walking idea? What does he want to do instead?
- Why doesn't Shani like walking Leroy?
- What did Mike do to his father's car?
- What does Mike consider "the right side dog"?
- Why are Shani and Jill reluctant to ask their clients for money?
- Why does Mike follow the girls?
- What does the fact that Mike is trying to steal the girls' clients reveal about his character? How does he convince Mrs B to let him take over walking Leroy?
- Why does Jake decide to leave the business?
- Why is Mike surprised when Mrs B gives him the bag?
- Describe Mike's experience walking Leroy.

- What does Mike discover when he goes to Rita's house?
- What is the twist at the end of the story?

Activities

- Write a paragraph explaining the main message or theme of the story.
- Write a sentence explaining why 'Take the Lead' is an appropriate title for the story.
- Design a poster advertising 'Waggers'.
- Write an epilogue for the story explaining what happened the day after the story ends.

The man with the dog eye by Melinda Szymanik

Questions

- What is unusual about Mr Bletcher?
- What theories do Kenny, Ryan and Michael have about Mr Bletcher?
- Describe what Mr Bletcher looks like.
- Why do the narrator's parents finally agree to buy him a dog? What does he call it? Why does he love the dog so much?
- How does the narrator feel when Fang disappears? Why is he so convinced that the man with the dog eye has taken him?
- Describe the narrator's plan to get his dog back.
- How does he get into Mr Bletcher's back yard? Why is he so shocked by what he sees there?
- How does Mr Bletcher know that the boy is in his yard? How does he respond when he sees him? Why is his reaction surprising?
- How did Fang end up in Mr Bletcher's yard?
- What surprising discovery does the boy make about Mr Bletcher that explains a lot?

Activities

- Write a paragraph explaining how this story reinforces the idea that you should never judge a person by appearance.

- Design a static image that illustrates this theme. 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.
- Write a letter to the author explaining what you liked about the story.
- Choose an exciting scene from the story and write a script for it. Remember to include a cast list and stage directions. Practise your play and present it to the class.

The Sugar Bag Boy by Kathy White

Questions

- Why are Thomas and Danny so keen to go to Tim's house?
- Why does Tim want to go to the library with his father? Why doesn't Danny want to go with them?
- Describe Danny's strange dream.
- What is Danny's mother doing when he goes into the kitchen to get a drink? What do we learn about his father?
- What startling discovery does Danny make when Mrs James comes over to look after him?
- What does Danny learn about Billy and Charlie from Mrs James?
- Who was Louise? How is she similar to Danny's mother?
- Why does Danny decide to go to the library?
- How does Danny feel when he hears Billy's voice? What does he learn about him from the interview? Why does he feel like he needs to get home so desperately after listening to the interview?
- What does Danny find on the fireplace in the parlour? How does this help explain his dream?
- Why is Danny so happy when he sees the photo of Billy?

Activities

- Conduct a research assignment about the Depression - when it occurred and how it affected people.
- Why do you think Billy felt the need to get in contact with Danny? Write a paragraph explaining his possible reasons.
- Write a letter to a friend explaining what you liked about the story and why they should read it.

Give it a Heave by David Hill

Questions

- Where is the All-comers Athletic Games taking place?
- Who is the reporter?
- Why does no one listen to Lucy Lastic?
- Who is first competitor in the Throwing the Discus Competition?
- Describe Rocky C's training programme. Does this sound very effective? Why/why not? What happens to him before he can throw the discus?
- Who is the second discus competitor? Where is he from? What is his special training diet? Why is he arrested?
- Who is Mai Song? Where is she from? What is her special training programme? What happens when Mai Song tries to throw the discus?
- How does Olga Upanotch use the book of poetry? Why is she disqualified?
- Why does Chris have trouble getting a straight answer from Amos Quito? Why does he stamp out of the stadium?
- Why isn't Lucy happy when Chris tells her that she could win all three medals? What does Lucy reveal at the end of the story?

Activities

- Write a paragraph explaining how the author uses humour in this story.

- Alliteration is where the author uses two or more words in a row that begin with the same consonant sound e.g. big bouncy ball. Find five examples of alliteration in the story.
- Write a funny poem based on the story.
- Make up some more funny names with double meanings, such as Lucy Lastic or Amos Quito.

Net Jumper by Philippa Werry

Questions

- Why is Joey reluctant to go to indoor netball?
- How do Em's friends feel about having Joey in the car?
- What is the name of the girls' team?
- Who is Spider? How did she get her name? Where is her brother Oscar?
- Why does Joey enjoy playing with the net so much?
- How does Joey know that he is in trouble?
- What advantage do The Rockets have over the Glitter Babes?
- Why does Joey have to play? How do the girls feel about this?
- How does Joey feel when he walks on the court? What happens when the ball hits his fingertips?
- How does Joey score a goal from outside the circle? What other clever moves does he pull off? Why does Em decide to put him at centre?
- What strategy do The Rockets adopt to give them a better chance of winning the game?
- Who wins the game? Who scores the winning goal?
- Why do you think the girls are quiet in the car on the way home?
- Why does Joey change his mind about playing when he hears that the netting might be changed?
- What sport does Nicole encourage him to take up?

Activities

- Write a story about an exciting game that you have been involved in.

- Imagine that you are Joey. Write a diary entry for the night after the big game explaining what happened and your thoughts and feelings about it.
- What qualities and characteristics do you need to have to be a successful sportsperson?