

# Stranger Madness

Author: Melanie Drewery

Illustrator: Jenny Cooper

## Synopsis

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When a guest speaker comes to Maddie's school to talk to the students about stranger danger Maddie becomes confused. The man is, after all, a stranger himself. Should Maddie really be listening to him? Isn't talking to a stranger just the sort of thing she shouldn't be doing? As usual Maddie makes a fuss and ends up being sent to the principal's office.

Maddie's concerns about stranger danger increase when her mother decides to go out to dinner and leave Maddie, her friend Buzz and her sister Molly at home with a babysitter. Her name is Mrs Cook and she is very old. She is also a stranger. Once again Maddie's vivid imagination takes over, and spurred on by Buzz, she decides that Mrs Cook is no ordinary babysitter. She is in fact a zombie who is determined to do away with Maddie, Buzz and Molly. It is imperative that the three keep themselves safe from her, so it is necessary to formulate a plan. Unfortunately, as with most of Maddie's ideas, this backfires with hilarious consequences.

## Text Type

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Stranger Madness is a fast-paced and action-packed story written by New Zealand author Melanie Drewery. It is beautifully illustrated by Jenny Cooper and these drawings add interest and make the story really come alive. The story chronicles a new adventure for Maddie, a character first introduced to us in *The Mad Tadpole Adventure*. The book will best suit younger readers and will particularly appeal to girls. It can easily be read in one sitting.

## Sharing the Novel

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The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapter 1 (pp. 7- 11), Chapters 2- 4 (pp. 12- 25) and Chapters 5- 8 (pp. 26- 45)

During the shared sessions encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of words and ideas presented in the story. Have them make inferences and predictions about what is going to happen next. Most

**importantly, students should enjoy the story, look at the illustrations and discuss their thoughts and ideas with their friends.**

## **Introducing the Novel**

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

- What is stranger danger?
- Who is the main character in the story?
- Have you read *The Mad Tadpole Adventure*? What did you like about it?
- Use the illustration on the front cover to predict what might happen in the story.

**Teacher reads Chapter 1 aloud (pp. 7- 11). Students follow along in their books.**

## **Comprehension Chapter 1 (pp. 7- 11)**

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- Why does the visitor to Maddie's school get her into heaps of trouble?
- Why does Maddie's teacher think that she makes a big fuss about everything?
- How does the visitor react to Maddie's behaviour? What does her teacher do?

### **Discussion**

- What do you think about Maddie's behaviour in class? Is she being reasonable or just "making a fuss"?
- What do you think is going to happen to her when she gets to the principal's office?

**Students read Chapter 2 - 4 (12- 25) independently before the next shared session.**

## **Comprehension Chapters 2- 4 (pp. 12- 25)**

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- What happens to Maddie when she gets to the principal's office? Why do you think that she gets sent there a lot?
- Why is Maddie so happy to stay with Miss Simpson?

- What is Maddie's mum's surprise? How does Maddie feel about this? How does she react when her mother says that a new babysitter will be coming over?
- What do you think Maddie did to the last babysitter?
- Why are Maddie and Buzz so worried about the new babysitter?
- What does Mrs B say to Maddie and Buzz before the adults go out?
- What is the babysitter's name? Why does Maddie believe that she could be a zombie?
- What does Mrs B threaten to do to Buzz when she acts like a zombie in front of Mrs Cook?
- Why does Maddie think that Mrs Cook really is a zombie?

### Discussion

- Do you agree with Miss Simpson about strangers just being people that you haven't met yet? Why/ why not?
- Do you enjoy having friends over to stay at your house? Have you ever done anything silly or got into trouble when you have had a friend over? If so, what happened?
- Do you ever get left with a babysitter? If so, who? What do you think makes someone a good babysitter?
- Describe Maddie's character. How does taking everything that is said literally get her into trouble?
- Predict what will happen next in the story.

**Students read Chapters 5- 8 (pp. 26- 45) independently before the next shared session.**

### **Comprehension Chapters 5- 8 (pp. 26- 45)**

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- Why does Buzz believe that people need to know that they are in danger? What plan does she come up with?
- Why is Maddie concerned that Mrs Cook has a large bag?
- How does Mrs Cook react when Molly starts yelling? Who comes over to help them? What does Mrs Cook tell the person by way of explanation?
- Why are Buzz and Maddie annoyed when Molly tells the lady that Mrs Cook is their babysitter? Why is the lady cross?
- Why does the babysitter decide to order dinner instead of walking to the shop?
- Where does Mrs Cook tell the girls to wait for their dinner? Why is Molly too upset to wait in her own room?

- Why do the girls decide that calling the police might not be a good idea?
- Why do the girls decide to hide? Why do they decide that running away might not be a good idea?
- Why does Maddie grab Mrs Cook by the ankle?
- What happens when Maddie tries to follow Molly out the cat door? How do Mrs Cook and Buzz react to Maddie's predicament?
- How does Maddie get released from the cat door? Why isn't her mother angry with her?
- How does Molly save Maddie from getting into trouble when everyone has left?

### Discussion

- Who is Badjelly the Witch? What sort of nasty activities do we associate with witches?
- Comment on the different fonts used in the book. Why have these been used? What do they add to the story?
- What does the lady mean when she talks about "little boys who cry wolf"?
- How might the story have turned out differently if Molly hadn't told the stranger that Mrs Cook was their babysitter?
- Was Mrs Cook really a terrible babysitter? Why/why not?

### Activities

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**Static Image** - Design a poster advertising Stranger Madness that would be suitable to be displayed in the school library.

**Static Image** - Design an alternative cover for the book and explain why it is better than the original.

**Letter** - Write a letter to the author of Stranger Madness explaining what you liked about the book.

**Diary Entry** - Imagine that you are Maddie. Write a diary entry for a day in her life. Remember to include her thoughts and feelings about what is going on.

**Character** - Explain how you are similar to, or different from, Maddie.

**Book Report** - Complete a book report for Stranger Madness using the template below:

<p><b>Character Study</b></p> <p>Name of character Describe character's personality</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	<p><b>Title:</b> <b>Author:</b> <b>What type of story is it? (circle)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Newspaper article</li> <li>✓ Autobiography</li> <li>✓ Non-fiction</li> <li>✓ Essay</li> <li>✓ Poetry</li> <li>✓ Comic</li> <li>✓ Adventure</li> <li>✓ Fiction</li> <li>✓ Humorous</li> <li>✓ Play</li> <li>✓ Mystery</li> <li>✓ Science Fiction</li> </ul>
<p><b>New or Interesting Words</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Word:</b> <b>Meaning:</b></li> <li>2. <b>Word:</b> <b>Meaning:</b></li> <li>3. <b>Word:</b> <b>Meaning:</b></li> <li>4. <b>Word:</b> <b>Meaning:</b></li> <li>5. <b>Word:</b> <b>Meaning:</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>Plot</b></p> <p>The story begins when...</p> <p>The problem is...</p> <p>The next thing that happens is...</p> <p>The problem is solved when...</p>
<p><b>Setting</b> Draw the main place(s) where the story takes place.</p>	<p><b>Theme</b> The author of this story is trying to teach us that....</p> <p><b>Review</b> I would/would not recommend <i>Stranger Madness</i> to others because...</p>