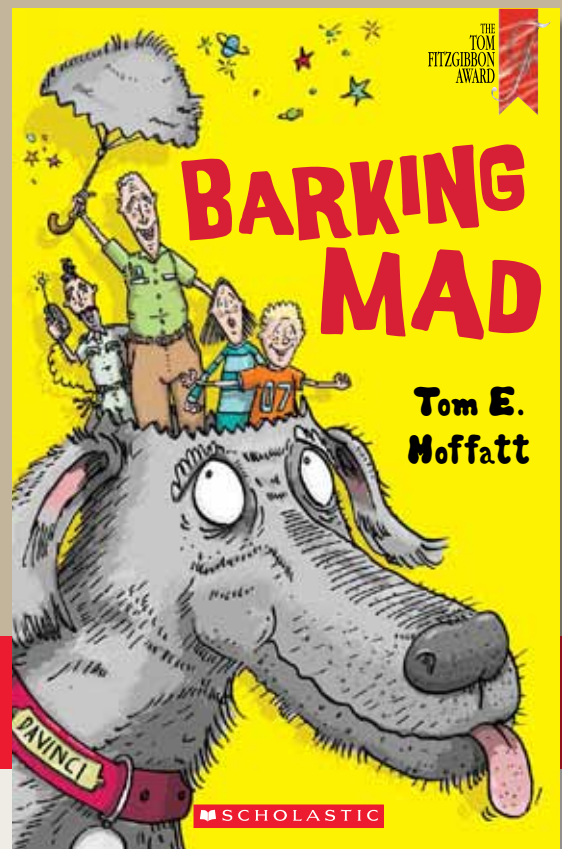


Barking Mad

By Tom E. Moffatt

- Listening • Reading • Writing
- Presenting • Developing Ideas • Technology



About the Book

At first Fingers refuses to believe that his Granddad has gone barking mad. Granddad is an inventor and has always been a bit wacky, but there is no way he would lick the postman! However, when he sees Granddad growling like a dog and chasing the hospital security guard up a tree, he becomes pretty certain that something strange has happened. In the middle of Granddad's workshop he discovers a rather bizarre machine. Fingers and his sister, Sally, try to move the machine but they accidentally drop it and somehow swap bodies.

The siblings instantly realise that their Granddad has swapped bodies with his dog, DaVinci. However, they are shepherded off to school before they can figure out how to change themselves back. After an eventful day at school in which Fingers and Sally remain trapped in each other's body, they return to DaVanddad's house, use the mind-swapping machine to swap themselves back, and embark on a race against the clock to rescue their Granddad before he is transferred to a more secure psychiatric unit in two days' time.

Naturally, things get complicated as the hospital security guard catches on to the odd behaviour of Fingers and Sally, and the mind-swapping machine is given a workout. Sally must swap minds with her Granddad's body while Fingers swaps bodies with the security guard, Jesus, allowing them to lead the dog out of the hospital so he can swap back with Granddad. With Granddad now rescued, Fingers and Sally's mum nearly gets in the way by marching them out of the hospital before Fingers can swap back with the security guard. He is miraculously saved as the machine is catapulted through the air in the hotel carpark and hits the right button before exploding into millions of pieces.

About the Author

New author and former school teacher Tom E. Moffatt is originally from Uxbridge, London, and now resides in Rotorua with his wife and two children. His Barking Mad manuscript was the winner of the 2015 Tom Fitzgibbon Award for a previously unpublished writer. Tom says that now that he is a telephone technician, he has more time for both his family and his writing ... with plenty of story ideas tucked away safely under his pillow.

Writing Style

Tom E. Moffatt has written a very humorous book that will lend itself well to being read aloud. The story moves quickly, engaging the reader from the beginning. This is a laugh-out-loud story with quirky illustrations by Paul Beavis. It also has some tender and reflective moments between the main characters, Finn (Fingers) and his sister Sally.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Look at the cover. Do you think the book will be funny or serious? What does the phrase 'barking mad' mean? Why do you think the characters are climbing out of the dog's head?
- What does the phrase 'madder than a box of frogs' mean? What is a 'funeral face'? (p.7)
- Why does Finn have the nick name 'fingers'? (pp.10–11)
- What does Finn offer to do to convince his mum he can come to see his Granddad? (p.12)
- What does Finn mean when he says 'my heart felt like it had just hit an iceberg'? (p.13)
- Why didn't Finn recognise his Granddad when he first arrived at Granddad's house? Who did he think he was? (pp.14–15)
- What does the phrase 'barking up the wrong tree' mean?
- What does Finn's mother ask him and Sally to do to get them out of the way? What did their mum not want them to see Granddad doing? (pp.16–17)
- What was Granddad trying to do to the security guard? What happened to the security guard's trousers? (pp.18–21)
- How does Finn get his Granddad away from the security guard? How do the other guards capture Granddad? (pp.22–23)
- When they went back inside it was very quiet. What noises did they normally hear at Granddad's house? What was unusual about DaVinci's behaviour? Why do you think DaVinci was behaving strangely? (pp.24–25)
- What does Finn think his nickname should be instead of Butterfingers? What happens when he picks up the machine? (pp.26–27)
- What did Finn say he thought was coming out of his mum's ears? Why did he think that? (p.28–29)
- What does the machine do to Finn and Sally? (p.30)
- What conclusion does Finn come to about Granddad and DaVinci? Do you think he is right? (p.31)
- Why is Finn worried about his reputation? Do you think he has more important things to be worrying about? What is his plan to protect his reputation from what Sally might do to it? (p.34)
- With what you know about Finn already, how do you think he will go with Sally's complicated timetable? (p.35)
- What does Sally do to help Finn get through the day? How does she explain his strange behaviour? (pp.36–37)
- What does Finn find written in the back of Sally's locker? What does he plan to do with that information? (pp.38–39)
- Why was the teacher offended when Finn sat down? (pp.39–40)
- What does Finn write in Sally's notebook instead of doing her maths? (p.41)
- What does Finn do at break that he wouldn't be allowed to do in junior school, while he's in Sally's body? (p.44)
- What does the music teacher ask the students to do to warm up for singing the duets? (p.47)
- How does the teacher describe the way Finn was warming up? Was Finn used to being described like that? What does 'vindictive' mean? (p.48–49)
- Why is Finn disappointed when he hears the song he chose for Sally? What is Sally's favourite thing in the whole world? How do Finn and Steve change the song they have to sing? (pp.50–51)
- Why is Finn worried about P.E.? What does he do to avoid it? Why did Finn blush? (pp.52–53)
- Who was Finn shocked to see in the nurse's office? What did Finn and Sally tell the nurse was the reason they were there? (pp.54–55)
- What did the sign on Sally's bedroom door say? (p.57)
- What is the first thing Finn looks for in Sally's bedroom? Where does he find it? (p.58)
- What does Finn name Granddad's dog? Why does he make up the new name? How do they communicate with DaVinci to find out how to use the swapping machine? (p.62–64)
- What does DaVinci tell Finn and Sally to type into the swapping machine's keyboard? (p.64)
- What is the first thing Finn does once he gets back into his own body? (p.66)
- The story is told from Finn's point of view, so we don't yet know what Sally did while she was Finn. What do you think Sally might have done to embarrass Finn? (pp.68–69)
- Why was Finn making more effort than usual in class? (p.72)
- What was Sally's idea for an invention? (p.74)
- Why will the security guard from the hospital never forget Finn's family? (p.75)
- What does the nurse say she hopes Mum won't do? What is the security guard's name? (p.76–77)
- How does Sally get Granddad to not leave the hospital? (p.82)
- Why does Granddad have to be sent to a more secure unit? What does he do when he's around the other patients? (pp.83–85)
- What is a pessimist? What is Sally and Finn's plan to get Granddad out of hospital? (pp.88–89)
- What does Granddad do when he sees Finn? Can you imagine your Granddad doing that? (p.92)
- What do you think will happen if the guard finds Granddad in the corridor? (pp.94–96)
- What does Finn do with Granddad's false teeth? (p.97)
- What does Sally borrow to try and get Granddad out of the hospital? Do you think it will work? (pp.100–101)
- Who is waiting at the lift for them? (p.102–103)



- What do you think happened between Jesus catching Sally, Finn and Granddad at the lift, and Sally and Finn being in the car with their parents? (pp.104–105)
- What does it mean to 'reflect on our behaviour'? Are you ever asked to do that? What is 'the loony bin'? (pp.106–107)
- What is the new plan that Sally and Finn have come up with to swap Granddad and DaVinci back into their own bodies? Do you think it will work? How might it go wrong? (pp.108–109)
- Why do Sally and Finn take DaVinci's collar off? What did the collar say? (pp.110–111)
- Why is it funny that Granddad is in the room 'K9'? Who do Sally and Finn unexpectedly bump into at the hospital? (pp.112–113)
- Why was Steve at the hospital? (p.114)
- What goes wrong while they stop to talk to Steve? (p.116–117)
- What is a 'fitful night's sleep'? Why can't they just go into the dog shelter and ask for DaVinci back? (pp.120–121)
- What plan does Granddad, in DaVinci's body, come up with to get himself out of the dog shelter? (pp.125–127)
- How do Finn and Sally use the dog biscuits to help with the escape? (p.128–129)
- What does Finn get in his face? (p.134)
- What has Granddad found in the hospital? Why does Finn think that it's creepy? (p.139)
- What do Sally and Finn have to do to try and get their Granddad out of the hospital? Do you think it will work? What could go wrong? (pp.140–141)
- Who is inside the dog's body now? What do they call the dog now? (pp.142–143)
- What does SalVinci do when she spots the patient's trousers? (p.147)
- What will happen if Finn drops the mind-swapping machine? (p.149)
- Who has swapped bodies now? Can you remember which bodies all the characters are in? (pp.150–151)
- Do you think things are better or worse for Granddad now that Jesus is involved? (pp.152–153)
- How does being in Jesus' body help Finn? (pp.154–155)
- What does SalVinci do to the old lady? Who do they see unexpectedly again? (pp.156–157)
- How does Finn help Sally to get out without being seen by Steve? Why do you think Finn suddenly cares about his sister being embarrassed? (pp.158–159)
- Who do they swap back first? (pp.160–161)
- Who do they find in room K9 that makes their plan more difficult? (p.162)
- What does Finn suddenly realise about his family? (p.165)
- What do you think Sally's plan is? (p.167)
- How does the old lady in J7 help Finn? Whose grandmother is she? (p.170)
- What does Finn remember is in the bushes that can help him? Does using it help, or does it make things far worse? (pp.174–175)
- What does Sally do to save the situation? (pp.175–176)
- What do Sally and Finn realise about each other? What helped them to change their minds? (pp.179–180)
- How have Sally and Finn's lives changed since their adventure with the mind-swapping machine? (pp.183–185)
- Why did they need to type 'Do you need to go to the toilet?' into the mind-swapping machine? (pp.187–189)

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: IDIOMS

Idioms are a form of figurative language, which includes metaphors and similes. The author has used several idioms to convey meaning throughout the text, and in particular as chapter headings.

Explain idioms to the class, using examples, e.g. 'paint the town red', 'do you have an axe to grind?', 'let sleeping dogs lie'. Ask them if they remember any from the text and list their suggestions, while adding some more from the book.

Read out examples or prepare a worksheet from the following Idioms for Kids list: <http://examples.yourdictionary.com/idioms-for-kids.html>. Students could work in pairs to work out their meanings. Some students may be able to make up some of their own.

ACTIVITY 2: IMPROVING INVENTIONS

In the story the class is asked to invent something that will make an improvement to their classroom. Working in pairs, or individually, ask students to identify three things that need improving in your classroom and to choose one to make an invention for. The students will need to come up with a prototype design, label it, and then present it to the class, stating the improvement needed and what their invention will do to make the improvement.

ACTIVITY 3: FILLING IN THE GAPS

Re-read pp.102–105. In this passage Finn and Sally find themselves caught by Jesus at the elevator on page 103, and then in the next chapter on page 104 they are in the car with their horrified parents. Ask students to write the missing scene. What did Jesus do? How did they end up in the car? How did Finn and Sally plan to get out of trouble?



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ACTIVITY 4: HOMOPHONES

A homophone is a word that is pronounced the same as another word but differs in meaning, and may differ in spelling. The words may be spelled the same, such as rose (flower) and rose (past tense of 'rise'), or differently, such as carat and carrot, or to, two and too.

The author plays with words throughout the story, and adds to the story by using homophones. Introduce, or revisit homophones using examples from the book, e.g. 'paws for thought'. Also use these examples: to, two and too; they're and their; bee and be; sun and son; which and witch; and plain and plane.

Ask students to illustrate a homophone showing both meanings, e.g. a nine carat carrot, the sun's son. They may wish to emulate the style of Paul Beavis in the story. There are also several online homophone games available: <http://www.vocabulary.co.il/homophones/>

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