



HOORAY FOR CHESTER!

Written by Rina A Foti
Illustrated by Ellen Hickman

Published by Windy Hollow Books

Teachers' notes

Reading

Before Reading

Cover the title of the book, leaving on the illustration of Chester.

Ask students to predict what the story may be about. What words could we use to describe this crocodile?

Uncover the title and ask students what difference does the title make to our predictions about the book. Orally brainstorm the many reasons characters within the story may be calling Hooray for Chester. Discuss the setting of the book. Flick through pages to see if students can confirm the Australian setting by the animals included.

After Reading

This book lends itself to discussion about the importance of being a member of a group or community and the feelings generated by isolation. Ask students if they have ever been in a situation where they felt left out like Chester? Moving to a new home, school, country? Joining a new sporting, recreation club? What feelings did they have? What did they do to try and make friends in a new situation? Discuss how Chester would have felt at the end of the book. Discuss the student's thoughts on the behaviour of the other animals in the book. Can they see alternative ways for the animals/birds to have behaved from the beginning?

Viewing

Ellen Hickman, the illustrator has used some wonderful design ideas throughout Hooray For Chester to enhance the story.

Viewing elements

Have students look at page 2/3 closely and ask how has the illustrator managed to convey Chester's loneliness in the illustration? Chester in the foreground with the swamp stretching out before him, no other animals in the illustration, clear reflection in the water adding to sense of stillness etc. Compare this illustration with the final illustration. How has the illustrator shown Chester's joy at being part of the swamp community?

Chester placed in the middle of the illustration, Chester's body stance, the size of the medal, the storks hanging the medal etc.

Perspective

Ellen Hickman is a botanical artist and has used her knowledge of the animals depicted to great effect. Have students look at the different angles and perspectives the illustrator has drawn both Chester and the other creatures from. What effect has this had upon the way we look at the illustrations, characters within the book? Within several of the illustrations the characters are seen from below and above the water. How does this add to the book's appeal?

Chester also appears in the right hand lower corner of each of the early illustrations. What does this symbolise to the students? Chester's imagination / the way he sees himself?

Writing

Diary Writing

This story takes place over the days of one week. Introduce the idea of a diary to students and discuss the many reasons people keep diaries. Personal diaries are usually written responses of a way a person/character feels about the events that are happening to him/her. Have student's write two diary entries for Chester, one at the beginning of the week and the other for Sunday. Emphasis the showing of Chester's emotions through his actions as well as this feeling. Share with class and compare the language employed in the two entries.

Writing from Own Experience

Discuss with students the importance of drawing on their own experiences in their writing. Students to speak about a time in their lives when they felt different from the people around them. What feelings did this create? How did they cope with the situation? Students then take this real life situation and create a story with animal characters/natural setting etc. Discuss how good narratives often involve the main character going through some change within the story. Share with class. Identify narrative elements. Illustrate.

Language

Rina Foti's story employs a delightful array of language that will both build student's vocabulary and their understanding of the use of language.

Verbs

Hooray For Chester is filled with words to describe movements eg. Flying, hurdled, back flipped, flapped. After reading, have students list all the different verbs/doing words they can remember. Reread the story and add to the list. Have students in small groups create hand signals/simple actions for each verb and have other class members try to guess the verb.

Research

Swamps are a major habitat for many Australian animals. Have students gather research for other books/internet/media to gain a greater understanding of the importance of swamps. Many swamps areas are under threat. Have student's research the reasons swamps are disappearing and suggest ways in which these areas could be protected.

Drama / Movement

Movement/Vocabulary

Hooray For Chester is full of words depicting movement and drama. As a whole class have students act out such words as hurdled, swayed, leaped, wriggled and jiggled etc. Ask students to think of as many words describing movement as they can. In pairs or small groups, using simple musical instruments, students choose sounds or a sequence of sounds to go with particular actions. Each group is then to demonstrate that movement for the other students to guess. Experiment with joining these sounds and movements together to create a theatrical piece.

Theatre

Hooray for Chester is ideal for turning into a play. Have the students turn the text into a script, adding in a narrator, sound effects and simple props.

Emphasis should be given to character voices, body language and positioning of performers to depict the atmosphere of the story. Perform for the classes.

Art

Ellen Hickman's illustrations in Hooray For Chester are stunning. The illustrations combine vivid and brilliant colour with clarity of design and amazing attention to detail and act as a great inspiration or the student's own artwork.

Perfect Places – Edicolle Dye Paintings

Chester described Greenbush Swamp as the perfect place for a crocodile to live. Look at the landscape illustration on page 2/3. Discuss why Chester would think that it was perfect. Students to think about their own perfect place and describe it to each other. Students then design their own perfect place and lightly sketch onto A3 (or larger) cartridge paper. Discuss acrylic gouache paint and why Ellen chose to use it in her illustrations-These lend themselves perfectly to the brightly coloured scenes and animals of Northern Australia (from blurb). Students to use brightly coloured edicolle dyes to paint their own perfect place. Share and discuss effects gained.

Spelling

From the list of verbs created in the above activity have students classify the words into groups according to common spelling features. Look closely at these features and add in other known words to each group/ Hyphenated and compound words are also used in Hooray for Chester. Identify these. Many Australian animals have common names that describe their visual features, eg. Black-necked storks, brush-tailed possums. Have students brainstorm other that they know and write a simple, imaginative explanation for how this feature came to be i.e. How the Stork's neck came to be black. Share with class.

Alliteration

Alliteration is a great writing device for creating rhythm and atmosphere. Read out the lines of alliteration from Hooray for Chester, eg. flapped and fluttered, shrieked and screeched, splashy, sploshy splash. Have students choose a letter of the alphabet and create their own piece of alliteration to describe the actions of a well-known animal or one of the creatures in the book.

Using Language

Authors choose their words very carefully to construct a specific character or mood. Sometimes negative effects are wanted for particular characters and words with negative connotations are used. See how many negative words students can identify from the text. Eg. frumpy, clumsy, dopey, gawky. Discuss the role of context in giving a word meaning.

Collective Nouns

Hooray for Chester contains many collective nouns eg. flock, school, family, cluster. Discuss these and brainstorm other collective nouns to add to this list. Skim read other books/resources on animals to discover other collective nouns.

Society and Environment

Differences Collage

In Hooray for Chester, Chester often states "I may be different, but..."

Discuss the importance of differences within a community or group and list all the benefits a group gains because of differences. Students to look through magazines to find pictures to illustrate these benefits. Collage words and pictures into a class chart.

PMI

In Hooray for Chester, Chester has moved to a new place to live. Discuss the consequences of moving to live in a new town/country with emphasis on student's own experiences. As a class or individually, record findings on a PMI table. Plus, minus, interesting facts.

Map the Environment

Hooray for Chester is set in Greenbush Swamp in Northern Australia. Discuss all the different features of Greenbush Swamp eg. Waterlilies, eucalyptus trees, swamp water, grasses etc. Have students draw their own map of Greenbush Swamp showing all the main features. A legend could be created showing where the different animals are found.