

SHAPE-SHIFTERS' teachers' notes.

Publisher www.aussieschoolbooks.com.au 2007

AUSSIE! AUSSIE! AUSSIE! Series One.

Recommended reading age: 7-10.

Here are a range of activities which can be used to extend students' knowledge, explore some basic research skills and give students the opportunity to express their ideas.

- Outline
- Rationale
- Resources and Preparation
- Talking Points
- Activities
- Writing Exercises
- What inspired this story?

BRIEF OUTLINE OF STORY:

“What followed was hard to describe. The only thing Penny was sure of was that a wind blew up. Soon it was strong enough to blow dust everywhere.

Dust flew into Penny's eyes. It was like looking through cracked glass. She rubbed her eyes and stared. Then she rubbed her eyes again.

Acacia had vanished. Where she had been standing, was now a tree with curly, yellow leaves. Every branch was covered in prickles.”

Bullies are terrible. Acacia, with her blonde curls and pretty face, is one of the worst. Penny doesn't know what to do about her but Lei-Li, the new girl, has a secret weapon. With the help of Lei-Lie's grandmother, Penny finds she has the power to change the people around her. But will this power get out of hand?

RATIONALE:

'Shape-Shifters' is intended for young readers who are discovering chapter books.

Unlike many contemporary books for children, this series is set in Australia where many areas (such as Buxton Camp) actually exist.

This series also espouses Australian ‘values’ such as fairness, not tolerating bullying, and standing up for your mates.

Though this chapter book is a fantasy its intent is to show children that bullies can be overcome through finding the right ‘mind-set’ and having loyal friends.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION:

In a fantasy, or ‘magic realism’ the trend is that

- The inexplicable occurs
- No explanation is necessary
- However there must be some internal logic
- The reader has to suspend disbelief

Readers are guided to Goldie Alexander’s other books on similar themes

- *6788*
- *Cowpat\$*
- *Starship Q*
- *Trapeze*
- *Killer Virus*. A number of fantasy/ magic realism stories are contained in this short story collection. The longest story: “The Glitterland Tapes” deals with bullying.

TALKING POINTS:

1. Lei-Lei is new and ‘different’. How?
2. Penny is scared of Acacia. Why?
3. What does Lie-Lie do when Acacia tries to bully her? What actually happens?
4. How does Lie-Lie promise to help Penny?
5. What has turned Acacia into a bully? In your opinion is this an excuse? How does she convince Delilah and Poppy to join into her bullying? What happens then?
6. How does Penny learn to shape-shift? What rules must she follow? What happens as a result of her first shape-shifting? What about back at school? How does she use her shape-shifting after that?
7. (page 31) ‘But deep inside, she (Penny) wasn’t so sure she wanted to try again.’ When does shape-shifting not work?
8. Describe Camp Buxton. What valuable lesson does the class learn at this camp?

9. What happens to the bus on the way home?
10. How do Penny and Lie-Lie use Shape-Shifting to get the bus running again?

ACTIVITIES

- Make a story-board or collage to convey 'BULLIES' or 'SHAPE-SHIFTING.'
- Mock up a 'before' and 'after' interview with Acacia with you as the interviewer.
- Now change places.
- Imagine you can shape-shift. How would you use this skill?
- Write the lyrics for a song called 'Shape-shifting.'

WRITING EXERCISES:

- Design an unusual solution for handling bullies.
- Create five rules for coping with bullies that will help you and your friends.
- Write a story ending with '...and the bully ran away.'
- Pretend you can turn into any shape that will scare ALL bullies. How will this work? You can also draw it.
- Design a 'scare away all bullies machine'.

WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY:

"When I was little, there were lots of bullies at my school and they usually got away with it. Bullying happens everywhere, even to grown-ups. I love the idea of finding a sure way of stopping it.

Working together to stop bullies soon as they start is the best way to prevent this from happening. You need to show that they don't scare you. You need to tell a trusted adult what is happening. You need to support your friend if this is happening to her or him. You must never let bullies get away with it.'