

Teachers' Notes

Hand-Me-Down Hippo

by Hazel Edwards

Illustrated by Mini Goss

Puffin...Penguin

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The language of fantasy is international, so the cake-eating hippo is multi-cultural.

These notes are meant to provide ideas for activities which you can use in the classroom or library which relate to key learning areas and themes as well as provide insight into the author's creative process.

Curriculum Links

Apart from the importance of fantasy....

Personal Development, Health and Physical Education

- Going on a sleep-over, flying interstate or learning to catch the ball and be part of a team...
- Nutrition - balanced eating habits, special needs, cake& vegetables.
- Personal identity – new school, making friends: imaginary and real Buddies. Relationship with teacher. Dealing with fears e.g. darkness, other peoples' homes, new places
- Effects of physical activity- playing with family, teams and being part of a class or family team project helping friends, picnics...

Maths: Roof building, shapes e.g., brick, question mark, numbers, spatial, guesses and estimating. Counting bricks. Constructing a wall. Mapping, Distance. Weather.

Science: Airports. Flying in a plane. Packing. Spatial relationships.

Art: Designing my bedroom space/home for visitors to sleep over.

Music: SFX. Spooky night noises. Choral reading

English: Reading clues, guessing, playing with words and shapes. Family stories.

Drama; performing the classroom play of this story

LOTE Clues in other languages, vegetable names in other languages. Ahmed the caretaker

S.O.S.E. Celebrations e.g. Birthdays, Sleeping over. Visiting grandparents. Travelling. ID

Civics: Buddies system where older students help younger

Technology: Class electronic portfolio stories



Resources for Hand Me Down Hippo

1. Outline of Stories
2. FAQs
3. Activities
4. Book Launch
5. LOTE

1. Outline of Stories

There are three stories within Hand- Me- Down Hippo: each covers circumstances in which a child might be apprehensive. The mini hippo does not speak, but provides reassurance simply by being there as an all knowing friend.

Sleep Over Hippo **Sky-ways Hippo** **Sporty Hippo**

- Sleeping over at a young friend's house can be a worry.

Especially the first time. But not if your cake-eating Mini Hippo goes with you.

- 'Flying' to Gran's in a plane can be a concern. Especially the first time.

But not if Mini Hippo comes too.

- When you're always the last one chosen for the team, it hurts.

Unless you have a cake-eating Hippo as your coach.

Within all the stories are thematic links to friendship, reassurance, adjusting to change and the importance of fantasy. The cake eating hippo is multi-cultural because the language of fantasy is international and crosses all cultures.

While the vocabulary level and sentence structure is simple within Hand- Me- Down Hippo, the concepts of 'cloud music' or 'question mark candles' and the logic of fantasy enable students to play around with imaginative ideas beyond the simply crafted text.

The Sleep Over classroom script based on the first story is at junior primary reading level and has flexible roles and choruses for up to 30 students so all can be involved. A suggested cast is provided for Sky-ways Hippo, the second story and suggestions on how students can create their own classroom play from the story. The plays can be performed individually or together as a Hip Hop Hippo Festival with more than one class being involved.

These could also be used as a part of a Buddies program with older students performing for younger groups. The linking concept is that the Hand-Me-Down Hippo will be all hippos/imaginary friends who are passed on to younger children.

There is also an explanation of the link between the original 'big' male, cake-eating hippo and the new mini, female hippo friend. This illustrates the logic of fantasy and the rules of credibility within the world of a story.

2. 'Hand Me Down Hippo'

F.A.Q.S of the Author

Q.1. Why did you create a new, mini, female hippo?

Just as children hand down favourite belongings to their younger relatives or friends, 'Hand Me Down Hippo' is the result of a new generation of children wanting to read about an imaginary friend.

This book (and maybe sequels) are aimed at the new reader of six plus. It is not a picture book but an illustrated story with chapters about an imaginary friend who provides reassurance in scary times.

My son Trevelyan was the original three year old who created the hippo on the roof eating cake after we had leaking house problems and workmen banging on the roof. He is now 28 and uncle to 5 year old Truman, my grandson who is the next imaginative generation.

Parents approach me to sign books for their children, because the cake-eating hippo was their favourite. He now spans a generation and various continents where he has been translated, performed and is even on the side of a library bus.

It was time for a new hippo, and Mini Goss was willing to illustrate her and Penguin was happy to publish 'Hand Me Down Hippo' as well as the backlisted earlier titles of the big hippo.

2. How can two hippos co-exist?

Cousins co-exist amicably. Why shouldn't Big Hippo and Mini Hippo co-exist in the world of a child's imagination? Originally the big hippo didn't have a gender, but children started saying 'he' and so the hippo became male.

Across the years I've become aware of the logic of fantasy in a reader's mind. And I've received many letters and e-mails via my web site written to the hippo directly asking:

'Will you come and be a friend on my roof?'

'Why do you eat cake, not carrots?'

'I've heard you on my roof.'

3. Why in the chapter format instead of the picture book?

Because readers are growing up. Full colour picture books are also more expensive for families to buy. And there can be three stories in this collection, rather than one.

4. Why create a mini hippo who is female?

For contrast. And the coincidence that the illustrator's name is Mini and her daughter is called Hazel. Serendipity.

I've had some embarrassing moments with the large hippo (which the publishers made) seat-belted in my car passenger seat and I thought mini would be more appealing and maneuverable.

5. Can the Mini Hippo speak for herself?

She can think for herself. As with the Big Hippo, the child narrator interprets.

My name is Hand Me Down Hippo. I'm also known as Mini Hippo. Mini means small.

I'm the Little Cousin of the Hippopotamus who lives on the Roof and eats Cake.

I have some stories too. And I'd like to share them with you.

In some ways, I'm like Big Hippo because I'm a good friend.

In other ways, I'm different.

My shape is smaller and I'm a girl hippo.

But I still like cake, I'm cuddly and I know 'many things'.

Hazel Edwards created me and Mini Goss drew me for a new generation of children.

6. Why is there a question mark candle on the cake?

So the Mini Hippo can be whatever age birthday you wish. Probably Mini Hippo will be your age, which is the age of the reader.

Some children have suggested these reasons for having a question mark candle:

- To save money and use it every year
- Because the hippo is not good at counting.
- So readers have to guess
- So it can be the age of the reader (Hazel's answer too)
- Because it's a hook to catch ideas.
- Because authors ask lots of questions.

It can be a good starting point to ask the students why they think there is a question mark candle. This is the kind of 'open' question which encourages divergent thinking.

7. To what extent was it a challenge to work with a new illustrator?

A pleasant challenge. I'd always liked the unusual angles and perspectives from which Mini Goss drew her stories and she'd drawn an earlier book for me.

The Mini Hippo had to look different from the Big Hippo but still friendly, reassuring and appealing.

I suggested red knee high boots but these were dropped. However, Mini Hippo does have some clothes, which will change in different stories.

I think in abstract, not colour or shape, so I like to defer to the illustrator once the concept is worked out in the text.

I think Mini Goss is excellent at drawing unusual perspectives and I like the illustrations of the plane outline and the hippo on the plane wing.

3. Activities:

Most of these activities can be accomplished within a session after reading the Hand-Me-Down Hippo as a serial.

- 'Discuss' 'What are hand-me-downs? Have you ever had hand-me-downs from older children? Things which they've valued and grown out of?'
- Prediction: What might have happened before/after this story?
- Make an imaginary hip cake. Children can draw or make the ingredients needed for Hippo's special cake. e.g. cupful of smiles, spoonful of giggles etc. Make any cake and allow each child to stir with a 'special' wish.
- Draw or mime what the hippo might be doing on the school roof or plane wing e.g. reading her own book.
- Make up some hippo exercises. e.g. swim like a hippo. (* Can use music from the Bushfire Press CD). What sports might sport hippo coach?
- Make hippo masks from paper plates.
- Have muddy hippo footprints leading into the library and to the book on the shelf.
- Create hippo-shaped food. e, g, biscuits, sandwiches. Soup can be the mud.
- Write a letter to the Hippo character. Or send a postcard or an e-mail. Create a Corridor of Characters where children's letters to the book characters are displayed either side of a passageway.
- Where might a cake-eating hippo work? Cake shop? Mud pool? As Swimming instructor? Masseur? Roof tiler? Draw hippo at work. Create a C.V. for a hippo who is going for a new job.
- Ask children to form their bodies into the number which is their age or the first letter of their given name. Then ask them to form a question mark shape.
- Design a question mark candle in any medium. Have a display.
- Discuss: What would happen if all numbers were taken out of our world?
 - No house numbers.
 - No number plates
 - No telephone numbers
 - No class numbers
 - How old would you be?
- Perform a 'hippo' classroom play based on scripts from 'Our Cake Eating Hippo Plays (Bushfire Press) This collection also has a page of hints on how to create your own classroom plays for young students.

Book Launch

A book launch is like a first birthday party for a book. It is to celebrate but also to introduce the book to readers.

You've been asked to organise a book launch for 'Hand Me Down Hippo':

- Where will you hold the book launch?
- Why?
- What food will you offer?
- Who might launch the book?
- Who will you invite?
- What might the guests be asked to dress up as?
- Any activities, plays, music or games at the launch which link with the book?
- Design the invitation.
- Have your own Book Launch.

LOTE (Languages Other Than English)

Regardless of which LOTE your students study, 'Hand Me Down Hippo' can be adapted easily. It's always useful to choose a book used in mainstream to be adapted in LOTE activities

Possibilities include;

- Interleaven book where the inbetween pages contain the second language inserted between the English pages and illustrations.
- Classroom playscript with dual languages. Indonesian, French and Chinese versions exist of the Bushfire Press hippo plays. These have been performed in various schools and at an Indonesian Teachers' conference.
- Audio script with both languages.
- Braille with 'feelie' illustrations and Braille type.
- Auslan signing and video for hearing impaired children.

Contact hazel@hazeledwards.com regarding translations

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