

TEACHER NOTES

Nannie Loves

Written and illustrated by Kylie Dunstan

Title: *Nannie Loves*
Author / Illustrator: Kylie Dunstan



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Author / Illustrator: Kylie Dunstan

Kylie Dunstan is an award winning author and illustrator of children's picture books. She was born in Broken Hill, New South Wales, in 1972, and completed secondary and tertiary (Bachelor of Visual Arts) schooling in Adelaide. After working for a number of years in commercial art galleries she took up a position as an Arts Officer at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) in the Northern Territory. It was while working with the local women to collect pandanus and 'colour' for weaving and dyeing mats and baskets, that she was inspired to work on her first picture book *Collecting Colour*, which won the 2009 Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Picture Book Of The Year. Her subsequent picture books include *Because you are with me*, *The Red Bridge* (2012 CBCA Notable book), *Same, but little bit diff'rent*, *This Way Up*, and *Puddles Are For Jumping*. Between 2010 and 2012 Kylie spent three years in Hanoi, Vietnam, with her partner and two daughters. Kylie and her family now live in Melbourne.

SYNOPSIS Nannie lives on a farm with rolling hills, a muddy creek, and lots of animals. Nannie loves everything about her farm. But what she loves most is when her family comes to stay. And her family love visiting her on the farm. There is so much to see and do on Nannie's farm – picking fruit, herding the cows, shooing the sheep, walking across the rolling hills, and best of all, spending time with Nannie.

WRITING / ILLUSTRATING STYLE

Kylie is the author, and the illustrator, of *Nannie Loves*. She has used paper collage, gouache and pencil for the illustrations in the book, and created a delightful, warm story set around the themes of family and life on a farm. The tenderness that Kylie captures in the words and pictures is drawn from personal experience. She says,

'Nannie Loves is based on my children's paternal grandmother. As a family we have spent as many weekends as possible at her farm. The kids have always loved doing the farm chores and enjoyed their time pottering around with their 'Nannie'. Personally, I have been inspired by Heather's strength... Her ability to manage the property solo is nothing short of miraculous. It is her warm, pragmatic character that I was hoping to capture in the illustrations. Working on this book was special in that it was very close to home. It is a representation of a place and people I love.'

The book is loosely structured around a Sunday visit to Nannie's farm. The story begins with a simple sentence - *Nannie lives on a farm* - and a picture of a child posting a letter. The story is then broken up into small stanzas or 'chapters'. Three double-page spreads with text are followed by a double-page illustration, with no text, rounding off that part of the story and leading into the next chapter. The chapters include,

- Arriving and greeting Nannie – showing the setting, and introducing Nannie, the narrator, and other characters
- Helping with the farm animals
- Doing jobs in the garden and around the farm

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- Sharing Nannie's home-cooked Sunday lunch
- Rounding off with a last walk with Nannie around the farm

Kylie loves writing *and* illustrating her books because of the creative control this allows her. She says she takes time in the studio,

'... pushing visual ideas around and teasing out stories and characters not immediately evident in the written text (even when the text is written by me). Finding an underlying story is the most rewarding part of the process - seeing it bubble to the surface and drawing all the threads of the story together visually is what makes all the hours worthwhile.'

After much playing around with *Nannie Loves* in the studio Kylie decided to use gouache, pencil, and paper for the illustrations.

'The desire, for me, was to capture the warmth of the story. I hope the textured paper, loose pencil lines and washes of gouache come together to create a sense of relaxed warmth.'

Kylie says that seeing through a seed of an idea to the very end of the book-making process is a little like being the director of a film or play, choosing your characters, their costumes, the mood, and writing the script. In *Nannie Loves* the words and the pictures combine to portray mood, drama, action, thoughts and emotions. In the Sunday lunch page, Kylie's text perfectly captures Nannie's mood, and the picture, with simple pencil line strokes for the mouth and eyes, and just the right tilt of head in hand evokes the utter pleasure she feels being surrounded by her family.

**The table is set, the cutlery
shines and every seat is filled,
just the way she likes it.**



When Nannie and her grandchild call to the hungry chooks, a simple black, paper cut-out silhouette, shows just the right way to stand, and evokes just the right sound (*'choo-oo-ook-chook-chook'!*) The cut-out chooks with their spiky colour pencil feathers come running – fast!

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Nannie calls to her hungry chooks.
They peck at the ground all day,
run to her when she feeds them
and lay yummy eggs.



The colours Kylie has used - bright and muted greens, and a range of earth colours for the landscape, bold colours for clothing, hens' combs, fruit and rooves - were influenced by the North/East Victorian farm landscape she was trying to capture.

The story has a repetitive poetic structure, simple yet evocative. Each page begins with a simple sentence that tells the reader something about what Nannie does: *Nannie collects the mail*; and ends with a sentence that tells something about how she feels: *Nannie loves to get mail*. In between are descriptive lines about what is happening: *She walks up the rocky driveway and peers into the box, hoping for a letter*.

DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

- This story with its repetitive text and expressive illustrations is a great book for adults and children to look at and read together.
- Before reading the story with a large group of children, spend time reading with individuals and small groups. This provides opportunities for children to share their own responses to the story, and for educators to draw attention to how the words and the pictures work together to tell the story. 'Look at Nannie. Is she happy? How can you tell?' 'Those chooks are running fast! Look, their feet are off the ground, they're running so fast'. Why are they running so fast?
- Every page of *Nannie Loves* invites discussion. But don't let talking get in the way of the enjoyment of the story. Discussions should be relaxed and natural, and take place over time. They can be a simple and friendly way of drawing the children's attention to specific elements of how a picture storybook works.



Nannie pats her bouncy dog. Nannie knows her family are coming to visit because she got a letter (turn back to the pages that show the child posting the letter, and Nannie collecting it).

The words on this page tell us about Nannie's dog. The picture expands the meaning. Why is the dog being bouncy at this moment? Who is coming in the car? Why does Nannie have to hold the dog?

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- Invite the children to read along with you. Once they understand the pattern - *Nannie likes...*, *Nannie collects...*, etc. and *Nannie loves...*, you can pause so that they can join in.
- Don't forget some children just want to get on with the story. Look for the right balance between allowing children to respond spontaneously, and holding on to the story as a whole.
- Look at the double-pages that don't have any text. Talk with the children about how these pages propel the story forward and create a transition from one experience to the next. Look at the page just before everyone stops for lunch. The tractor is parked. In the foreground children and the dog are playing with Grandpa, In the background and table is being set and Nannie is bringing out the lunch. This is the last page without text, and the last five pages wind down to a warm and friendly ending.
- There are action verbs and descriptive words on every page of this book. Talk about how the use of simple words and phrases adds to the meaning of the story – *The farm has rolling hills, a muddy creek and lots of paddocks – green in winter, brown in summer*. Think about how the meaning of this descriptive sentence is heightened by the last sentence on each page which starts – *Nannie loves...*
- Then, think about how the pictures add yet another layer of meaning, For example, on the 'herding' page, look at how the excitement and joy of Nannie, the child and the dog, contrasts with the stillness and benign expression of the cows. Think about the visual techniques Kylie has used to capture meaning and emotion
- Use the palette of colours that Kylie Dunstan uses for the setting, and paint your own background pictures
- Tell and write your own stories and illustrate them with paper collage, gouache and pencil drawings.
- Have a movement group to act out some of the scenes in the story: Be a bouncy dog, a wild and woolly sheep grazing, a herd of cattle wandering and lazing. Drive a tractor, hug each other, say 'I love you'
- Talk about what you do with your Nannies and Grandads, or Aunties and Uncles, or friends you visit
- Draw or paint pictures of yourself with your Nannie, Pop, Auntie, Uncle, or someone else you love to be with
- Visit Kylie Dunstan at <http://kyliedunstan.com>
- Enjoy this lovely book!

'Illustrating is always the most challenging (and time hungry) aspect of creating a picture book. There is no rushing an illustration project for me. It seems to take the time it needs to take. The writing is sporadic. Ideas come when they come and either stay with me and eventually become a story or float away'. Kylie Dunstan

