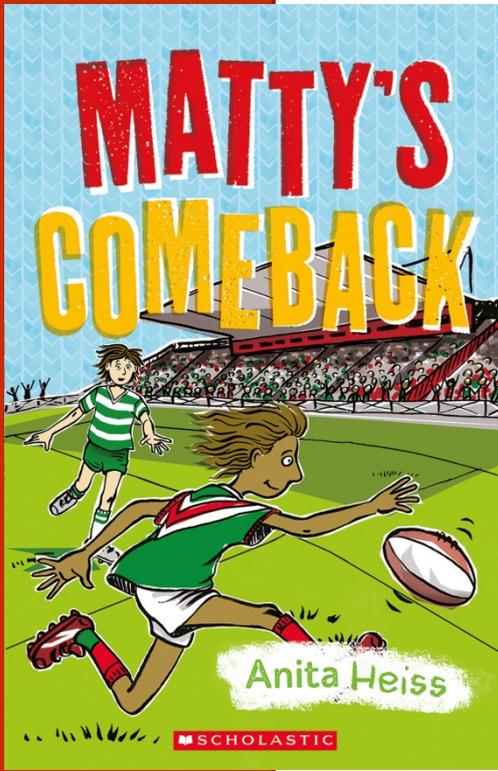


MATTY'S COMEBACK

Anita Heiss



Matty just loves rugby. He is the South Sydney Rabbitohs' No. 1 fan, as well as the star scorer in his own local team. His family share his passion for the game, except for Nita, who can't quite understand all the fuss and has her own opinions of the sport among other things.

Matty's deadly performance through the season gets his team to the finals. But when Matty has an accident, it doesn't look like he'll be able to play for team. When Nita steps up as a caring sister, Matty finds inspiration to help his team in another way.

Matty's Comeback is a story about family, friends, football, Aboriginal identity and dreams.

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TEACHER NOTES

- What are some of the signs of sports fever used in the novel?
- Why do you think that sports have their own language, symbols, fan gear and rituals?
- What are the benefits a fan takes away from supporting a team?
- Identify some of the positive and negative behaviours crowds display at sports matches?
- Do you think the novel accurately reflects Australia's football culture? Why do you think some people get swept up with football fever and others dismiss it, like Nita does?
- Why do you think Nita says, 'People just copy other people's culture all the time, but do they even know what it means?'
- Do you think it's important to know the meaning behind a cultural custom/object before copying it?
- What do you think makes a player a hero or a legend, like Greg Inglis of Mario Fenech? Why do you think sportspeople are often role models for youth?

SCHOLASTIC

Teacher notes written
by Chrysoula Aiello

- What do Nita's observations and opinions tell us about her character? Do you agree or disagree with any of her views? Why?
- How are Matty and Nita different? What lessons do both Matty and Nita learn about both themselves and each other by the end of the book?
- What do you think the Williams family's discussion about the origin of the Rabbitohs' name tells us about the nature of history and true stories? Do you think that there can only ever be one story to explain something?
- How does Matty's Comeback present and question traditional male and female roles? Find examples.
- Matty puts money away for a rainy day. Ask students what other popular phrases and proverbs they know. Have students pick a proverb, discover its origins and explain its meaning. Create a book collecting all the chosen proverbs.
- Divide the class into three groups. Have each group research the history and symbolism of one of the following flags: Aboriginal, Australian, Torres Strait Islander. Have each group present their findings to the rest of the class.
- Why do you think Mum wants nothing to do with the Bicentenary? Discuss Australian colonisation and contemporary views about the traditional custodians of Australia. Consider how parts of our everyday culture are perceived differently by Aboriginal people (eg. Australia Day referred to Survival Day or Aboriginal Sovereignty Day).