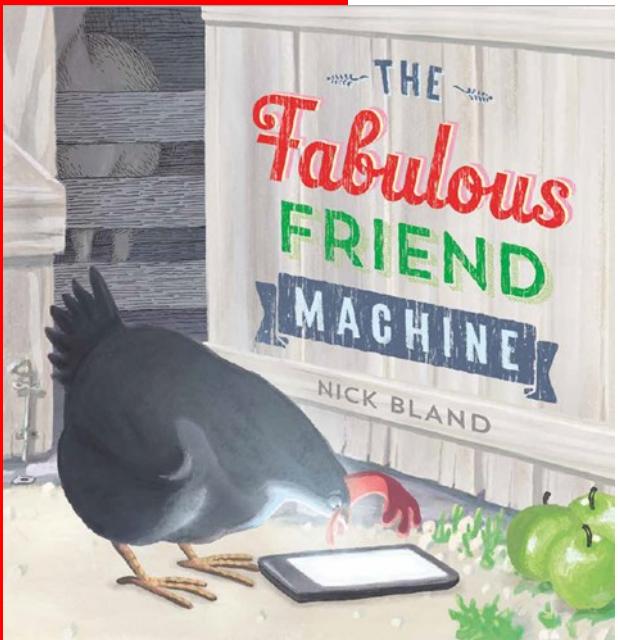


THE FABULOUS FRIEND MACHINE

NICK BLAND



Popcorn is, quite simply, the FRIENDLIEST chicken at Fiddlesticks Farm! Every morning, she says 'Hello!' to everyone on the farm. She is always ready for a friendly chat over tea, she entertains the cows at milking time and *ready* to help out her friends whenever they need. She's so friendly, in fact, that she's won the prize for being the friendliest chicken at the Farmyard Fair — three years in a row! So when she finds a Fabulous Friend Machine in the barn, Popcorn sets about making some brand new friends. But behind the screen of the Fabulous Friend Machine, maybe her new friends are not so friendly after all . . .

A cautionary tale from the globally best-selling creator of the Very Cranky Bear series.

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Study notes written by
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About the author: Nick Bland is one of Australia's best-selling author-illustrators. In 2012, **The Runaway Hug**, illustrated by Freya Blackwood, was awarded the CBCA Book of the Year (Early Childhood). The following year, 2013, saw **The Very Hungry Bear** awarded Best Children's Book by the ABIA and **The Very Cranky Bear** won best picture book in the Koala Awards. **King Pig** was shortlisted for Picture Book of the Year by the CBCA in 2014. Nick lives in the Northern Territory.



SCHOLASTIC

STUDY NOTES

- Look at the opening spread of the book. Popcorn has a similar house to the other chickens on Fiddlesticks Farm, but how has Nick Bland made her home stand out amongst the others? Without reading the text, how can you immediately tell that Popcorn is very friendly?
- What does it take to be kind, friendly and helpful? In pairs, write a short list of simple things you can do every day to be more kind, friendly and helpful. Over the course of a month, make a note of when your partner does any of these things (you could even keep a tally!). Also note how other people respond to your partner's behaviour. At the end of the month, compare your observations with your partner. What have you learned about being friendly to other people? How might positive behaviour like kindness and helpfulness have a flow-on effect (eg you might be kind to someone, who is then friendly to someone else and so on and so forth)? Can you implement what you have learned in your everyday life?
- Do you have a mobile phone, or does anyone in your family own one? Are mobile phones really 'fabulous friend machines'? How are they useful things to have? What are some of the negative effects of having a mobile phone? Divide the class into two teams to debate the statement: 'Mobile phones are disconnecting us from the people in our lives'. Each team should take care to list both the pros and cons of mobile phones when formulating their argument.



- Turn to the spread where Popcorn begins to receive messages from the Fabulous Friend Machine. Why do you think each 'Hello!' is written in a different font? Imagine that each 'Hello!' ended with a full-stop, rather than an exclamation mark. How would it change the meaning of the word? Why?
- Compare each spread after Popcorn finds the Fabulous Friend Machine to its reciprocating one before she has it. How do the illustrations show her change in demeanour and how her friends feel about it?
- Do you think Popcorn means to ignore her old friends? How can the excitement of making new friends sometimes distract us from our old friends? What can we do to make everyone feel included?
- Write a letter from Popcorn to her new friends, explaining why she may have ignored them, apologising for hurting their feelings and thanking them for their rescue.
- Popcorn's fabulous new friends aren't fabulous at all — they are wolves! As a class, discuss cyber safety. We all use the internet, mobile phones and social media. How can we be safe while we do so? What is the difference between a friend with whom you keep contact using your phone and on social media and someone who you don't know except online? Is the latter really someone you can consider a friend, or are they acquaintances? What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?



- It's not just cyber safety we should think about when using our mobile phones! While Popcorn is busy using her Fabulous Friend Machine, she almost gets run over by a tractor! This is a common problem: when people are so engrossed in their phones, they don't pay attention to their surroundings. Talk as a class about how we can be physically safe while using our mobile phones.
- Nick Bland used acrylic paint and pens to create the artwork in **The Fabulous Friend Machine**. Examine his artwork, particularly where he has illustrated grass and hay (you will find this on most pages). How has he used brushstrokes to create the grassy texture? Using acrylic paints, recreate this technique in your own paintings that include things with a grassy texture.
- Popcorn puts on a puppet show for her friends on the last page of the story. Act out your own puppet show for parents and family members! You can use socks or paper cut-out characters on paddlepop sticks and craft materials to create your characters and stage setting for your show.
- Popcorn wins the award for friendliest chicken at the Farmyard Fair! Make your own award for the friendliest person in the class and award it to a different friendly student every week!

