

Silver Linings



AUTHOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary

SYNOPSIS

Nettie Sweeney has a dad, three big sisters, a farm full of cows and a cat called Mittens. But it's not enough. She longs for a mother. One with a gentle touch and sparkles in her eyes. Instead, she has Aunty Edith with slappy hands, a sharp tongue and the disturbing belief that peas are proper food.

When Dad marries Alice, all Nettie's dreams come true. The Sweeney home overflows with laughter, love and, in time, a baby brother. Billy. The light of Nettie's life.

Then tragedy strikes. The Sweeney family crumbles. Nettie tries to make things right, but has she made everything so much worse?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katrina Nannestad is a multi-award-winning Australian author. Her books include the CBCA-shortlisted *We Are Wolves*, *The Girl Who Brought Mischief*, the Travelling Bookshop series, the Girl, the Dog and the Writer series, the Olive of Groves series, the Red Dirt Diaries series, the Lottie Perkins series, and the historical novels *Rabbit*, *Soldier*, *Angel*, *Thief* and *Waiting for the Storks*.

Katrina grew up in country New South Wales in a neighbourhood stuffed full of happy children. Her adult years have been spent raising boys, teaching, daydreaming and pursuing her love of stories. Katrina celebrates family, friendship and belonging in her writing. She also loves creating stories that bring joy or hope to other people's lives.

Katrina now lives on a hillside in central Victoria with her husband, a silly whippet called Olive and a mob of kangaroos.

Find out more about Katrina at www.katrinanannestad.com.

STUDY NOTES

- *Silver Linings* begins with a death, as well as discussion about birth and death. Why do you think the author, Katrina Nannestad, has begun the novel with two such confronting topics?
 - How does this establish the themes of the novel?
 - How is Nettie's naming of the piglet echoed later on?
- What other, less obvious, themes are established in the opening couple of chapters? Provide examples from these

chapters, and from later in the novel to support your answer.

- Nettie is very confused about the story that Aunt Edith has told her about storks bringing babies. Why do you think Aunt Edith tells this story to Nettie? Why do adults sometimes lie to children about where babies come from?
 - Nettie has a lot of questions about the story of the storks, what does this suggest about how believable the story is? In telling Nettie this story, Edith fails to explain how the death of Nettie's mother is linked to Nettie's birth. What are the consequences of Nettie's lack of understanding further into the novel?
- ““But having babies is a private matter, Lynette. It's not the sort of thing we talk about with others. Understand?”” (p 6) Is this true, both within the story of *Silver Linings* and in the real world?
 - What are the consequences of treating birth as a 'private matter' in *Silver Linings*?
- Aunt Edith has a lot of rules, particularly when it comes to the behaviour of girls. Why do you think she is so insistent on passing these rules on to her nieces? Many of these rules seem silly, if not downright wrong, today. Does Edith insist on Nettie and her sisters following these rules with good or bad intentions? How do you know?
 - Sometimes Nettie questions these rules, if only to herself, and her questions offer some insight into how ridiculous they are. Find two examples of this in the novel and explain how and why Katrina Nannestad has included these insights, and the effect of having such a young child make these points.
- Katrina Nannestad is very effective at establishing a time and place for her novels, without explicitly telling us. Where and when is *Silver Linings* set?
 - Find three quotes which helped you to reach that conclusion. Select quotes that convey different aspects of the world of the novel, eg. dialogue, food, clothes, home. For each quote, identify and explain the techniques used to convey time and place.