

Losing the Plot

AUTHOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

To save the football team, Basil Beedon is roped into listening to reluctant reader and star footballer Terry Clegg read fairytales out loud. Every. Single. Saturday. But when Terry brings over a battered copy of *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, and haltingly begins reading Hansel and Gretel, the pair find themselves transported inside the book, having fallen through a plot hole.

They meet Gretel, who can't stop crying, but only because she 'is written that way' and endeavour to help find Hansel (who is stuck in a bottle). The bureaucratic world is run by FANCY (the Fairytale Alliance Network of Character Unions), where Gretel is part of the subset SUPER FANCY (Stereotypical Unempowered Princesses and Extraneous Royalty). She and the boys are accused of breaching SLIP and SLIDE (Safety Laws of Interworld Portals/ Secrecy Laws of Interworld Demystification Experiences). Using a combination of Basil's bookishness and Terry's sporting skills, the boys must outwit their opponents, as Basil realises he has always underestimated princesses, and Terry realises that books are growing on him!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Annaleise Byrd grew up on a farm in Queensland, ignoring most farm-related pursuits in favour of reading books. She then spent nine years in England and Canada, neglecting a variety of jobs in favour of reading books. Eventually, she realised the best way to get away with this was to become an author. Annaleise now lives in Brisbane with her husband, two young sons and rescue greyhound, and she is particularly fond of lamingtons.

You can find her online at www.annaleisebyrd.com.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Before reading, view the cover and title of the book and identify the following:
 - The title of the book
 - The author/illustrator
 - The publisher
 - The blurb.
- Based on the title, what do you think this story is about? Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? Did your ideas change after seeing the cover? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answer after reading

the story to see if your predictions were correct.

- Write your own story using the title of the book.
- Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? If you were asked to choose an alternative title for the book, what would it be? Remember, a good title should capture the audience's attention and give them some idea of what the book is about.
- Look at the front cover, read the blurb on the back to gather clues and use any prior knowledge you may have to predict some events that might happen in this story.

AFTER READING

- Who do you think the audience for this book is? Why?
- Is the book an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? How can you tell?
- Literary techniques allow a writer to convey a deeper meaning in their text. What techniques can you find in this story? eg. metaphor, imagery, alliteration, personification.
 - Notice the descriptive words and language used throughout the text. List some of the descriptive words and phrases. How do they make you feel? Why do you think the author used those words in the book?
- What deeper meaning can you draw from the text?
- There are many acronyms used throughout this text. List the acronyms and what they stand for. Then create your own acronym for something from the book.
- What did you know about fairytales before reading this story? What do you know now?
 - Make a list of the different fairytales featured or referred to in *Losing the Plot*. Tally up how many students were already familiar with each one. Were there any stories no-one had ever heard of? Discuss why this might be.
- Modern retellings of fairytales often soften the original endings to make them less violent. What were the original endings of *Rumpelstiltskin* and *Hansel and Gretel*, as mentioned in *Losing the Plot*? Discuss how a modern retelling might end these stories. Have a go at writing a new ending for a fairytale.