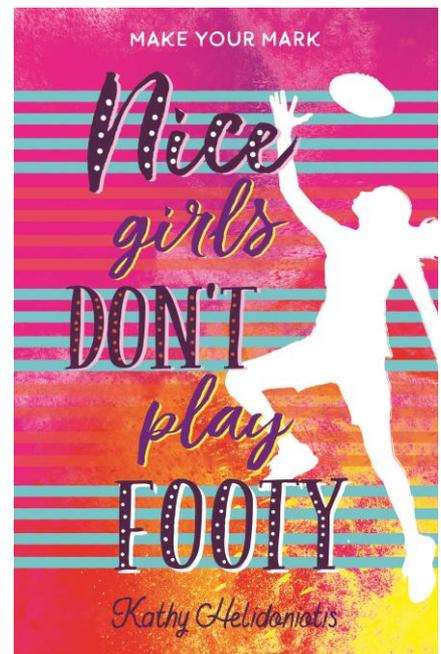


Nice Girls Don't Play Footy

Author

Kathy Helidoniotis



Synopsis

Devi is on her way to become Bollywood's first ever Australian half-Indian, sort of Kiwi, quarter Scottish, Vaisnavi vegan superstar. More than anything she wants to win the upcoming BollyOz competition for her mum. But when she starts AFL lessons at school and discovers she has a natural talent, she feels something she hasn't felt in a long time – a fire in her belly! But there is a problem: her grandmother thinks that 'nice girls don't play footy' and her mum doesn't want anything to get in the way of her winning BollyOz. Her mum's studio is dependent on it. With the help of her best friend Josie, Devi comes up with a plan so she can play footy, and follow her dreams. Along the way she learns a valuable lesson about telling the truth and about how family can surprise you ... in good ways.

About the Author

Kathy Helidoniotis grew up in Sydney and always wanted to be an author. She has published numerous books for children including *The Horse Mad* series, *Nice Girls Don't Play Footy* is her first book published by Omnibus Books. Kathy now divides her time between writing, reading and teaching. She is an avid GWS fan.

Themes

Family; relationships; friendship; loyalty; telling the truth; identity; passion; self-discovery; self-honesty; sport; growing up; high school.

Writing Style

Written in the first person from the point of view of Devi, Helidoniotis' language choices are modern and colloquial. Devi is an enthusiastic and delightful character, who just wants to do the right thing. The narrative voice is a reflection of Devi and how she views the world. By having Devi narrate the story directly, with dialogue interspersed with longer descriptions of events and Devi's inner thoughts and feelings, Helidoniotis is able to bring the challenges in Devi's world to life. By doing this the reader empathises with Devi's decisions, even when they disagree with them.

TEACHER NOTES

- 1) Before reading the book, as a class discuss the cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion are:
 - What can we tell from the cover of this book?
 - Who do you think this story is aimed at?
 - Who do you think the main character might be (age/gender etc) and why do you think this?
 - What do you think 'nice girls don't play footy' means?

- 2) After reading the first two chapters, as a class discuss what you have learned about the main character, their family and interests. In small groups, or as a class, make a basic 'character map' based on what you have learnt in the first chapter, leaving plenty of space to add more details later.
 - In the centre of a page write the name of the main character.
 - Around the edges of the page write the names of the other characters that have been introduced so far.
 - Draw lines connecting the different characters to each other and on each line write the nature of the relationship between the two e.g. 'friend', 'mother', or 'coach'.
 - Beneath each character's name write a list of dot-points describing such things as their age, gender, interest, and personality features. Think about whether they seem shy or outgoing, friendly or antagonistic, and how they relate to the protagonist.
 - Continue to add to your character map as you progress through the book.
 - Add new characters who play a role in Devi's life as you encounter them, and add further details about the characters you already have as you find out more about them from their actions and from Devi's descriptions of them.
 - Be sure to include information about how the different characters affect Devi, what her opinion of them is, and how important they are to her.

- 3) Individually, using the information that you have gathered and recorded on your character map in activity 2, write a descriptive analysis of one of the relationships that Devi has in her life. You can choose someone who is a friend or family member, or someone who Devi does not like at all. In your description of the relationship be sure to describe both the character you have chosen, as well as Devi, and focus your analysis on how and why they affect each other as they do. Include evidence from the text to support your statements, and include any personal hypotheses you have regarding why a character behaves in a particular way.

- 4) Do you agree or disagree with Aji's statements '*Sports are for boys*' and '*Nice girls don't play this football!*'? As a class, or in small groups, discuss whether or not you think these statements are true. Individually, write half a page arguing for or against this statement. As a class share your opinion pieces, and discuss the reasons why some people see girls playing sport as negative or positive. Why are some sports divided into males and females? Are there any sports where men and women compete together? What are the benefits and disadvantages of males and females competing together? You might want to organise a class debate addressing this.

- 5) Research and write a report on the genesis and history of Australian Rules. Compare the Indigenous game of Marn Grook, and Gaelic Football to modern AFL Research a player who has contributed to the game.
- 6) Being a Hare Krishna is an important part of Devi's identity. In small groups or in pairs, research what Hare Krishna believe and what their practices are. Write a brief 1 page report and present your findings to the class.
- 7) Hare Krishnas are vegetarians but Devi and her family are vegans. In pairs or in small groups research veganism. What is the difference between vegetarianism and veganism? Why are Hare Krishnas vegetarians? Write a list of the different reasons why might people choose to be a vegetarian or a vegan? Why do you think Devi and her family are vegans rather than vegetarians?
- 8) Create your own vegan recipe and write up your recipe. Share why your recipe is vegan and what vegan substitutes did you use?
- 9) As a class try making vegan cookies. Identify what ingredients are used instead to set the cookies.
- 10) Create a glossary of Indian terms you haven't heard of before, research their meanings.
- 11) Create a simple plot line of events. How has the author structured the novel? Some things to consider include:
 - How does the pace of introduction of different plot complications affect the tension levels in the story and help maintain reader interest?
 - Why do you think the author made the choices she did?
 - What might have been the impact if there were fewer plot-complications, or a lot more?
- 12) Throughout the book, Devi refers to herself as a dancer. Create a Venn diagram showing the skills of a dancer and the skills of an AFL player. In a paragraph justify why Devi's dancing skills make her a natural AFL player.
- 13) Find and watch videos of Indian dancing. Compare and contrast Indian dancing with the dancing styles that Devi learns at school. What are their similarities and differences?
- 14) Devi is introduced to different AFL terms throughout the book. Write an index page with definitions of the different terms she hears, research their meanings.
- 15) Write a least a half-page piece discussing whether you think Devi's decision not to ask her parents for permission was foolish or sensible. Include evidence from the text to support your argument.
- 16) Do you think Khushi's behaviour towards Devi is justified? From the antagonist's perspective, write an explanation justifying Khushi's behaviour. Now from your own perspective, what advice would you give to Khushi and Devi to improve their relationship?

- 17) In chapter 17, Josie and Devi get into a fight. Do you think Devi treaded Josie like a friend? As a class, discuss what it means to be a friend. Individually, write a letter to Devi giving her advice on how she can mend her friendship with Josie.
- 18) Now think about the fight from Josie's perspective. Write a letter to Devi explaining how Josie feels. Remember to use evidence from chapter 17.
- 19) Devi's identity is an important theme in the book. As a class, discuss what identity is and the different parts of Devi's identity. Using the results of your class' discussion, choose 4 different aspects of Devi's life that she identifies with and write a paragraph on each explain how it shapes Devi, remember to use examples from the text.
- 20) Write a book review about 'Nice Girls Don't Play Footy'. Remember to include:
- The book's title and author
 - A brief summary of the plot that doesn't give away too much
 - Comments on the book's strengths and weaknesses
 - The reviewer's personal response to the book with specific examples to support praise or criticism