

NZSO READER'S NOTES

Title: Hattie Helps Out
Author: Jane Godwin, Davina Bell, Illustrated by Freya Blackwood
Publisher: Allen & Unwin
Price: NZ\$27.99
ISBN: 9781743435434
Publication Date: March 2016
Audience: 3-5
Reader: Carolyn Walsh, Allen & Unwin

Synopsis:

It's dad's birthday and there's a party planned for tonight. There's a lot to do before the guests arrive and Hattie's mum is keen for her to have a sleep in the afternoon. But Hattie has other plans: after all, Mum needs help with getting the place cards drawn and a cake decorated, not to mention biscuits stuck together, flowers arranged and a whole house tidied up. So sure is Hattie that she is the perfect helper she decides to leave her mother sleeping after accidentally nodding off and sets about to do the chores herself... with hilarious consequences. The biscuits are literally stuck together, the berries are scattered across the cake *and* the bench, and the flowers end up in all sorts of *interesting* places.

Style:

Jane Godwin and Davina Bell's sweet tale of a tired mother and her enthusiastic daughter is told in simple past tense with extensive use of dialogue and a very satisfying narrative arc. The story is scaffolded by repetition, as Hattie follows—*literally*—the things her mother has listed earlier in the story, adding humour to the story as she takes pride in her own interpretation of what needs to be done.

Freya Blackwood's soft sketch-and-pastel drawings perfectly complement and extend the text, and add an extra level of warmth and humour to the story. Nowhere is this more evident than on the first page of the story where Hattie's mother tells her daughter that she will need to help get things ready for Dad's party and we see Hattie 'helpfully' putting a paper hat on her sleeping baby sister's head.

In the author's own words:

Jane Godwin: 'We [Davina, Freya and I] think there's a magic in Hattie that comes from the fun we have together. We spend most conversations laughing, we all love babies, find children fascinating, have a similar aesthetic and hold such a warm respect for each other.'

Davina Bell: 'This is a book that celebrates so many themes of childhood: creativity, naughtiness, sibling rivalry, birthday parties, family celebrations, overwrought mothers, 'helping' in a way that isn't entirely helpful! At its heart is a feisty, energetic, joyous, headstrong little girl, who embodies so many of the wonderful and difficult aspects of childhood.'

Author Background:

Jane Godwin is the author of many award-winning stories for young people, including her bestselling picture books with Anna Walker, *What Do You Wish For?*, *Starting School*, *Today We Have No Plans*, *All Through the Year* and *Little Cat and the Big Red Bus*. Jane has also collaborated with Andrew Joyner on the delightful picture books *How Big Is Too Small?* and *Bear Make Den*.

Davina Bell is a book editor and writer for young people. She is the author of the Alice books in the bestselling Our Australian Girl series of historical fiction for middle readers. Her first picture book, *The Underwater Fancy-dress Parade*, was published in March 2015, and she is currently writing a young-adult novel on the edge of a vineyard in the Margaret River region.

The daughter of a painter and an architect, Freya Blackwood began drawing at a young age. She has collaborated with many wonderful authors, including Libby Gleeson, Margaret Wild, Jan Ormerod, Roddy Doyle and Nick Bland. Freya won the prestigious Kate Greenaway Medal for *Harry and Hopper*, and her books have been honoured in the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards many times.

Suggestions for Classroom Discussion and Application:

- **Pre-reading activity**

Before opening *Hattie Helps Out* consider the title and cover design. Discuss what students think the story might be about and the clues in the picture that make them think that. Ask simple questions such as:

- Who is this story going to be about?
- Which girl on the cover do you think is Hattie?
- What sort of things might Hattie have to do to help out? (Hint: look at all the things around her)
- Is this going to be a happy or sad story?

- **Post-reading activity**

After reading the story ask the following simple comprehension questions:

- What big family celebration were Hattie and her mum preparing for?
 - Why doesn't Hattie like having a sleep anymore?
 - Why do you think Hattie's mum fell asleep instead of Hattie?
 - What were some of the helpful things that Hattie did while her mum was sleeping?
 - How did Hattie *arrange* the flowers?
 - Did Hattie do the right thing leaving her mum to sleep and doing all the chores herself?
- Ask students to come up with words that describe the sort of person they think Hattie is and things in the story that show she is like that.
 - Look at the double page spread of Hattie *arranging* the flowers. Name some of the locations she has put the flowers and try to count up how many flowers in total she is arranging.
 - Look at the double page spread of Hattie's family sitting around the dinner table. What things has Hattie put on the table that are different to the sort of things you might expect to see?
 - Look at the pictures Hattie has drawn for the place cards. Why do you think Great-Aunt Susan says, 'Good grief' when she sees her place card? What does the picture Hattie has drawn say about how she might feel about Great-Aunt Susan?
 - Ask students to re-enact some or all of the story in small groups.
 - Ask students to name some of the things they do at home to help their mums and dads and why they think their chores are helpful.