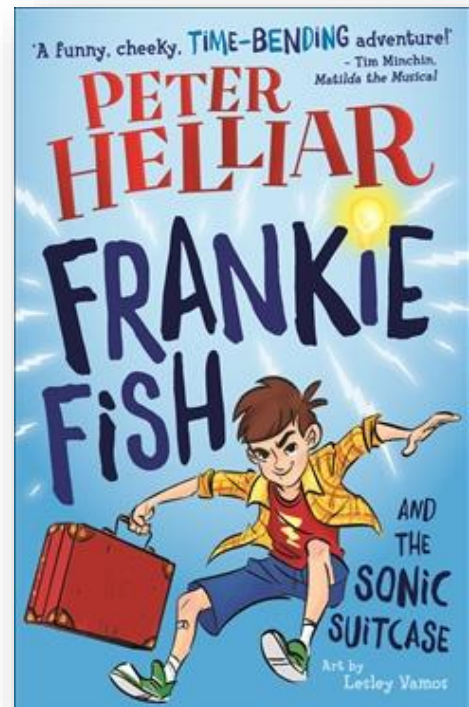


Frankie Fish and the Sonic Suitcase

By
Peter Helliar



Frankie Fish is excited. He's about to spend the school holidays with his best friend, Drew Bird, and the entire Bird family, at their beach house. Frankie won't have to spend time with his sister (a professional saint), or help in the family business, Fish Pest Control. But Frankie is a prankster and Drew is an even bigger prankster. So when they target the end-of-term assembly, pulling a stunt that humiliates Miss Merryweather, things don't go as planned and Frankie is sent to his grandparents' house as punishment. But instead of the 'old-people jail' that Frankie expects, he discovers some amazing things: a shed full of mysteries and a Sonic Suitcase that makes time travel possible. He also discovers that his knowledge of Doctor Who is invaluable and that he has much more in common with his cantankerous old grandad that he could have ever imagined. Together, Frankie and his grandad must return to Scotland, 1952, to save the family.

RECOMMENDED READING LEVEL: Mid to Upper Primary

TEACHER NOTES

BEFORE READING

- In groups, brainstorm a list of all the things a Sonic Suitcase might do. After you've finished, draw your own Sonic Suitcase. Label your suitcase, identifying all its powers/functions. Share your suitcase with the class.
- Study the title graphics. What do they reveal about Frankie's character?

THEMES

- A theme is a main idea that occurs in a piece of literature. Themes in literature are effective because readers can relate to them. They show what people have in common. What things do you have in common with Frankie Fish?
- Below are just some of the themes explored in Frankie Fish and the Sonic Suitcase:
 - Family
 - Friendship
 - Regret
 - Love
 - Ambition
 - Hope
 - History.
 - As a class, list three more themes explored in this book.
- In pairs, choose one theme. Find one event in the book that illustrates your theme. Draw a picture of this event. Note on your picture the page where this scene occurs. Choose an appropriate line from the book as a title for your picture.

CHARACTER

- Frankie Fish and the Sonic Suitcase is full of fantastic characters. The reader can imagine them easily because they are so vividly described. Choose your favourite character and fill out the profile below:
 - Name:
 - Age:
 - Nickname:
 - Physical description:
 - Positive qualities:
 - Negative qualities:
 - Things I have in common with this character:
 - Ways in which the character changes during the book:
- Peter Helliard is very good at describing his characters in short, sharp sentences: 'Frankie liked Nanna Fish okay because she loved kids, had sparkly blue eyes and made good pancakes.' (p 32)
 - Find your favourite description of a character and share this with the class.
 - Create three characters and describe each in a short, sharp sentence.

LITERARY TECHNIQUES

Humour

- There are lots of funny moments in Frankie Fish and the Sonic Suitcase. What part of the book made you laugh? Share this part with a friend.

- There are many literary devices that create humour—pun, surprise, exaggeration, slapstick, sarcasm. Can you find examples of these devices in the book? Make a list.

Similes

- What is a simile?
- Choose your favourite simile in *Frankie Fish and the Sonic Suitcase* and share it with the class.
- As a class, discuss what makes a successful simile. Why are the similes in this book so good?
- In pairs, make up your own original, surprising but accurate, similes.

Alliteration

- What is alliteration?
- Find three examples of alliteration in the book.
- Why might the author have used this literary technique?

Neologisms

- One of the wonderful things about Peter Helliard's writing is how playful it is with language. His novel demonstrates how standard Australian English continues to evolve. He uses words that have been in the language for centuries, while also drawing on words that have recently entered the language. Use a dictionary to write a definition of the term 'neologism'.
- Can you find some newly-coined words in the novel (eg snooze-fest, Facebook, Twitter)?
- In pairs, brainstorm a list of other neologisms.

- Choose three neologisms from your list. Using your general knowledge, write definitions for them. Share these words and definitions with the class.
- As a class, make a list of the reasons why language changes. Consider things such as technology, culture, gender or generational change.

STRUCTURE/FORMAT

- This book is high on suspense. How does the writer create this feeling? Look at:
 - The titles of chapters
 - The last sentence of chapters
 - The length of sentences
 - The detail included.
- How do the illustrations enhance the story? What extra information do they tell us about events or characters?
- Why have some words been printed in bold? Name some other books that do this. Do you like it? Why or why not?

WRITING ACTIVITIES

- *Frankie Fish and the Sonic Suitcase* is a story about a developing friendship between two unlikely allies — Frankie and his grandad. Write a short story about two very different people who discover that they have something in common.
- Choose an ordinary item, for example the suitcase, and give it extraordinary abilities/powers. Write a story about your item.
- Write a personal piece about a good friend.
- Write about a time when you showed courage. Or write about a time when you didn't.

- Write a story where you meet yourself twenty years in the future. What is the world like? What are you like?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- If you could time travel, would you? Why or why not?
- Technology has greatly improved our lives. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- When are pranks okay? Was the prank at assembly at the start of the book okay? Why or why not?
- Do adults sometimes misjudge young people? How and when?
- Do young people have skills and information that adults don't? Give some examples.