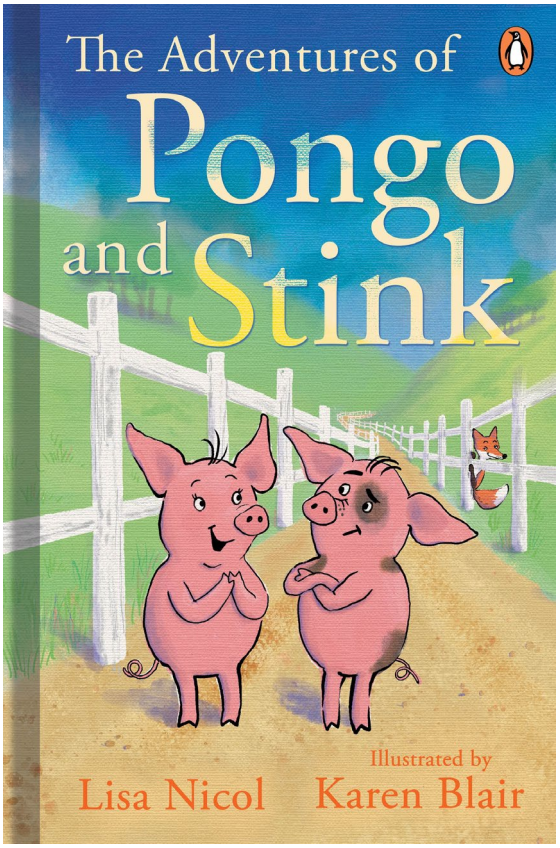
Teacher's Resources



PLOT SUMMARY

Pongo and Stink are FED UP with living in a pigsty. They want to live a life of luxury, all cosy in the farmhouse, getting loving pats from Farmer Nic while eating scones and jam on toast - just like their tormentor, Rollo the dog.

When Pongo has the daring idea of dressing up as pups, the two piggies set out to chase their dreams. But will the wily fox scupper their plans? Or will Pongo and Stink discover that to be yourself is the greatest, mud-splattered adventure of all?

An uproariously funny tale about the difficulties of trying to be something you're not, the power of true friendship and the perils of eating far too much cheese.

RECOMMENDED FOR
(ages 6-9; years 1 to 4)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

• Learning areas: English • General capabilities: Literacy; Critical and creative thinking; Personal and social capability; Ethical understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

• A fun adventure that is the epitome of silly, full of incident (and a few piggy farts) with great themes around friendship and supporting each others' differences and strengths, problem-solving and teamwork.

THEMES

• Belonging and identity; being yourself • Family and friends • Creative thinking

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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The Adventures of Pongo and Stink

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Nicol is an internationally published children's author and sometimes documentary-maker. Her feature Wide Open Sky won the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Sydney Film Festival. Her first novel, Dr Boogaloo and The Girl Who Lost Her Laughter was a CBCA Notable, Shenzhen Reading Month, Top Ten Children's Books of the Year 2021 and is currently being adapted for the screen. Her other works include the hugely popular Vincent and The Grandest Hotel on Earth and The What on Earth Institute of Wonder. Lisa lives in Sydney with two out of her three children and a dusty old dog who smells worse than an elephant fart.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Karen grew up in Perth, Western Australia. She loves to create picture books that celebrate the joys and adventures of childhood. She lives in Fremantle with her husband, two children and a little dog called Dobby, who keeps her company in the studio. Karen's award-winning books include Something Wonderful and Hello From Nowhere by Raewyn Caisley, With Nan by Tania Cox, Granny Grommet and Me by Dianne Wolfer, Me and You by Deborah Kelly, Train Party, Baby Beats and Baby Animal Farm.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

There would be no Pongo and Stink without Toffee and Clover. Their tight, ill-fitted Cavalier King Charles Spaniel suits and unmistakable piggy snores alerted me to their ruse but after they begged me not to give them up to their kind-hearted (but awfully gullible) owner Nic Doyle, I agreed and wrote a book about them instead . . .

Pre-reading Questions

1. Look at the cover. What do you think the story is about? Look carefully at how the different characters are drawn. Is there anything you see that tells you something about each character's personality? Can you figure out what each character's name is based on the title and how they are drawn?
2. The two main characters are pigs and, based on the cover illustration in which their faces and body language are very expressive, clearly have strong personalities. When animal characters are given human traits in this way, it is call 'anthropomorphism'.

   In many stories that are anthropomorphic, specific animals have common traits. For instance, lions are brave, bunnies are cute. Foxes are traditionally known for being wily and cunning. Is there anything about how the fox appears on the cover that makes you think it will fit this description?

   When you think of pig characters in stories you have read, are there any specific traits that come to mind that you think Pongo and Stink might have? Ideas might include eating lots and liking muddy puddles . . . Write down anything that the class says, and refer back to them after you have finished reading the story.
3. Before reading the blurb on the back cover, write your own blurb, based on the cover. Include where you think the story is set, the characters' names and something about them as well as the problems you think they are going to face in the story.
4. Now, read the blurb on the back. It includes information about the characters, the setting and the story. Did it make you want to read the story? How?
5. Each chapter in the story has a descriptive title. After reading the first chapter, can the class guess what might be about to happen in the next chapter from the title of chapter 2: Same Old, Same Old?

Writing Style

The Adventures of Pongo and Stink is a perfect example of narrative writing (fiction/novel) for use in the classroom – an enjoyable way to help readers understand the tools that fiction authors use to do more than just communicate information (in particular, to explore characters, conflict, and settings). Readers can learn how fiction authors use:

• Description, dialogue and described thoughts, and

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how the 'narrator' of the story might explain to the reader what is happening, using vivid details and various literary devices.
• Concepts such as voice, perspective, tense, tone and atmosphere/mood.

The Adventures of Pongo and Stink also includes illustrations that bring parts of the narrative to life in visual form. This is a great springboard into a discussion around visual storytelling, and how pictures work with and alongside a story's text.

Questions and activities

1. The author is the person who writes the book. The narrator is the voice that tells the story. Discuss the differences between the author and the narrator with your class.
2. There are three different types of narrative style:
   – first person narration is when a character in the book is telling the story.
   – second person narration is when the narrator speaks directly to the reader and/or characters
   – third person narration is when the narrator is someone not in the story. (You can identify this) by the use of pronouns like 'they', 'him', 'her' or 'it'.

   What narrative style is *The Adventures of Pongo and Stink* written in? Find examples of each from different books, and discuss with your class these different types of narration. What are the similarities and differences between them? And what are the pros and cons?
3. This book is written in the past tense. We know this due to the use of past tense descriptions such as 'was', 'had' and 'sat'. The opposite of past tense is present tense, which uses descriptions such as 'is', 'has' and 'sits'. Can you rewrite the text on the first page of the story into a present tense narrative?
4. *The Adventures of Pongo and Stink* is a humorous tale. Writing funny stories is one of the hardest things to do. You may have a great sense of humour, but capturing that in your writing takes skill and practice. After reading the first chapter of the book, can you list which bits were funny? Did you and your friends agree or disagree?

   Find your favourite funny bit in the first chapter. Can you identify what techniques the author used to make it funny? Examples might include: sarcasm, dialogue between the characters, funny actions such as farts. How were they used to set a humorous tone?
5. The narrator in this book tells the story in a 'conversational' style. The word 'conversational' is based on the word 'conversation', and the opposite of conversational is 'formal'. This is called the 'tone' of the writing.

   Underline the words in the following paragraph that are 'conversational'. Could you re-write the text in a more 'formal' way?

   Farmer Nic smiled and crouched down. 'Well, who do we have here?' he said gently. Farmer Nic was a big guy with big hands and the belly of a man who liked a scone. He reached out and gave Pongo and Stink a pat on the head. 'Hey there, little fellas,' he said, almost a whisper.

   Can you explain what makes the following dialogue 'formal'?

   'Okay. You ready?' whispered Pongo.
   Stink nodded.
   Pongo turned and face the kitchen door. 'Sierra. Zulu. Foxtrot. Yankee. I hereby declare Operation Scone underway.'

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Characters

Pongo and Stink have many similarities and many differences. For instance, similarities include: they are both pigs, they both like rolling in mud, they both love food. And differences between them include: - Pongo is a girl and Stink is boy. Pongo likes change and Stink likes things to stay the same. Pongo is trusting while Stink is suspicious of others.

Questions and activities

1. Pongo and Stink disagree quite a lot, but they are still firm friends. They both have the same adventure, but they experience it differently due to their perspective, or point of view. Based on the extract from chapter 2 below, what words are used

to describe Pongo, and what words are used to describe Stink? How do the descriptions and things they say show their point of view, or what they are thinking?

'I think I almost enjoyed getting held hostage. It was something different for once. Our lives are so dull. So drab!'
'Give me dull and drab any day,' said Stink.
'That's because you're an old stick-in-the-mud, Stink. But I'm a daring and adventurous pig, and the routine around here is killing me! Dawn: wake, take a pee, wander over to the trough, eat the same old slops. Root about in the same old mud then a one-way conversation with Denis and the next thing you know it's time for my midday nap with you again. Then wake up, rinse and repeat!'
'Oh, sorry to be such a bore!' said Stink.
'Apology accepted,' said Pongo. 'Honestly, there must be more to life than this!'
Stink pulled his snout out of the trough. 'Pongo. You're looking at things all wrong.'
'Is that right?' said Pongo. 'How so?'
'Well, you have to admit, Farmer Nic takes very good care of us. We're well fed. We never go hungry. Every week we get a few pitchforks of fresh hay for the barn. It's a bit draughty, granted, but it's a roof over our heads and it keeps us dry. Plus, right over there we have our very own lovely, scrummy mud to rummage about in. We never know what we might find. We might find a tuber! Or an earthworm!'
Pongo rolled her eyes. 'Oh, a root vegetable or an earthworm! Dare to dream big, why don't you?!'
Stink felt a pang of embarrassment. Even a little hurt. What? Everyone loves a worm, don't they? Worms are scrumptious!
'Is that really your idea of the good life?' Pongo carried on.
'Well, I don't see what's wrong with it,' replied Stink.
(Pages 9-10)

After reading the full story, would you use these same words to describe the two pigs? Why?

2. In many stories, there is a main character and a sidekick – or companion. For instance, Batman is a main character, and Robin is his sidekick. Would you say that Pongo is the main character and Stink is his sidekick? Or are they more of an equal duo – like Hansel and Gretel. Discuss the reasons for your answers.

Friendship

Pongo doesn't like her lot in life, and believes she is destined for greater things. Stink supports his friend, but likes his home comforts and worries about new things. Even though the two characters are opposites in many ways, they work well together, too – just like in many friendships.

Questions and activities

1. Would you say that Pongo and Stink belong together? Consider how they support each other and do things together even when they disagree with each other.

2. What are the qualities that you look for in a friend? Some examples might be loyalty, is fun or funny, likes the same things as you. Pretend you are Pongo or Stink and write a list of friendship qualities about the other pig.

3. Sometimes, it is hard to tell when someone is being a friend or not. Are there times in the story that you think Pongo and Stink cross over a line into being mean instead of a friend to each other, or to others such Farmer Nic? Use the descriptions below to help you think of times in the story when they crossed a line from being a good friend.

Playful, funny words	vs	Mean, hurtful words
Being proud	vs	Bragging
Being BFFs	vs	Excluding others
Having fun	vs	Being annoying

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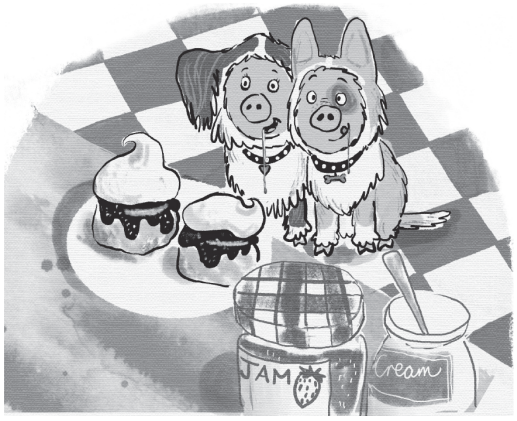
Food

The two pigs love food. A lot! And they are fed a healthy diet by Farmer Nic when they are in their stye. But when they go on their dog-suited adventure, they eat a lot of food that is not good for them. A balanced diet is important to keep our bodies healthy.

Questions and activities

1. List all the foods that Pongo and Stink eat in the story. Can you list them in two columns – one column of healthy foods and another column of foods that should only be eaten every and now and then?
2. Pongo and Stink love scones! Pongo says on page 71, *'Scones... Every day, I say a little prayer that one lands in my trough!'* What is your favourite treat food? Draw a picture of your favourite food, and who you like to share it with!



3. There are five main food groups:
   - vegetables and beans (also called legumes)
   - fruit
   - dairy
   - meat
   - cereal and grains

   As a class, list the foods that Pongo and Stink eat throughout the story. Then, can you put them in the correct food group? Which is the biggest food group that Pongo and Stink ate from in this story?

KEY QUOTES

1. *'Where would the world be without daring dreamers like you, Pongo?'*
   Pongo nuzzled in close. 'And where would the world be without cautious stick-in-the-muds like you, Stink?' (Page 195)

   Consider how the above quote describes each of the two pigs, as well as the relationship between them.
2. *'It's a dog's world, all right,' declared Pongo.* (Page 15)
3. *'We pigs are treated like second-class citizens on the farm. And I've had enough! So, I've decided to get myself a dog suit in town and live the luxurious life of a dog!'* (Page 26)
4. *'Operation Dog might be in a spot of trouble.'* (Page 116.)
5. *'It's not over until the fat pig sings.'* (Page 138)

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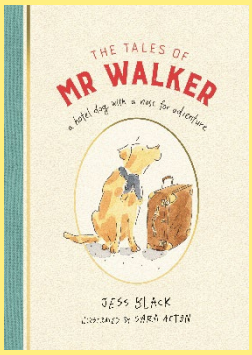
Further reading from Penguin Random House



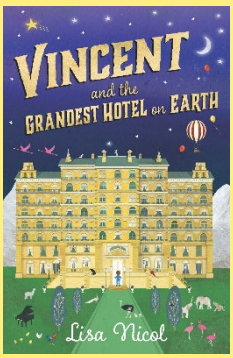
The Tales of Mr Walker
by Jess Black, Sara Acton

On a brilliant autumn's day, Mr Walker arrives at the grandest hotel in town. While things get off to a wobbly start, this charming labrador is determined to put his best paw forward. And it's just as well because the most unexpected adventures await . . .

The Tales of Mr Walker contains four delightful stories inspired by the real-life Mr Walker, a Guide Dog Ambassador who now used to call Park Hyatt Melbourne home.

Royalties from sales of this book go to Guide Dogs Australia..

Teachers' Resources available.



Vincent and the Grandest Hotel on Earth
by Lisa Nichol

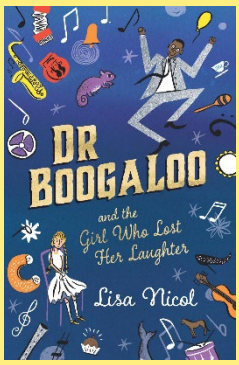
Perched high on the snowy slopes of the Mabombo Ranges lies The Grandest Hotel on Earth. It's wilder than the African savanna, more fantastical than Disneyland and more magical than Shangri-la.

So when ordinary eleven-year-old Vincent meets the hotel's young Florence he sets off on a path leading into his most wondrous dreams.

But of course, dreams have a funny way of taking strange and surprising turns and, before long, Vincent is torn between right and wrong, friendship and family and the most enticing of desires – to see into the future . . .

Warning: this book includes insanely cute pocket dogs, travelling by llama or jet pack, chocolate fountains and shoes that play Bach.

Teachers' Resources available.



Dr Boogaloo and The Girl Who Lost Her Laughter
by Lisa Nichol

Dr Boogaloo was no ordinary doctor. Not at all like the one you might visit if you had a sore tummy. No, Dr Boogaloo was a very different type of doctor. He treated folks who suffered from rather unusual complaints. And how did he treat them? Why, with the most powerful medicine known to mankind . . . Music!

Blue was no ordinary girl. For starters, her name was Blue. But what was truly extraordinary about Blue was the fact that she hadn't laughed for 712 days. Not a hee hee, a ho ho or even a tiny tee hee.

According to Dr Boogaloo, music can cure anything. (Of course, you need the right dose of the right music. No point listening to a jive if you're in need of some boogie-woogie, and you can't just substitute a toot for a blow!) But no laughter was definitely a case for alarm.

Can Dr Boogaloo compose a cure before Blue loses her laughter forever?

Teachers' Resources available.

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Order form

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The Adventures of Pongo and Stink	Lisa Nicol, Karen Blair	9781761355691		$19.99		
Vincent and the Grandest Hotel on Earth	Lisa Nichol	9781760890681		$16.99		
Dr Boogaloo and The Girl Who Lost Her Laughter	Lisa Nichol	9781760892364		$14.99		
The Tales of Mr Walker	Jess Black, Sara Acton	9780143793076		$24.99		
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