

The Pony Question

Author:
Jackie Merchant

Publisher:
Walker Books Australia
ISBN: 9781760651640

Synopsis

Essie doesn't believe in signs or wishing on stars. She likes facts, and the fact is, she's left her love of horses firmly in the past. She doesn't want a new horse and she certainly doesn't need one, not with the price she'd have to pay. That's a line she just won't cross. But the universe has other ideas. Essie may not need a pony, but there's a pony that needs her. But taking on a pony without a past brings a lot of unanswered questions, and in searching for answers Essie is going to have to decide if to go forward, she is able to forgive the past.

Author Bio

Jackie Merchant has worked as a designer, art director and copywriter.

She spent the majority of her childhood on the outskirts of Sydney, where, when she was 10, her parents bought an old run-down riding school.

Even with no ponies at the time it was a dream come true for a girl with an imagination fuelled by ponies and horses.

As an adult Jackie is lucky enough to share her life with 3 beautiful horses (Moxie, Percy and Squiggles) and several other animals.

She currently lives in Tasmania. The Pony Question is her second novel.



Jackie's first book

Curriculum Links

English Year 5

ACELT1609 Present a point of view about particular literary texts using appropriate metalanguage, and reflecting on the viewpoints of others

ACELT1610 Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses

Health Year 5 and 6

ACPS055 Practise skills to establish and manage relationships - assessing the impact of different relationships on personal health and wellbeing

ACPPS056 Examine the influence of emotional responses on behaviour and relationships

The Arts - Year 5/6 - Music

ACAMUR091 Explain how the elements of music communicate meaning by comparing music from different social, cultural and historical contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music.

Themes

Exploring the text

In the first two pages, the author describes the sounds around Essie as she wakes up. Take notice, next time you wake up, and make notes on the sounds you hear in your house when you wake up. Is your household quite in the mornings, or loud?

Essie and her Mum play the three for one word game, it started a distraction on a long drive, and now they do it all of the time. Using three words that mean the same thing.

- Leaving, deserting, abandoning
- Adventure, expedition, exploration

Start a word list in the classroom, it can be more than 3 words, and students can add to it over the school year. It will become your class thesaurus.

We learn a bit more about why Essie and her Mum are living in the country, and why Essie's Dad is not in the picture. What can we learn about Essie's relationship with her Dad from the stories she tells? Essie's Dad thinks winning is everything. How important is winning? Is enjoying what you do, and doing your best enough?

As Essie and Francesca leave home in the early hours of the morning, Essie describes their cul-de-sac. Based on her description of this, draw a map of the cul-de-sac and where everyone fits in, based on what you read:

- Essie and Francesca's house
- The Loves house/barn/orchard
- Aiden's family's house.



Essie's Mum accidentally buys a horse, a very neglected horse.

Essie thinks it's a Palamino, a Palomino is a particular breed of horse.

Ask the class if they know anything about horses? Did they know there were different breeds?

As a class, make a list of any other horse breeds you know and/or research other breeds.

Assign one breed to each student and ask them to answer the following questions about it:

- What colour/pattern can they be?
- What part of the world did they come from?
- What are they known for? (such as, do they perform particular jobs, compete, run wild, etc.)
- Are there any famous horses of this breed?

Essie and Francesca have nowhere to keep a horse, so when the stranger offers to buy the horse from them, for more money than they paid for the it, do you think they should take it?

Essie and Francesca felt uneasy about this man, no reason, just a gut feeling. What does that mean?

Have you ever had a strong gut feeling about something/someone?

Naming the pony. Pg 83

"Ah well, that's the thing with names, isn't it? If they aren't right, then you can't make them stick"

Have you ever had to name a pet? How difficult was it? How did you decide?

You may have noticed that they refer to the animal as a pony, not a horse. What's the difference between a pony and a horse?

Exploring the text

Music

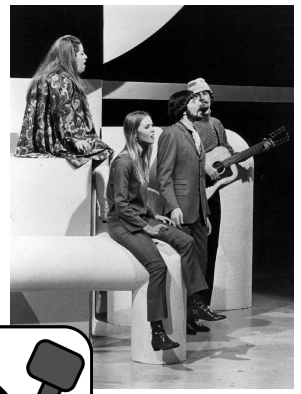
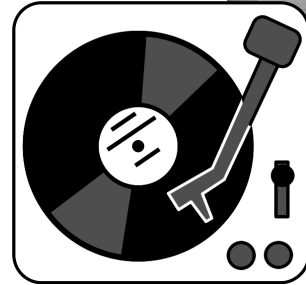
Essie loves to listen to her Mum's old music.

Her mum has vinyl records that Essie plays on her 1980s record player.

If you're lucky enough to get your hands on a record player, have one to show the students.

Otherwise have a look at some images/videos, and talk about how listening to music has changed.

Essie puts on a Mamas and Papas song – the book does not say what song Essie put on, so listen to a few songs from the Mamas and Papas and see which one you think suits the 'feel' in the house that morning.



The Mamas & the Papas on ABC's The Songmakers, 1967

What era are the Mamas and Papas from?

Listen to a variety of music from era and then ask the students to share the music they like.

How is the music different from the two eras? Are there any similarities? Talk about what makes a good song and why?

On page 99 Essie gets a churning in her tummy. What does that mean?

Essie's Dad Steven is not very supportive of the new pony. Essie thought he might be interested in the pony, interested in helping her, but he acts like this pony is a joke.

She was happy having brunch with her mum and neighbours. How did her feelings change when her Dad and Caroline turned up?

How did these new feelings make Essie feel?

Why would her Dad turn something new and exciting into something that makes Essie feel bad?

Essie does not like Caroline, her Dads new wife. So she is surprised that Caroline sends her Chet's old pony gear. Essie needed these things, so she should be happy.

Instead she has feeling of irritation, aggravation and grievance.

What do these words mean?

Why do you think Essie feels like this?

They finally come up with a name for the pony. Moxie.

What does Moxie mean?

Do you think this is a good name for the pony?

Do you think that these attributes are good for a person too?

When Moxie starts to misbehave and even bite, Essie doesn't tell anyone. Why would she keep this behaviour a secret?

As the story progresses what feeling do you get about Essie's relationship with her Dad? When Essie asks her Dad for the money to go to the horsemanship clinic, do you think he will pay for her to go?

Do you think he is being reasonable by not paying for the clinic?

Francesca is not upset with the idea that they weren't given the money for the clinic.

Why isn't she worried about it?

Why do you think Essie doesn't want to remember the good times she had with her Dad?

Essie and her Mum have helped get Moxie healthy and confident again.

What has Moxie done for Essie?