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MOSQUITO ADVERTISING

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Teachers' Notes

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ISBN: 9780702237713 / AU\$16.95

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SYNOPSIS

Katie Crisp has talent, it's just that the report card hidden in her room doesn't show it. School's out for another year and Katie is set to spend the summer lazing under the sausage tree in the backyard of the only home she's ever known. So, when she discovers that Parfitt's Family Soft Drink Company is about to be taken over by a corporate giant, leaving her mum out of a job and them both out of a home, it's time to finally show everyone what she's made of.

With her nose for trouble and her eye for advertising, and a little help from some neighbourhood friends, Katie declares Mosquito Advertising open for business. Pocket money and creative thinking can stretch a long way when everything that means anything to you is about to be destroyed.

Mosquito Advertising could be the subject of a novel study or read during a unit dealing with Visual Literacy, Advertising, Multimedia or Enterprise. Excerpts of the book could also be used to demonstrate or consolidate learning during class activities. There are fantastic resources available on the Mosquito Advertising website at: <http://www.mosquitoadvertising.com/> and an author website at: <http://www.katehunter.com.au> to support the teaching of this book.

The characters are richly described and lend themselves to analysis and role play.

THEMES

Mosquito Advertising addresses a range of themes in the context of the Advertising and Soft Drink industries.

Friendship

- Katie and Lorraine's friendship has survived their differences. It comes under the spotlight in Chapter 14 when Lorraine is missing in the flood.
- Clementine and Katie's friendship is slow to start due to Katie's possessiveness of Joel and Dominic.
- Joel and Katie have been friends for years but the friendship is changing as they grow up.

Family

- Katie and her mother have a very close relationship but there is tension between them regarding the possible sale of the house and relationship with Simon Gutteridge.

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- Auntie Nancy has never been a part of Katie's life but over the Summer holidays Katie gets to know her very well.
- Katie's relationships with her friends and Pat Parfitt demonstrate that the concept of family can be broad.
- Clementine's struggle to find a comfortable place in her family of high achievers.
- Lorraine's parents seem more concerned about their work and social lives than their relationship with their daughter.

Globalisation

- The power of the world wide web as a tool for rapid mass communication is demonstrated by Mosquito Advertising's effective use of email and YouTube.
- The advantage GBI has with its seemingly unlimited financial resources is also clear.
- Global Beverages Incorporated (GBI) is a 'corporate giant' and is constantly seeking small local operators to add to its company. The book outlines the process by which this happens in great detail.
- The examination of the 'corporate giant' is balanced, as the story plays out, the CEO of Global Beverages become one of the heroes of the story.

Courage and Persistence

- Katie demonstrates great persistence in the face of a number of serious scenarios: Simon Gutteridge's interest in her family home, the proposed sale of Parfitts and convincing her friends and Pat Parfitt regarding the Parfizz Pitch.
- The friends show courage in investigating what is going on regarding Jackie Ng's dealings.

Childhood and Growing Up

- Throughout the novel Katie recalls her experience growing up in Toowong.
- The friends who form Mosquito Advertising are all on their Summer holidays. Holiday jobs, watching tv, attending 'meetings' under the sausage tree are just some of the things they get up to. These characters are on the cusp of being old enough to get 'real jobs' for the holidays.

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- Katie is growing up and is dealing with the adult world through her mother's experiences and her own reactions to them.
- Katie's friendships are changing as she gets older.
- Characters she once saw in a one-dimensional way have become quite complex as she gets to understand their lives and concerns.

Deception and Fraud

- Jackie Ng has been supported by Pat Parfitt for so long that his betrayal is the ultimate breach of trust.
- Simon Gutteridge misrepresents his true interest in the family home to Katie's mother.
- Austin Ogilvy is obsessed with improving his own financial position and misuses his position with GBI.
- Katie participates in her own deceptive conduct in the process of researching Parfizz and investigating what is going on at the Factory.

Creativity

- Lorraine's creativity is demonstrated through her interest in fashion.
- Katie's is demonstrated through her campaign ideas.
- Clementine's artwork becomes a central part of the campaign.
- Joel's ability to use his ICTs skills for creative ends such as advertising become clear once he stops worrying about making a fool of himself.
- Aunty Nancy teaches them that creative and effective ideas don't have to cost a lot of money.

Teamwork

- The Mosquito Advertising team demonstrate that a great team consists of members with varying skills.
- Katie's good ideas can only be achieved when the friends work together.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

The idea behind *Mosquito Advertising* has been swimming around in my mind for many years, but it only took form as a book in 2008. Way back in 2001, when I was out of ad agencies and home with our first baby, I thought my idea of ads being made by non-advertising people would make a good tv show. The Seven Network thought so too, offered me a contract and made a pilot. But the concept was not appealing to advertising agencies and Seven was not about to bite the hand that fed it.

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So my idea morphed into a story - which was great because I realised that a story doesn't need a network, or a production company or anything but an idea and some time. And no matter what anyone says, there is always time for something you really, really want to do.

At first writing *Mosquito Advertising* was difficult because I was unaccustomed to writing anything that takes longer than 30 seconds to read aloud, but I had a keen publisher and a serious deadline, so I kept going.

It's been a long time since I was thirteen, but I remember that time clearly and mostly with happiness. I also remember the books I loved – Enid Blyton made a huge impression on me – particularly *The Naughtiest Girl In The School* series. I read the first one when I was eight but was probably secretly re-reading them for years. In the end, I just wrote the kind of book I would have liked to read.

The characters are mostly hybrids of people I met and worked with. Some I just made up. No one is based purely on a real person.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**Orientation and events of the book**

- Before beginning to read the book, study the title and the cover and predict what the book will be about. What does the graphic suggest? What could 'The Parfizz Pitch' mean? What is a pitch?
- After predicting the storyline based on the cover and title, students go to the trailer
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTXBmUVcncr8&feature=related> .
Watch and discuss prior to starting the book.
- For students who live in Brisbane put a map of the city on the classroom wall and have students place pins at various locations or journeys (i.e. late night trip to Parfizz, bike ride to City, Lorraine in the creek).
- Given the 'mystery' slant the book takes, the class could develop a 'crime investigation board'. Students can add relevant pieces of information or images of characters as they find them throughout the story.
- The Queenslander home that Katie and her mum live in is one of the key characters of the book (first description pp5-11). Students unfamiliar with this style of architecture could undertake a homework task to look up the

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suburb of Toowong on the web and look at some examples of Queenslander houses (typing Queenslander Homes into Google and clicking on 'images' brings up many examples). Does anyone live in an old Queenslander house or know someone who does?

- Parfizz is a local family owned softdrink company. Do such companies still exist in the local area? Other than the major global softdrink companies students know of, are there any that are still Australian owned or available only in your state? What are some of the surviving local family owned companies or industries in your area?
- Students can keep track of the major events of the novel in their books or on a class table or timeline put up on the wall of the classroom. They can add post- it notes with events or take turns in adding a summary of events at the end of each chapter.

Character analysis

- The Mosquito Advertising website provides an excellent overview and introduction to the characters broken up into friends and enemies <http://www.mosquitoadvertising.com/friends/>. It also has a tab listing the characters who form the agency, <http://www.mosquitoadvertising.com/us/>.
- As each new character is introduced, enter their name and details into a matrix you have drawn up in your notebook or created on the computer. For example:

Character Name	Physical Description/Sketch	Key personality characteristics or values

- Students compare and contrast two of the characters or they could analyse the relationship between two of the characters and think about how key events in the book affect the relationship.

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- Students consider how the author is positioning them in terms of each character. Some of the characters are likeable, some are heroes and some are downright evil. For example, how has the author developed the character of Jackie Ng throughout the novel culminating in his final deception? How does the author position us in regard to the character of Katie's aunt Nancy and what occurs throughout the book to change our mind?
- Students read excerpts of the descriptions of the characters and attempt to write a description of themselves, a relative or a friend (e.g. Joel pp4-5, Katie pp6-7, Clementine pp16-17, Dominic pp17-18).
- Students analyse the choices the author has made regarding the language and speaking patterns of each character. How do these help us to know the character and bring that character to life in our mind?
- Students choose a key event from the book and write it from the perspective of one of the characters. Alternatively they could write a diary entry or blog in character reflecting on an event i.e. Lorraine's disappearance in the flood waters, Lorraine and Katie's trip to her aunt's flat.
- Students write an additional chapter or section of a chapter focussing on a character other than Katie i.e. the boys developing the YouTube video.

Related activities

- Students visit the Mosquito Advertising website and view the materials and the Rude Reindeer YouTube video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA1_rfU2loE&NR=1 . Discuss what makes this an effective idea and how it could be improved.
- Students check out the ads on the We Rate section of the Mosquito Advertising website, <http://www.mosquitoadvertising.com/we-rate/> and discuss the effectiveness or otherwise of these.

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- Students explore some other ads (chosen by the teacher) and perhaps some teacher selected excerpts from The Gruen Transfer segment called “The Pitch” or other advertising programs.
- Students review the advice that Nancy gives Katie about ideas generation. Nancy’s advice is captured on the Mosquito Advertising website, <http://www.mosquitoadvertising.com/any-ideas/> . They then develop their own campaign for Parfizz or another soft drink or product. This campaign could involve choosing colours, symbols, catchphrases or jingles. It could go further and involve the development of a storyboard for a commercial or a completed commercial.
- Students develop a key part of the book into a script. They could then perform their script.
- Students maintain a blog or take part in an online discussion as they read the book. This could be teacher generated i.e. Blackboard or other online classroom site.
- Either online or in notebooks teachers can pose homework questions as the class reads the book. Discussions could be set up for each chapter so that readers can note their feelings and hear the views of others as they read.
- Students read some examples of book reviews and then write a review of *Mosquito Advertising* for a paper or website i.e. Brisbane News or Press. They could also find out more about the author on her website.
- Students write a Wikipedia style entry about Parfizz based on the information included in the novel.