

WOLFRED

TEACHERS NOTES

Written and illustrated by Nick Bland

Published in October 2020 by Little Hare,
an imprint of Hardie Grant Egmont

SYNOPSIS

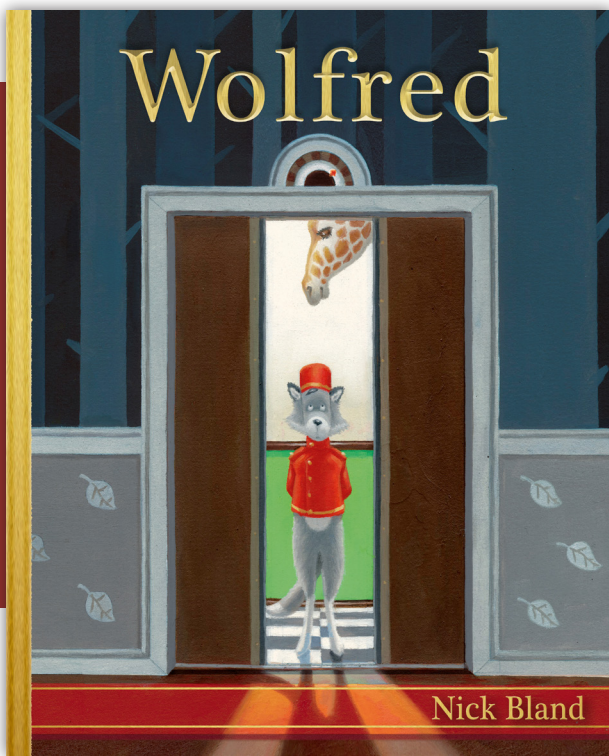
Fancy Pants Tower is the biggest, shiniest building in the city. And Wolfred operates the lift.

Each day he silently observes the extraordinary things he sees as he passes between the floors of the tower. To his boss, Wolfred isn't important enough to notice. But Wolfred notices everything – big or small, normal or very, very strange ...

Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* meets Helen Oxenbury's *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* in this hilariously oddball tale of Wolfred, an endearing elevator operator and writer, and the strange building he works in.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nick Bland was born on a farm in Victoria's Yarra Valley, and is the son of two school teachers. When he moved to the bush at the age of six, he discovered a wonderful new world and his creativity bloomed. Nick always wanted to be a cartoonist and a writer, but it wasn't until he got a job at a bookshop in his twenties that he finally found a way to bring those two loves together. Untrained, he spent the next couple of years reading every picture book that hit the shelves and began discovering his style as a storyteller and illustrator. He now lives in tropical Darwin where he works full-time as an author and illustrator. Nick's books, which include *The Very Cranky Bear*, *The Wrong Book* and *The Runaway Hug*, have been shortlisted for and won many different awards, including the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards, the Kids Own Australian Literature Awards and the Australian Book Industry Awards.



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WRITING STYLE

Nick Bland uses a series of rhythmic stanzas to create his story – we might even call it a narrative poem. He also uses 'perfect' rhymes to link end words (words at the end of a line) and create a harmonious flow throughout the story.

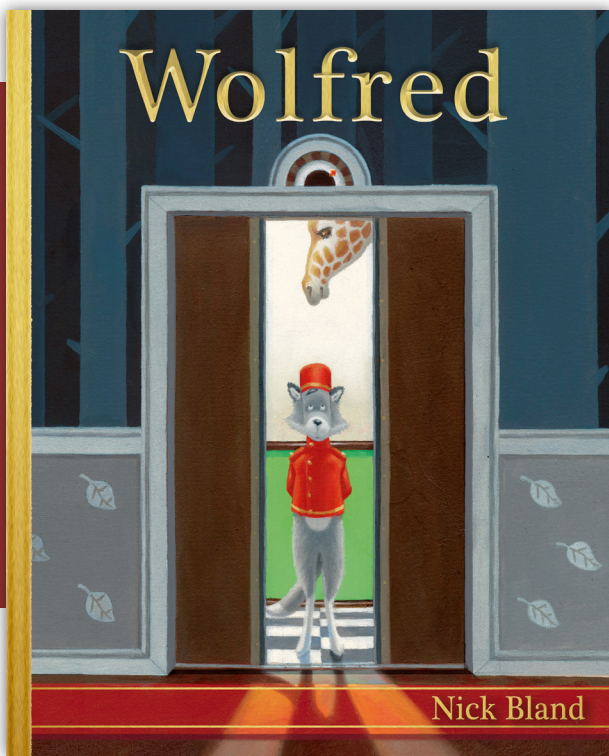
ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Nick Bland used oil paints to create these incredibly vibrant and warm illustrations. Oil paints are slow-drying, and they create a vibrancy and depth of colour that artists can't quite replicate with other mediums. If you look closely, you can still see some paint strokes in the artwork.

THEMES

Wolfred is a special story that uses its characters to explore difficult themes. Wolfred finds himself working in a tricky job and not feeling very happy to be there. But throughout the story, Wolfred tries not to judge all the people he comes across in the lift, and he changes the Fancy Pants Tower inside and out with truth and honesty. Some other themes you might like to look out for and discuss with your students include:

- Individuality
- Kindness & compassion
- Creativity
- Employment
- Bravery
- Personal growth



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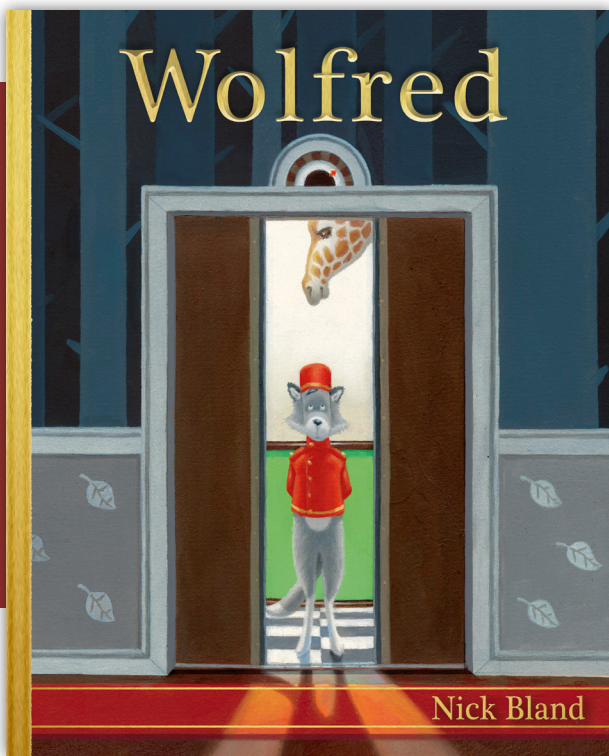
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BEFORE READING

Ask students to look closely at the cover illustration.

1. What do they think *Wolfred* might be about?
2. What kind of book do they think this might be? Funny? Sad? Scary?
3. This book is set in a hotel. Wolfred is wearing a special uniform – what do they think his job might be?
4. There's a giraffe in the lift! What other animals do they hope to see?
5. Where do they think this elevator goes? It must be a very special hotel to fit so many animals in the lift. Maybe there's lots of different rooms – what might they look like?



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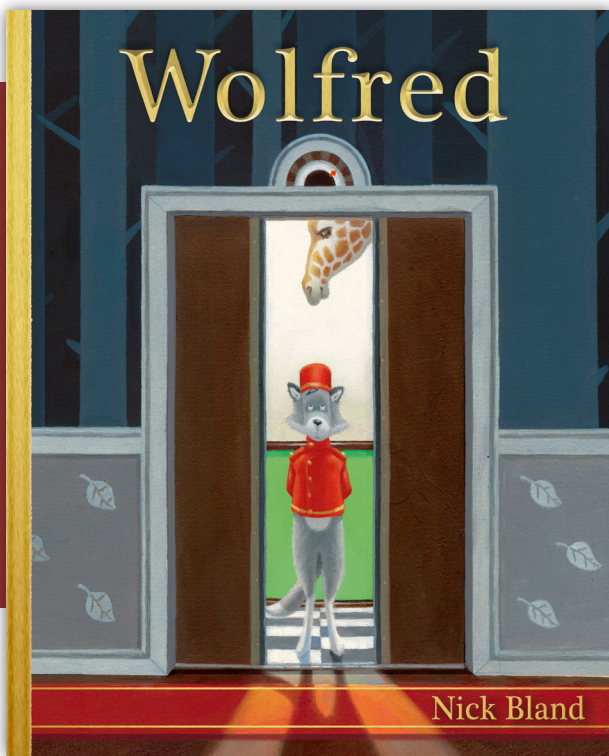
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WHILE READING

1. Mister Pig isn't very nice to Wolfred – he says, 'You don't say hello, don't put on a show, just push! Or you'll find yourself fired!' Ask students how they think that might make Wolfred feel.
2. Wolfred works in a very fancy elevator. Ask students if they like to ride in elevators, and if they've ever been in one with an operator. You can talk to them about old-fashioned elevators, called hoists. In hoists, someone needed to push buttons and open the doors for guests.
3. Wolfred writes lots of letters while he works at the Fancy Pants Tower. What do you think he might write about?
4. 'He sent stories by air, to his friends over there, and they waited each dawn for the gift. He became quite renowned, for the things he wrote down, about life in the Fancy Pants lift.' Wolfred's friends think his poetry is a 'gift'. What does that mean? Is it extra-special?
5. Wolfred folds his poetry into paper planes and sends them to his friends. Ask students if they like to receive letters. Maybe they could write letters to each other later?
6. There's lot of different levels to the Fancy Pants Tower – there's oceans and space, green jungles and hot red rooms for dragons. Ask students which is their favourite, and why?
7. Uh-oh! Wolfred is fired from his job. Ask students what they think happens next?
8. Wolfred saves Mister Pig from being kidnapped! Wolfred is very brave – do you think Mister Pig will be nicer to Wolfred now?
9. Wolfred turns the elevator into a library! Look closely at the illustration. What book has he given to the rabbit?
10. Look at the final page, and compare it to the earlier picture of the empty grey rooftop. Spot all the things that have changed. What do students think Wolfred will do next?



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ACTIVITIES

1. This story is told in rhyme. Invite students to try creating their own rhyme, perhaps to follow this line: 'Now I must let you know / if you ever do go / to the Fancy Pants Tower to stay –' The original line ends with 'There's a wolf in the lift / who's unlikely to shift / and he lives there to this very day.' Using a new rhyme, invite students to also ponder what might come next for Wolfred.
2. The story is illustrated using oil paints. Some scenes seem to glow with warmth – like the ghost on floor two, and the trouser lights outside Fancy Pants Tower. Ask students if they prefer to use pencils or paints to draw. Perhaps they would like to try creating their own cover?
3. What other animal would you like to see in the Fancy Pants Tower? What would their room look like – can you draw it?
4. The elevator is very small, and some of the animals get a bit squished! What other animals might look funny in an elevator? Make a list, or draw a picture.
5. Wolfred loves to write poetry. Can you find all the rhyming words in this book?
6. Wolfred sends his friends lots of letters. Write a letter about your day and send it to a friend. Maybe you can even fold it into a paper plane!
7. Nick Bland used oil paint to illustrate this book. Have students try to copy their favorite page using paint.
8. Wolfred recommends books to the guests at the Fancy Pants Tower. Have students gather in small groups and talk about their favourite books with each other.