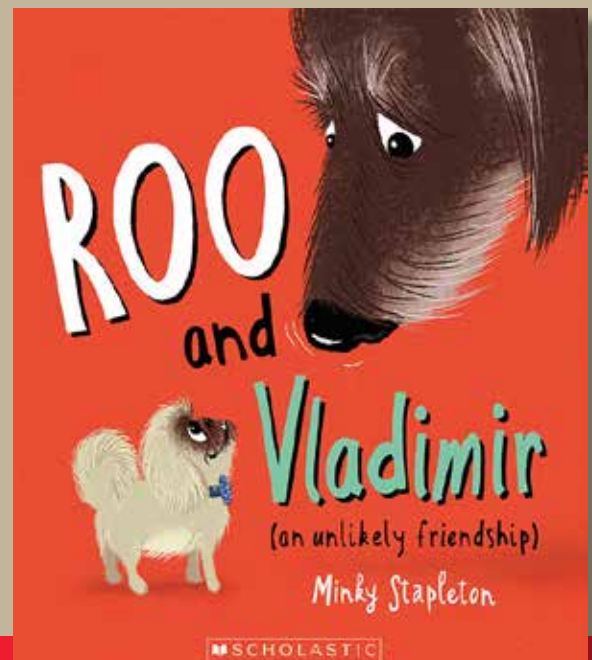


Roo and Vladimir

(an unlikely friendship)

By Minky Stapleton



• Reading • Writing • Thinking Skills • School Values • Art

Synopsis

Roo is a dog who loves to play catch, have naps and cuddles, and feel the wind in his hair. There is just one problem. Roo is also a very large dog, so large that he can scare others around him. His large tail can knock things over, he can accidentally sit on things or inhale food he shouldn't.

One day Roo meets a small but tough pekingese dog called Vladimir and they become firm friends, playing, chasing and napping with each other. The other dogs admire how brave Vladimir is to be spending time with Roo, and Roo, aware of how much the other dogs are afraid of him, is happy to have a best friend.

When a storm causes a bridge to be washed away, Roo and Vladimir find themselves stranded in a park with a group of local dogs. Because of his large size Roo is able to piggy-back the dogs across the river. Roo has saved the day and is the town hero, and the other dogs realise they no longer need to be scared of Roo.

About the Author

Minky Stapleton is a multi-faceted illustrator with a range of styles, all with a heavy dash of dark humour. She spent her formative years as an award-winning Art Director and later Creative Director in Johannesburg, working in some of South Africa's best advertising agencies. After many years of corporate life, she threw it all in to follow her first love, illustration. She now resides in Auckland, where she balances a number of local and international illustration projects with running classes for kids on how to design scary monsters.

Minky has illustrated a number of books for Scholastic New Zealand including *Things in the Sea are Touching Me!*, *Kia Kaha: Together Standing Strong*, *Kia Ora: You Can Be a Kiwi Too*, *My Kiwi Gumboots*, *There's a Bear in the Window* and the redesign of the *My New Zealand Story* series covers. *Roo and Vladimir (an unlikely friendship)* is the first book Minky has both written and illustrated.

Writing and Illustration Style

Minky Stapleton's humorous text and bright, colourful illustrations perfectly convey the themes of difference, acceptance, and friendship in this fiction picture book. Children will love the story of the unlikely friendship between Roo and Vladimir and delight in the expressions of the humorously illustrated dogs. They may also relate to the 'accidents' that happen around Roo, despite his best intentions, and empathise with how hurtful words make Roo feel sad.

The writing style is simple and clean with high-interest verbs and adjectives sprinkled throughout and key words and concepts enlarged and emphasised with capital letters. The journey from outcast to town hero is compelling (look out for 'the lazy duck') and the message of inclusivity is heartfelt.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

During the shared sessions, encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make predictions and inferences and relate these to their own experiences. Read the passages aloud and have students read alongside or by themselves.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb then turn to the title page.

- Which dog is Roo and which is Vladimir? Why do you think that?
- Why is their friendship 'unlikely'? Are friends always alike or are they sometimes different?
- What makes a good friend?
- What do you think will happen in this story?

Comprehension

- Is it necessary to be good at something to enjoy doing it?
- What's the difference between 'naps and cuddles' and 'cuddling while napping'?
- Did the other dogs need to be scared of Roo? Why / why not? What is a 'yeti'?
- Why was Roo sad?
- How do you think Roo got his name?
- What do you notice about the word 'tripping' in the book? Have you ever tripped over your own feet?
- Do you think Roo likes being so big? Why/why not?
- How do you think the girl eating the ice cream feels about Roo resting on her head? Why did Roo choose to rest there?
- How did Roo's tail get him into trouble?
- What does 'inhale' mean? What really happened to Mrs Dunkirk's ham?
- Why did new dogs run away when Roo smiled at them?
- What does 'smitten' mean?
- Why are some words and phrases in capital letters?
- Why do you think Vladimir loved Roo when all the other dogs were scared of him? Why did Roo love Vladimir?
- Do you think the dog that 'whined that Roo would probably eat them all' meant to hurt Roo's feelings? Why / why not?
- Why did Roo carry the lazy duck across the stream when it could have swum or flown across?
- Where do you think Vladimir goes to while Roo is transporting the animals across the stream? Why does Vladimir come back to wait for Roo?
- What is a hero? What is Roo wearing around his neck? How do you think Roo feels about all the attention? Was Roo the only hero in this story?
- What do you notice about the line up of dogs on the last page?
- What is the moral or lesson of this story?



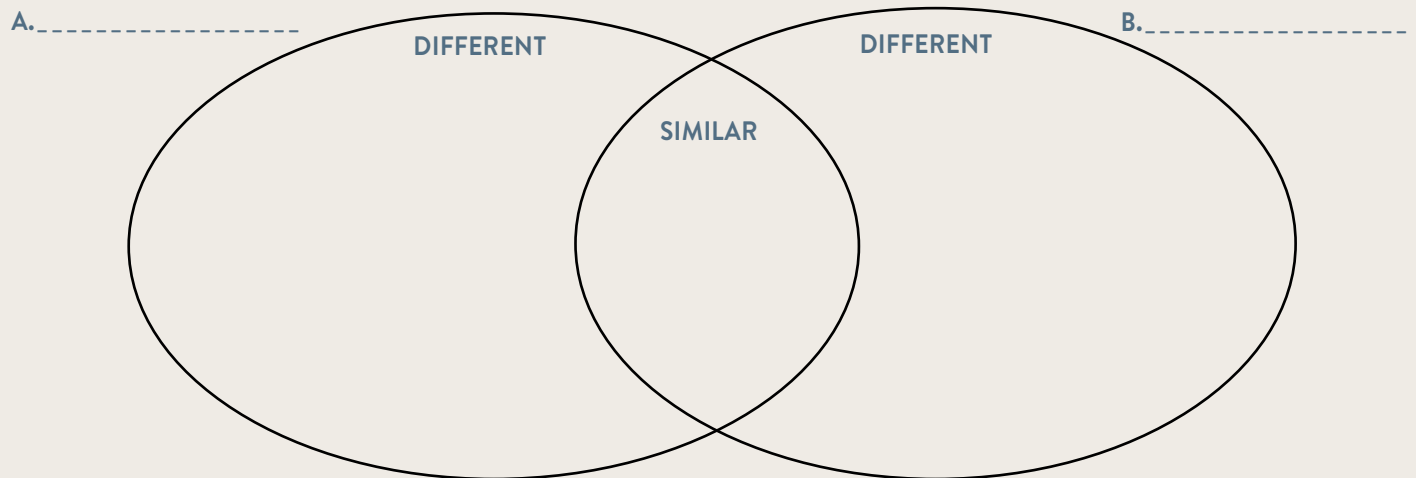
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Activities

ACTIVITY 1: COMPARE AND CONTRAST – GETTING ACROSS THE WATER

Revisit the story *The Gingerbread Man*. Then use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the climax of *Roo and Vladimir* with the climax of *The Gingerbread Man*. How are they the same? How are they different?



ACTIVITY 2: SCHOOL HEROES

As a class, discuss what it means to be a hero and the qualities that heroes often have. Then discuss the attitudes and actions of a class hero or a school hero. How are school values such as manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga related to being a school hero?

Invite the students to design and make their own school hero medals based on school or class values.

Hold a simple election where students nominate classmates and / or teachers for class or school hero awards. Challenge the students to state the qualities or actions that make their nomination a class or school hero. Vote for the winners and award them medals.

ACTIVITY 3: DESCRIBING OR DOING?

Vladimir and Roo (an unlikely friendship) is full of adjectives (describing words) and verbs (doing or action words). But which is which? In the list below, highlight the adjectives (describing words) in yellow and the verbs (doing words) in pink.

Played	Eat	Widest	Whimpered
Massive	Squished	Awkward	Brave
Arrive	Whined	Inhaled	Felt
Happy	Delicate	Cuddling	Chased
Carried	Big	Long	Wild
Napping	Large	Friendliest	Clumsy
Sad	Walk	Small	Saved
Tripping	Enormous	Huddled	Noticing
Long	Tough	Clambered	Huge

ACTIVITY 4: FURRY FRIENDS

There are so many different kinds of dogs in *Roo and Vladimir*. Draw a portrait of your favourite dog and give it a name. Put the dog's name on its collar. Underneath your doggy portrait, write a sentence using an adjective to describe why your dog is a good friend. For example, *Rufus is loyal*.

ACTIVITY 5: TAKE A LOOK AT ANOTHER BOOK

Share read another book about friendship, such as *The Story of Swoop*, *Marvin Makes a Friend*, *This is the Dog*, or *The Bantam and the Soldier*.

Written by Frances McBeath



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