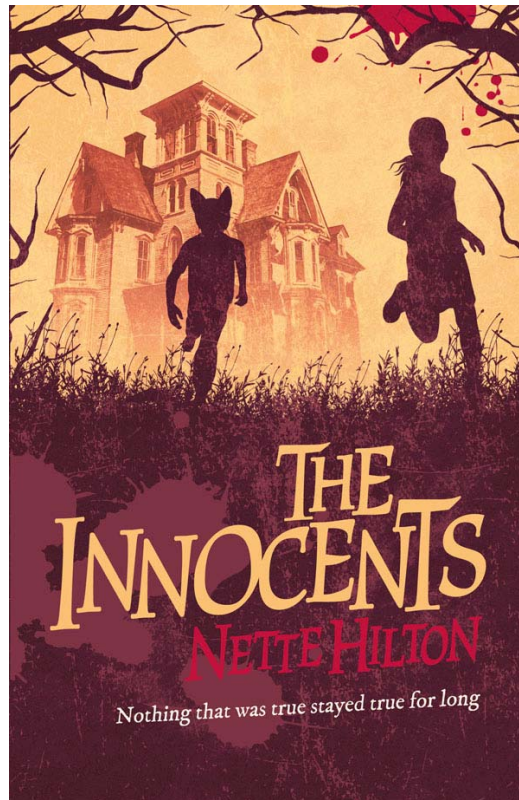


THE INNOCENTS

NETTE HILTON



TEACHING SUPPORT KIT

by
Nette Hilton


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THE INNOCENTS
Teaching Support Kit

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PLOT SUMMARY

Lansdale is a small town in 1950s Australia. It's an innocent time with everyone in the community comfortably going about their own business and cheerfully involved in the business of others. Missie Missinger becomes friendly with a stranger in town, but it's not until tragedy strikes that her new friend finds himself in serious trouble. Missie is the only one with the key to save him from a terrible miscarriage of justice.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nette Hilton was born in Traralgon and grew up in Bairnsdale, the eldest of three children. At school, her favourite subject was poetry and drama. She dreamed of becoming a Maid Marion destined to ride around on a white horse, fighting for justice and other glories while she worked at various jobs, including governessing, taxation clerking and teaching. Now, she's a full-time writer and performs in many schools each year. She loves talking to students and teachers about story making, picture books, novels, dogs, love, death, birth, marriage (or not) – just about anything as a matter of fact.

Nette Hilton's body of work includes picture books, novels for young readers and young adult novels. It includes such well known works as *A Proper Little Lady* (which has been in constant reprint since 1991), *The Web* (again, constant reprint since 1992), *Pyro Watson and the Hidden Treasure*, and many others. She has also performed at readings on train trips through Victoria and public venues in Australia and overseas.

Nette Hilton is renowned for many works which have featured as Notable books by the Children's Book Council of Australia. These include the above books as well as:

- *The Belonging Of Emmaline Harris* – 1994
- *Tough Lester* – 1998
- *Hothouse Flowers* – 1998
- *Strays* – 1998
- *Watch Out, William* – 1999
- *Grave Catastrophe* – 2004
 - Listed by NSW School Magazine as an 'Excellent Read'
- *Woolly Jumpers* – 2005
- *Living Next To Lulah* – 2006
- *Star Of The Show* – 2006
- *Star Of The Circus* – 2007

Her works have been shortlisted for Children's Book Council of Australia Awards on a number of occasions as well as being shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards. Several of her novels have won awards throughout Australia and have been released in other countries including translations for countries with languages other than English.

Nette lives on the Far North Coast of New South Wales. Visit her website at <http://www.nettehilton.com.au/>

GENRE, STRUCTURE AND STYLE

- Discuss how the title is relevant to the story as a whole.
- Discuss how the cover image is relevant to the story. If you had to use a different image on the cover, what would you choose?
- *The Innocents* is a realistic novel for young adults, although most of the story is told from the viewpoint of a nine-year-old girl. How reliable is the world from Missie Missinger's viewpoint given that she is so young?
 - Why do you think a young child has been allowed to be the voice of this novel?
 - What are the advantages of using someone so young? Discuss.
- How does the author use humour to convey the story? Is she successful?
- What are some features of Nette Hilton's writing that you consider to be original and distinctive? Provide examples.
- How does the author use dialogue to develop characterisation?

CHARACTERS

- Make a list of the book's characters, indicating their relationships to one another.
- Which character do you most identify with, and why?
- Do a case study of Missie, Jimmy or Zilla, taking in their background, appearance, attitude, likes and dislikes, how they see themselves and how they relate to other people – especially members of their own families. Describe how they react to crises in their lives, explaining why they behave as they do.

THEMES

Intolerance

- How is Oleks seen by the community?
- What aspects of Oleks Mykola's life are known by Marcie? How does she try to defend him?
- How is the attitude to New Australians different now? Is it different? Discuss.

Friendship

- How does Missie engage Zill as her friend? Do you think this is fair? Discuss.
- How does Zill's appearance in Missie's life change her self-image? Find some examples of this.

First love

- What do you think about Missie's feelings for Jimmy? Are they reciprocated? How do you qualify this relationship given that these are two young people? Is this love?

Innocence

- Of what are the characters in this book innocent? Try to attach this label to:
 - Oleks
 - Missie
 - The community
 - Marcie