

Teachers' Notes

Title: **The Amazing Matilda Mudpuddle**

Author: Gordon Winch

Illustrator: Dee Texidor

1. Synopsis

This story is about an amazing little girl who floats to the tops of trees, flies as fast as the birds, performs a high wire circus act, zooms to the highest point of the harbour bridge and takes the part of Mary Poppins in the school play. Her big test comes when her friend, Stephen Ko is captured by car thieves. Saving him is the most serious test of her powers.

Although Matilda is amazing by nature, never surprising those who know her with anything she does, her new powers appear when she eats some beans her adventurous grandfather has brought back from a trekking tour in Tibet.

This little fantasy, with its delightful illustrations, will enthrall students who are just moving into chapter books, and captivate older readers who need a little fun to get going with their reading. They will imagine themselves, like Matilda, larger than life.

2. Author/Illustrator Style or Medium

The text is arranged in eight chapters with individual chapter headings. Dee Texidor's expert lined illustrations feature throughout this book.

3. Author/Illustrator Motivation

The author believes that readers of this age love to read about heroes, real or imaginary. They project themselves into the role and perform the heroic feats in their minds. Matilda is a perfect hero protagonist. Not only does she carry out amazing deeds, but she operates for the benefit of others; there is a true moral dimension to her.

Books that are written for the interests of this age group, and pitched at the right linguistic level, are always needed and often difficult to find. Both the author and the illustrator believe that *The Amazing Matilda Mudpuddle* and the other books of the series will be very popular with young readers.

4. Author and Illustrator Background Information

Gordon Winch has written a number of well-loved books for younger children. These include the ever popular *Samantha Seagull's Sandals*, *Enoch the Emu*, *Barrington's Board Shorts* and the recent collection of his comic verse for children, *Rhinos, Toucans and Woolly Dogs*. His latest picture story books are *Rodney Thinks of Food* and *Koala Sees the World*. Gordon's work has been twice short-listed for the Koala Award, the children's own choice of their most popular books.

A feature of this book is the comic element found in the situations, the language and the illustrations. This comic spirit permeates in *The Amazing Matilda Mudpuddle* and appears in all of Gordon's work, including his verse.

Dee Texidor is a young and highly talented illustrator. Her work has appeared in more than 30 books and is specially noted for its edge of wit and originality. Her particular style is ideally suited to the illustration of the *Matilda Mudpuddle* books.

5. Educational Applicability

The class can be organised into groups or individuals for Shared, Guided and Independent Reading

Shared Reading

The Amazing Matilda Mudpuddle is an ideal book to read to children in class as shared reading. It can be read in chapters, as each chapter is complete in itself, and whets the appetite for the next. It can also be read in smaller segments, at the end of the day or for a special reward. The illustrations can be shown to the students as they appear in the book, by projection or by just holding them up

During shared reading the teacher can stop and ask questions, draw attention to the illustrations, pause to talk about a particular word and check literal and inferential meaning. Depending on the ability and interests of the class, the teacher will vary the pace of the reading to involve all of the students. The most important aim in shared reading is to make sure that the students enjoy the experience.

Guided Reading

Guided Reading is group reading, including one-to-one teaching. During this session, small groups under the teacher's supervision can spend more time on particular learning experiences such as decoding or comprehension.

After the Guided Reading session, students can form pairs and read the book to each other, read it quietly to themselves or take it home for Independent Reading.

Independent Reading

The most enjoyable and rewarding time for many students is when they can read the book independently. There are many variations of Independent Reading that can be carried out with *The Amazing Matilda Mudpuddle*. Parents may supervise the reading of the book at home or at school; the teacher may use the DEAR approach (Drop Everything and Read), which will include other books that the students are reading. This book is ideally suited to Independent Reading as the language is pitched at a readability level that keys into the cognitive interests of the students.

Discussion Topics

Before reading the Book

1. Ask students to imagine what it would be like to fly like a bird or a character from literature such as Peter Pan, Wendy, Mary Poppins or Superman. Have them talk about what they might do, what adventures they might have, what problems they might encounter.
2. Ask the children about their grandparents. What do they like to do with their grandparents?
3. What are a scientist and an inventor? Ask the children to think of different inventions.
4. Discuss swim safety. What do you do if you see someone in trouble?

After reading the book

1. What do the students think of Matilda? Is she a heroine? Does she enjoy flying? Do you need to fly to be a heroine?
2. Does Matilda have a good relationship with her grandfather?
3. What do the illustrations tell you about Mr Michael Mudpuddle, Matilda's Dad?
4. Did Matilda do the right thing when rescuing Stephen Ko?

Craft Activities

Make a propeller

The children could make a propeller to go on a hat.

Collage

Discuss other characters from fantasies that have the ability to fly. Make a collage using drawn characters and images from magazines or the internet. Examples for other characters are Peter Pan, Dumbo, Tinkerbell, Mary Poppins and Superman. Once the collage is completed the children could dress up as their favourite flying character.

Poster

Create a poster for Mary Poppins , Matilda's school play or a play your school is putting on.

Further Research

1. Discuss what makes a fantasy?
2. Each student could choose a different character to write about. What makes us like or dislike the characters? How do the illustrations help us form an opinion of the characters?
3. Have a "think tank" to imagine some of the things that might happen in the next Matilda books.
4. Students could write of their experiences imagining they could fly.

6. Marketing and Selling Points

- Gordon Winch is one of Australia's best loved children's authors. Known for such best selling titles as Samantha Seagull's Sandals and Enoch the Emu. Gordon's recent publications include Koala Sees the World and Rhinos, Toucans and Woolly dogs. His engaging, humorous and informative style makes him a favourite with young readers.
- 5,000 word illustrated reader perfect for those struggling eight year old readers who need a little fun to get going.
- Children will love Matilda's enthusiasm for life as she embarks on numerous adventures with her surprising new talents. A fun and quirky start to a great new series.

7. How the book is to be promoted

- Review copies to Reading Time, Magpies, metropolitan and regional dailies and various online review forums.
- Gordon Winch is a regular visitor to schools.
- Radio interviews.