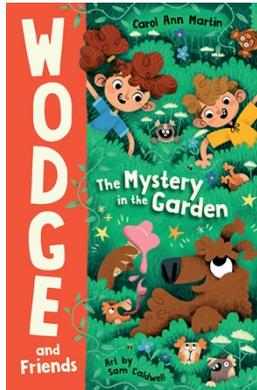


Teacher's Notes



Wodge and Friends: The Mystery in the Garden

Written by Carol Ann Martin

Illustrated by Sam Caldwell

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary-aged readers (ages 8+, grades 3+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - Learn about friendship and loyalty
 - Use their imagination to create stories

THEMES

- Feelings
- Friendship
- Difference
- Creativity
- Endangered Creatures

SYNOPSIS

When Nancy and Dom's dad goes to Antarctica to photograph an elephant seal named Brian, Nancy and Dom go to stay with their grandmother's eccentric friend, Miss Heatherbell. Miss Heatherbell is a painter with rainbow hair and a wheelchair, who has transformed her house into a wonderland of rooms painted with extraordinary scenes that make them seem alive. But what's inside the house is nothing compared to what Nancy and Dom discover at the bottom of the garden...

Down, behind the weeds and bushes near the fence, living beneath a fearsome gargoyle statue is the last living wodge. Wodge is a furry, curious looking creature with a round body and monkey-like paws. He is an unusually shy creature who can shapeshift and is VERY fond of icecream, and has to stay hidden so he isn't captured and put into a museum. But when Nancy and Dom take their new friend to the park and lose him, it becomes a race to get him back before he's discovered or lost for good.

Wodge and Friends: The Mystery in the Garden is a light-hearted story about taking care of each other, with a hint of magic and lots of oddball fun.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Carol Ann Martin has worked as an author and editor for more than 35 years. She writes picture books, junior fiction and young adult fiction, and several of her books have been recognised by the Children's Book Council of Australia as Notable titles. Her books include the *Dulcie and Dud* series, *Once There Were Mermaids*, *Tansy Magill*, *Heart and Soul* and many titles in the *Cocky's Circle* series. She lives with her husband in a small, vibrant town in southern Tasmania, where she is always scribbling new ideas in her notebook.

Sam Caldwell has a particular talent for illustrating the world's strangest and most fascinating creatures. He grew up in the north of England and now lives in Glasgow, Scotland, where he works as an illustrator and designer. Sam studied painting at the Edinburgh College of Art and is passionate about using texture and colour to tell stories with his art. His illustrations are regularly featured in magazines and newspapers, including *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and his books for children include *Sneaky Shadows* by SC Manchild, and Tim Flannery's 'Explore Your World' series, including *Weird, Wild, Amazing!* and *Deep Dive into Deep Sea*.

THEMES

Friendship

Dom and Nancy's best friends, Arlo and Sammi, show what a good friends they are when they defend Dom against the school bully, Stewie MacGubbin.

- How do they show their support for their friend?
- What kinds of things does Stewie do that show he is NOT a friend? Why do you think he behaves this way?
- What qualities are important in a friendship, and how do Dom and Nancy display these when they meet Wodge and BTF (bad tempered fairy)?

Fear

When the wodge is afraid, he makes a stink that smells like 'rotten fish, dead rats, filthy socks, dog poo and a blocked drain, and that was just for a start' (p45).

- What is the wodge afraid of?
- What do you do when you're afraid?
- What are Dom and Nancy afraid of in the story? How do they handle these fears?

Endangered Creatures

When the BTF explains what the wodge is she says 'He's the only wodge left in the world, right? They used to be everywhere. Just like the dinosaurs, only smaller, OK? But like the dinosaurs, they died out' (p56-57).

- How did the dinosaurs die out?
- Discuss what the words **endangered** and **extinct** mean. Which word would you use to describe Wodge, and why?
- Make a list of animals that you can think of that are endangered or extinct. How do animals end up on this list? What can we do to help them?



Creativity

Miss Heatherbell has used her creativity to turn her house into a wonderland of hidden rooms. Nancy uses her creativity to write mystery stories, while Wodge uses his to turn into animals and BTF has all kinds of inventive spells.

- What kinds of creativity are there?
- How are you creative?
- Use your creative brain to come up with a new room to add to Miss Heatherbell's house – either draw it or write about it.

COMPREHENSION

- Why doesn't Dom want to stay with Miss Heatherbell at first? What happens to change his mind?
- Stewie teases Dom about his name, calling him '*dummy, dummy, dumb-bum*' (p6). What makes a nickname mean or not? Have you ever had a nickname? Did you like it?
- How is Miss Heatherbell's house different to the other houses on the street? What does this first impression tell you about the person who lives inside?
- What's your favourite room in Miss Heatherbell's house? Why?
- What does BTF stand for? Why is she so bad-tempered?
- Why is Stewie so interested in what Dom and Nancy have found? What will he do if he finds out their secret?
- What happened to Miss Heatherbell to make her forget Wodge? How do you know that she hasn't completely forgotten him?
- Why do Nancy and Dom think that Arlo and Sami will be able to help them to learn more about the wodge? What does Sami think it might be?
- The wodge isn't the only unusual thing in Miss Heatherbell's house. What else do Nancy and Dom see while they're there that's unusual?
- What is Wodge's favourite flavour of icecream? How do his friends use it to find him?
- How does Wodge use his shapeshifting abilities to help him get whatever he wants?
- Why does Wodge run away? What makes him so difficult to find again?
- Where do they live? Draw three places that you might find a microbe around your house.



WRITING EXERCISE

- Nancy writes stories about Awesome Girl – a grade-four kid who turns into a superhero, but nobody knows it's her. Writers often get their ideas for stories from things that happen to them in real life, or interesting places they've been. Use an event or place from your own life as inspiration for your own Awesome Girl story. What would you call it? What problems would she have to overcome? Who would her friends be?
- Wodge has had a long life full of adventures and travel. Write a short story about a part of Wodge's journey. Try to include the details you know about him – his shyness, shapeshifting abilities, and especially his pong!
- Imagine trying to look for something that could take on any shape! Choose something around your house that Wodge might turn himself into if he was trying to hide. Draw a picture showing how he might camouflage himself as this object.

