

## Teacher's Notes



### *Reggie Round and the Aga Panthers*

Written by Jane Grant

Illustrated by Martina Heiduczek

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### RECOMMENDED FOR

4+ aged readers (grades 1–2)

#### KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
  - ACELA1453
  - ACELT1582
  - ACELY1671

### THEMES

- Imagination
- Fear
- Difference
- Friendship
- Australian plants and flowers

### SYNOPSIS

Reggie Round is afraid of the house next door, which is so unlike his own. It's full of shadows and creatures, including the mysterious blue Aga Panthers that Reggie has heard his parents talking about. What are the Aga Panthers? Where do they hide?

When Reggie leans too far over the fence to retrieve a ball and falls into the garden, he is terrified that he might find himself face-to-face with a dangerous Aga Panther. But what he finds is even more unexpected.

By facing his fears, Reggie makes two new friends and discovers a whole new world to ignite his imagination.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

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**Jane Grant** grew up in Melbourne in the late 1960s and early 1970s and was influenced by the social and political changes of that time – including the peace movement, feminism and the environment movement.

In the late 1970s, Jane moved to the coast with her partner to live a different life, away from the big city, and to step more lightly on the planet. They hand-built their house over a year and moved in on a weekend in February 1983, only to lose the house and all their possessions three days later in the Ash Wednesday bushfires. This was a defining moment for Jane – she learnt what was important in life and that you could lose all your possessions, even your dream home, and still have everything.

Over the past forty years, Jane has had a keen interest in community activism against inappropriate development and the destruction of the natural environment. She has a passion for gardening and enjoys long walks with her dog most days.

Jane has one son who was born not long after the fire, two granddaughters, and has been working in publishing for the past twenty years.

**Martina Heiduczek** grew up in a small fishing village on the Baltic Sea in Germany. Here you could find her mostly galloping through the forests with flying piggy tails on her Shetland pony, drawing or reading. These days she is an illustrator and lives in Australia.

With a passion for colour and textures, Martina creates happy images to evoke emotion and thought in young minds. Her works are inspired by nature, people, places, and the moving and silly things she sees out there ... magic is everywhere!

## THEMES

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*Reggie Round and the Aga Panthers* weaves its themes subtly through the text and illustrations. Without being overt or didactic, the story allows readers to consider the way their imagination shapes how they see the world, and the way that fear can sometimes keep us from wonderful new opportunities and friendships. When reading this book as a class, readers might like to think about:

- What they're afraid of and where that fear comes from
- How they use their imagination during play
- Their knowledge of Australian plants and flowers
- How it feels to make new friends



## WRITING STYLE

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Jane Grant writes in **limited third person**, with Reggie as the focus of the narrative. The way the narrative is structured can act as an introduction to the way we use language to focus on one person, or on many – for example, talking about the way the writer only names characters who are important to the story, or the way that we know what Reggie is thinking and feeling, but not what his parents are thinking or feeling.

Readers might also find the use of dialogue interesting. They could discuss the mix-ups that can happen when we don't know what a word means, and how our imaginations can make incorrect guesses based on the way that unfamiliar words sound.

## COMPREHENSION

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- Why is Reggie afraid of the house next door? Look at the picture of the two houses on the first page and make a list of the differences between them.
- Make a list of all of the things in the book that are blue – other than their colour, is there anything the same about them?
- Does Reggie's imagination make his fear of things worse? Draw a picture of something you're afraid of.
- How does Reggie misunderstand what an agapanthus is? Have you ever misunderstood the meaning of a word? Make a list of words you can think of that mean one thing but sound as if they mean something different.
- What happens when Reggie overcomes his fear?
- Re-read the first page of the book, and the last. What has changed between the two?

## WRITING EXERCISE

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Write about a time that you were afraid to try something new. What were you afraid of? When you did it, was it as bad as you thought it might be? Write about yourself as if you were a character in a story, like Reggie. How would you tell your story to someone else?

## ILLUSTRATION STYLE

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Martina Heiduczek's illustrations are beautifully detailed and colourful, bringing together Reggie's imagined world with the reality of the world around him. On the first page she uses shadows to emphasise the mysteries of the house next door, with hands creeping over the rooftop and mysterious creatures climbing from the trees. When Reggie starts to imagine what the blue Aga Panther might look like, readers will enjoy watching it creep through his bedroom window, and then discovering the way it follows him across subsequent pages. Fluid lines contrast solid shapes to show



the difference between imagination and reality, and blue is used across the pages to bring the main elements of the book to life – the agapanthus and the Aga Panthers, but also the places Reggie visits in his imagination, and the blue dark of night. As readers explore the pages and identify each of these elements, they can talk about how they use colour and lines in their own drawings, and how these elements help to tell the story.

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

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1. Take a walk around your neighbourhood and see if you can spot any agapanthus. Where do they grow? What do the flowers look like? Many states in Australia classify the agapanthus as a weed – can you find out why this is?  
Agapanthus aren't native to Australia, but they are common in most states. What other plants and flowers do you see on your walk? Can you identify which ones are native and which ones aren't?  
Draw a picture of a plant or flower that especially stands out to you on your walk and see if you can find out its name and where it came from.
2. Reggie uses his imagination to travel to other worlds. Draw a picture of one of the places your imagination takes you and describe it for someone who has never been there before. What colour would it be? What kind of creatures live there? Is there anything in this place that you're afraid of?
3. What does your garden look like? Is it wild, like Daisy's, or neat and tidy, like Reggie's? Which of the two gardens in the book do you like better? What is good about each? Are the differences between them good or bad?
4. Choose a plant or flower that you love and use it as inspiration to create a creature for a story. Think about the colour and the shape, or the name, or where you found it to help you come up with details about the kind of creature you'll create. Draw a picture of your creature and give it a name.

