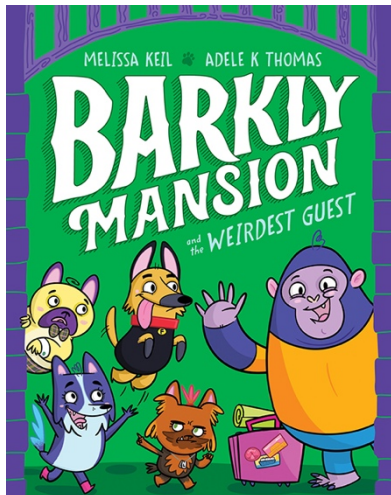


Teacher's Notes



Barkly Mansion

Written by Melissa Keil
Illustrated by Adele K Thomas
Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

These notes may be reproduced for use within schools free of charge, but not offered in any part for commercial sale. Copyright © Hardie Grant Children's Publishing 2021.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

- These notes are written with Year 3 students in mind, although readers age 6+ will enjoy the series.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - Language for interaction (ACELA1476)
 - Expressing and developing ideas (ACELA1482)
 - Literature and context (ACELT1594)
 - Responding to literature (ACELT1596)

- Interacting with others (ACELY1676)

THEMES

- Fitting in
- Friendship
- Overcoming obstacles
- Facing your fears
- Working together

SYNOPSIS

In this house on Sullivan Street, nothing out of the ordinary ever happens. It's an ordinary, normal house, with everything you'd expect – you know, a Grand Ball Room, thirty-five different kinds of ham in the fridge, and a bone-shaped pool out the back. Nothing weird at all.

In the perfectly normal house on Sullivan Street, four perfectly normal dogs live together with one axolotl, living perfectly ordinary lives. Lady Delilah is always on the lookout for trouble (and sometimes is the one causing it). Fizzy likes simple pleasures – snoozing and snacks. Cookie's always up for an adventure, and Kyle leans to the finer pleasures – fancy cheese, croquet and, of course, his friends in the Society for the Nice-looking, Obviously-distinguished, and really very Best (SNOB, for short).

Lady D, Fizzy, Cookie and Kyle, might be very different dogs, but they live together just fine until one day a knock at the door brings them a new and unexpected housemate – Edmund, a large loveable gorilla.



To the Barkly Mansion residents, Edmund sees things in a weird way. He doesn't hate the bunnies, and his favourite food is pumpkin cheesecake cookies. But maybe Edmund is just what Barkly Mansion needs. Edmund and the dogs are soon firm friends, and together they learn that a little bit of weird can be a very good thing.

1 Barkly Mansion and the Weirdest Guest

These notes contain series notes and individual title notes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Melissa Keil is from Melbourne, Australia, and has written three novels for big kids that have won awards and been published all around the world. Melissa has had lots of odd jobs, including IT person, drama teacher, waitress at a Mexican restaurant and Egyptian tour guide, but writing is definitely her favourite. She spends her free time being a big nerd and hanging out with her dog, Hugo.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Adele K Thomas was born in England and moved to Australia when she was 9 years old. She studied animation, and as well as illustrating award-winning books she has also worked in film and TV. She is a self-described geek who loves collecting LEGO minifigures and hanging out with her dog, Jasper.



SERIES NOTES

SERIES COMPREHENSION AND ACTIVITIES

A Little Weird Goes a Long Way

If you look closely at Barkly Mansion, you'll see that it's not just Edmund who is a bit weird. In fact, there are quite a lot of weird things going on in each of the stories.

- Make a list of all the weird things you see in the pictures, or that the author describes in the story.
- Write your own weird story. Start by writing about your life on a normal day. What does your house look like? What do you eat for breakfast? What do you do when you get home from school? Now introduce something weird into the story – be as weird as you can! Maybe you eat beetles for breakfast. Or maybe an alien comes to teach your classroom. Rewrite your story imagining a day in your own life when things get a bit weird.

Unique Personalities

Everyone is different, and the residents of Barkly Mansion are more different than most.

Draw a picture of each of the characters in Barkly Mansion and describe their personalities. Make a list of things they say, or their favourite things. Which character do you have the most in common with and why? Choose one word to summarise each of the main characters in the books.

Draw a picture of yourself as one of the characters from the book, and show your reaction to Edmund's arrival. What would you have said?

The characters in Barkly Mansion celebrate each other's differences – after all, it makes them who they are! Write a letter to one of your friends telling them about one of the differences you love about them.

A Map of the Mansion

Barkly Mansion seems like a pretty great place to live. Make a list of all the descriptions of it as you read through the book.

What do you think the inside of the mansion looks like? Draw a map of the inside of the mansion – use the descriptions you find in the book as a starting point, but add to it as you go, and feel free to add rooms of your own.

Make notes on your map of where things happen in the books.



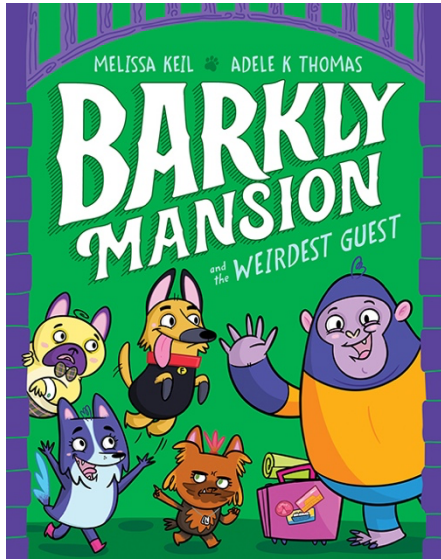
What's the Problem?

All books need a problem. Problems make stories interesting, and they give characters something to solve as a team.

Some of the problems are small, and can be resolved in a chapter, and some are so big they take the whole book to resolve. What kinds of small and big problems can you think of from your own life? Is Edmund not having a place to sleep a small problem or a big one? What about Lady D's toothache? Find your own example of a small and big problem in each book. How do the characters resolve it?

Come up with an alternative solution to solve one of the problems in the stories, and write your own end to the story.





BARKLY MANSION AND THE WEIRDEST GUEST (BOOK 1)

Story 1: The Weirdest Guest

It's a perfectly ordinary day on Sullivan St. And the residents of Barkly Mansion, a perfectly ordinary house on the street, aren't expecting any surprises. They certainly aren't expecting a huge gorilla with weird feet to arrive on their doorstep and announce that he's their new housemate!

Edmund seems nice enough, but where will he sleep? What will he eat? And, more importantly, will he help them get rid of the evil bunnies in the backyard? Cookie, Fizzy, Lady Delilah and Kyle are about to find out what it's like when a gorilla moves in.

Activity

Are the bunnies really evil? How does Edmund help to get Kyle's croquet stick back? Write about a time your day took an unexpected turn.

Story 2: The Fanciest Friends

Kyle has a dream – a fancy dream – and the dream is to join the Society for the Nice-looking, Obviously-distinguished, and really very Best (SNOB, for short). So, Kyle packs a fancy picnic for movie night, and brushes up on all the rules from the SNOB handbook.

But as soon as they arrive at movie night things start to go wrong. Kyle's Barkly Mansion friends are just so *weird* compared to his SNOB friends. When it comes down to choosing between Barkly Mansion and his SNOB membership, Kyle starts to think that maybe the weirdest friends are also the best ones.

Activity

What are some of the rules in the SNOB handbook? Are they good rules? Why/why not? Make a list of rules for friendship that will help you find really good friends (and keep them!)

Story 3: The Scariest Thing

It's Fizzy's birthday party – happy days! But the day gets off to a rocky start when Lady D reveals that she's got a toothache and the Barkly Mansion crew are forced to confront their scariest things just to get her to the dentist.

Lady D is really *really* scared of the dentist, but when she sees all her friends being so brave, she's able to find a bit of bravery inside herself, and maybe Fizzy's birthday will end up bringing the friends even closer than ever.

Activity



What are each of the characters afraid of in the book. What is Edmund afraid of? Edmund's special blanket helps him to feel better. Draw something that scares you, and write about things that help you to overcome your fear.

COMPREHENSION

- What weird things do you notice about Barkly Mansion before Edmund even knocks on the door?
- Who are the main characters in the book? What do they do in the story?
- Why does everyone stare at Edmund when he arrives at the door?
- Make a list of words from the book that you don't know. Look in the dictionary to find out what they mean (you might want to check whether Kyle has any meanings wrong!)
- Can you trust the bunnies? Why/why not?
- How do each of the characters react to scary situations (like bring shot out of a cannon)?
- Why do you think Kyle wants to be fancy? Is being fancy a good thing or a bad thing?
- What happens that makes Edmund sad about his new hat?
- Are good manners important? Do the SNOB members have good manners?
- Kyle worries that his friends won't manage at movie night without him? Is he right? Why is he so important to his friends?
- How does being called 'weird' make Edmund feel? Have you ever been called something that makes you feel bad? Does it matter if people aren't trying to hurt your feelings or not?
- Edmund feels 'slumpy' when his friends call him weird. What happens to your body when you feel sad?
- What does Lady D do to show Edmund how important he is to the group?

