

Teacher's Notes



*Plum & Woo:
The Puzzling
Pearls*
**Written by
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**Teacher's
Notes by
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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary aged readers (ages 9+, grades 5+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses (ACELT1610)
 - Understand how to move beyond making bare assertions and take account of differing perspectives and points of view (ACELA1502)
 - Understand how texts vary in purpose, structure and topic as well as the degree of formality (ACELA1504)

THEMES

- Friendship and differences
- Fashion
- Blended families
- Love

SYNOPSIS

A dazzling, whip-smart mystery series about two very different girls and a whole heap of danger ...

Hannah Plum loves fashion, fun, and junk food. Patti Woo is obsessed with detective novels, lives in leggings, and is definitely not Hannah's friend. But the two girls are stuck at the beachside Heart Break Hotel together while Hannah's dad and Patti's mum are out birdwatching and – yuck! – falling in love.

When a hotel guest's beautiful pink wedding dress is stolen, Hannah is determined to get to the bottom of it. With a reluctant Patti in tow, the two girls are launched into an ever-deepening mystery. Why is a wedding planner sending secret signals to an unknown guest? Who's leaving creepy wet diving relics in the hotel rooms? And could some long-lost, famous pink pearls be at the heart of it all?

If Plum and Woo want to survive the summer, they'll need to solve this mystery in style. But first, they'll have to survive each other ...

In every Plum & Woo instalment, Hannah and Patti will investigate a surprising and sinister fashion mystery while also navigating their newly blending family. Brimming with fun, danger and highly relatable tween angst, this series is perfect for 9+!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Siberry is a freelance writer and content producer who spent many years working at the ABC. She lives in Sydney with her husband and two children. Her debut middle-grade novel, *The Brilliant Ideas of Lily Green*, won the Ampersand Prize, the premier award for debut authors in Australia and New Zealand. *Plum & Woo: The Puzzling Pearls* is the first in an exciting new series.

THEMES

- **Friendship and differences**

Hannah and Patti are complete opposites: 'The problem was they had nothing in common. Patti was the kind of girl who played a million sports, collected trophies like toys, and read four-hundred-page mystery books just for fun. Hannah, on the other hand, had never read anything longer than a celebrity magazine. And the only sporty thing she owned was a cute tennis skirt she'd bought from an op shop and dyed purple.' (p 23)

But as the novel progresses they realise that doing things together can actually have its benefits: 'Okay, okay, let's just say we did it together.' Hannah gave Patti a grateful smile, realising that all this time they really had been getting to know each other. After all, she now knew that Patti Woo was bossy and clever and far too fast at running. She also knew that Patti was braver and better than any of the made-up detectives in her mystery novels. And if they were going to face down an evil writer, there really was no-one else Hannah would rather do it with.' (p 221)

How do Patti and Hannah overcome their differences? What brings them together?

- **Fashion**

Hannah Plum just loves fashion! So does the bride-to-be, Sabina, and her bridesmaid, Thea. Not to mention Travis, the wedding planner! This novel contains lots of references to fashion. And of course it hinges on the theft of a spectacular pink wedding gown and three other pink dresses.

Discuss the role that fashion plays in this novel.

- **Blended families**

'My parents split up when I was five. Then a few years later, my dad started "liking" someone else. You know what happened then?' Hannah blinked. 'My dad remarried and had two other kids,' snapped Patti. 'Do you know how annoying half-brothers are? *Do you?*' (p 116)

Patti is already part of a blended family (since her father has re-married) and she and Hannah are fearful that their parents are going to become a couple as well. By the end of the novel, what have they discovered about being part of a blended family?



- **Love**

This is a story of lost love: 'Roxy was left all on her own with the hotel, seven pink pearls, and a broken heart.' (p 54)

But it is also a heartfelt story about how much love can mean to people: 'Hannah thought about it. Love did make people do strange things, like Sabina melting down over her wedding. But love made people do good things too.' (p 203)

And it is a romance too, since these events take place while the girls' parents are conducting their own new romance.

What do Patti and Hannah discover about love?

WRITING STYLE

Genre:

This novel falls into the **mystery genre**. For example, several mysteries are presented in the opening pages of this novel, which the two twelve-year-old sleuths endeavour to solve: Roxy Barton's tragic loss by drowning of her husband-to-be, and her missing pearls; several stolen pink dresses; Hannah spotting Astrid retrieving a \$100 bill from a pot plant and leaving an object for a woman dubbed Miss X to retrieve there; the wet glove found in the room of the disgruntled guests, Mr and Mrs Brindle.

Mysteries rely on **clues** and this novel contains plenty of them, for example:

- 'But there's not a single grain of sand underneath the window.' (p 33)
- 'Now, let's start with the clue we found in the room. The red smudge.' (p 44)
- 'Okay, so we also have a Miss X in room 44, which makes six potential suspects.' (p 46)
- 'Four pink dresses – all connected to the Heart Break Hotel.' (p 56)
- 'Which meant one thing: Travis and the mysterious woman in room 44 knew each other.' (p 61)
- 'Secrets of the Deep' (p 65) is the last poem Roxy Barton wrote, which is also a clue.
- Astrid sends them a secret message: 'If you want to know who's in room 44, meet me under the heart sign at sunset. AND BRING YOUR HANDBAG.' (p 70)
- The deliberate accident at the Fun Fair (Ch 13).
- The threatening message sent to Patti (p 129).
- 'Patti, it's a pink dress under cover!' yelled Hannah,' (p 161).

Sometimes, though, clues can lead to the wrong conclusions:

'Hannah and Patti swapped horrified looks. Astrid really was a hopeless hotel employee. But they were far worse detectives, because all the pieces of the puzzle that they'd collected over the last two days were starting to snap together – and it wasn't the picture they'd expected at all.' (p 195)

What was the most impressive piece of detective work that Hannah or Patti did in this novel?



Structure:

The beginnings and endings of chapters in this novel are strong and provocative, for example:

Beginning: 'Inside, the pink hotel lobby had broken into chaos.' (Ch 2, p 10)

Ending: 'If someone's having a dress drama, they need my help!' (Ch 3, p 27)

How does a strong opening or closing sentence assist in structuring a narrative?

Characters:

The cast of characters assembled in this novel is reminiscent of an Agatha Christie novel plot:

- Hannah Plum
- Patti Woo
- Byron Plum, Hannah's dad
- Tulip Woo, Patti's mum
- Luis DelRio, owner of the Heart Break Hotel
- Cooper, Luis's partner and co-owner
- Astrid, Luis's teenage daughter
- Mr and Mrs Brindle, annoyed guests
- Sabina Seastone, a bride-to-be whose pink wedding dress has been stolen
- Travis Hardcastle, her wedding planner
- Woman who owns the Hidden Gem Gift Shoppe
- Conrad Mule, a travel writer
- Miss X, aka The Eagle, aka Thea Gull
- Veronica and Velvette, twin wedding guests
- Hugh, Sabina's husband-to-be

Who is your favourite character, and why?

Who is your least favourite character, and why?

Literary devices:

Identify any literary devices employed in this narrative and add quotes to the table below.

Simile	'making him look like a loveable emu.' (p 21)
Metaphor	
Alliteration	'The Case of the M enacing M ansion.' (p 2)
Humour	'I should have known only a hack writer could come up with such a pathetic piece of poetry.' 'I'll take that as a compliment.' Conrad smugly readjusted a red pen in his pocket,' (p 214)
Other	



Poetry:

Several references are made to poetry in the novel – and, of course, Roxy Barton was a poet:

‘It’s like Roxy wanted people to read her poem and learn about the meaning of love. Like she didn’t want to give her pearls to just anyone. She wanted them to earn it.’ Patti looked astonished that Hannah Plum had actually interpreted a love poem, but her face quickly clouded over. ‘Love, love, love. Do you know how sick I am of hearing that word?’ ‘You *are* holding a book of love poetry, Patti.’ (p 114)

Write a love poem as if written by Roxy about her lost lover.

COMPREHENSION

- Which bird are Byron and Tulip trying to spot? *Answer:* Golden-bellied finch.
- Who was Roxy Barton? *Answer:* A poet and former owner of the Heart Break Hotel.
- What is the name of Hannah Plum’s dog? *Answer:* Mango.
- What is the name of Roxy Barton’s cat? *Answer:* Love.
- How many priceless pearls are missing? *Answer:* Seven.

WRITING EXERCISE

Write a fashion column for a magazine as if written by Hannah, describing the outfits of some of the guests at the Heart Break Hotel.

Write a synopsis for another adventure with Hannah and Patti.

Read other books about either mysteries or fashion, and compare to this one. [See **Related Reading.**]

ILLUSTRATION EXERCISE

Create a cover for a teenage magazine featuring Hannah modelling one of her favourite outfits, and add a caption to the image.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Design and sketch your ideal image of a wedding dress.

Have fun dressing up in your invented fashions.

Read this passage: ‘Ten minutes later, after some expert tweaking and styling, Sabina stood in front of the mirror, gazing at her new beachside wedding look. The white satin slip dress was cinched in perfectly with the pink belt, and the polka-dot scarf was draped elegantly around her neck in an artful knot. Perched on her head like a cherry on top was Hannah’s handmade rose crown.’ (p 173)

Then give students a pile of clothes and accessories and invite them to create fashionable ‘new looks’. Take photos or draw images of the students modelling their outfits and create a ‘fashion gallery’.



RELATED READING

Picture Books:

Byrne, Eva *Along Came Coco* Abrams, 2019.

Chen, Eva *Juno Valentine and the Fantastic Fashion Adventure* Ill. by Derek Desierto. Feiwel & Friends, 2019.

Clarke, Maxine Beneba *Fashionista* Hachette, 2019.

Faruqi, Saadia *Yasmin the Fashionista* Ill. by Hatem Aly (Yasmin Series #3) Picture Window Books, 2018.

Hess, Megan *Claris: the Chicest Mouse in Paris* Hardie Grant Egmont, 2018.

Hess, Megan *Clarise: Fashion Show Fiasco* Hardie Grant Egmont, 2019.

Fiction:

Abela, Deborah *The Most Marvellous Spelling Bee Mystery* Penguin Random House, 2018.

Child, Lauren *Ruby Redfort* (Series) HarperCollins.

Dubosarsky, Ursula *The Cryptic Casebook of Carlomagna (and Alberta)* Ill. by Terry Denton. (Series) Allen & Unwin.

Harper, Charise Mericle *Fashion Kitty* (Series) Hachette Australia.

Harvey, Jacqueline *Alice-Miranda in Paris* (Alice-Miranda Series #7) Penguin Random House, 2013.

Nannestad, Katrina *Lottie Perkins Fashion Designer* Ill. by Makoto Koji. (Lottie Perkins Series #4) HarperCollins, 2018.

Van Mil, Jules *Gemma Riley and the Fashion Fiasco* Pan Macmillan, 2020.



WORKSHEET 1: FASHION FORWARD!

Name the fashion items below.

1. 	6. 
2. 	7. 3 items: 
3. 	8. 
4. 	9. 
5. 	10. 

Answers: 1. Sunglasses. 2. Beret. 3. Tutu. 4. Scarf. 5. Headband. 6. Tiara. 7. Mini-skirt, tights and high heels. 8. Boots. 9. Shoulder bag. 10. Jeans.



WORKSHEET 2: WORDS FROM THE HEART

Finish these scrambled words which contain the word 'heart'.
Then write a definition in your own words and discuss with other students.

Scrambled Word	Word	Definition
eg. khaeearrbt	heartbreak	
1. bhrtactae		
2. rlaentadh		
3. lhtrefeta		
4. rslateehs		
5. catherathe		
6. rbtueranh		
7. drtnhaniegre		
8. whtresteae		
9. arthbohrat		
10. fdytreoase		

Answers: 1. Heartbeat. 2. Heartland. 3. Heartfelt. 4. Heartless. 5. Heartache. 6. Heartburn.
7. Heartrending. 8. Sweetheart. 9. Heartthrob. 10. Softhearted.



WORKSHEET 3: PLOT POINTS

Identify each of the two-word objects below which are significant to the plot of this novel.

1. 	4. 
2. 	5. 
3. 	6. 

Answer: 1. Pink pearls. 2. Palm tree. 3. Wedding dress. 4. Wet glove. 5. Starfish brooch. 6. Jewellery box.

