

The Ballad of Henry Hoplingsea Teacher Notes

Written by Julia Hubery and Illustrated by Lucia Masciullo

Published by Little Hare, September 2016

SYNOPSIS

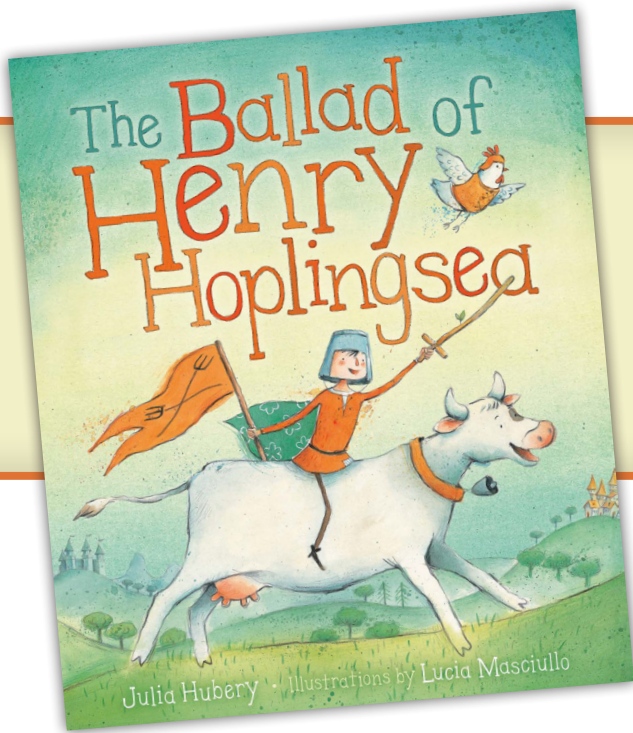
Henry will do anything to win the hand of his beloved Carmelita. He is inventive and determined, and nothing is going to stand in his way. Except maybe a niggling feeling that something is not quite right.

This is a rollicking tale about wanting what you have, rather than having what you want, by international favourite Julia Hubery and award-winning Lucia Masciullo.

THEMES

The theme of this funny and touching story is a comedy of errors in which the characters must learn to recognise the difference between what they think they want, what they think others want, and what everyone actually wants. It is not so much a warning against healthy ambition as a warning about failing to recognise the worth of what one already has. This tale of a heroic knight who sets off on a quest to impress his lady-love is inspired by the chivalric tales of the middle ages, but although the author has included all the usual motifs of a damsel in distress, monsters, dragons, trusty steed and daring deeds, she has also subverted them.





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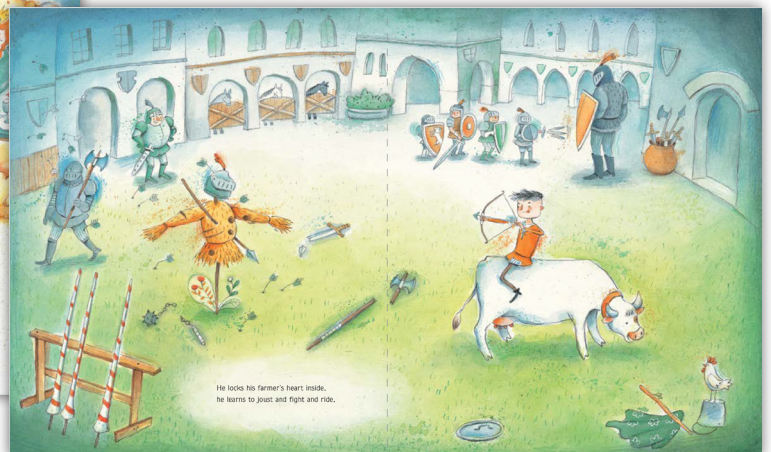
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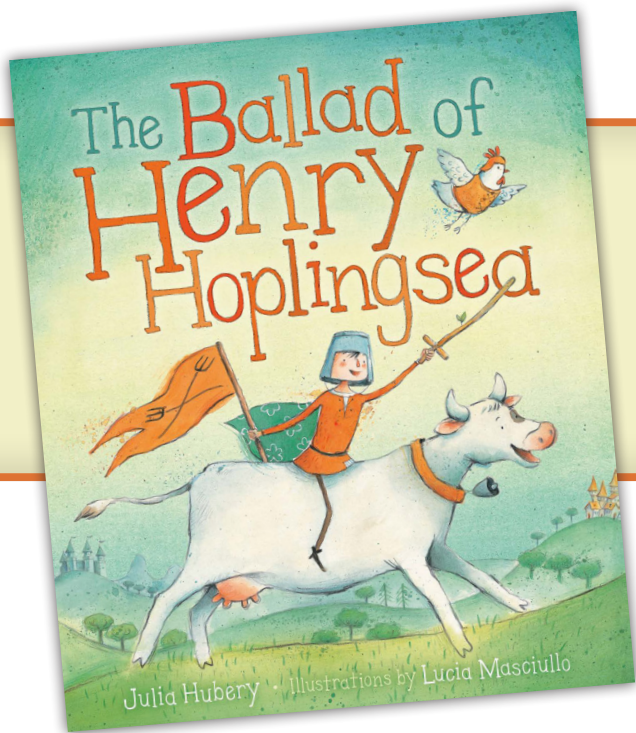
WRITING STYLE

Julia Hubery's faultless verse mixes formal poetic conventions (such as: 'with flag unfurled') with colloquialisms and deliberate grammatical errors ('bestest friend', 'squiffy sneeze'). Julia also manipulates the poetic conventions of alliteration, assonance, sound and rhythm to make this text a pleasure to recite aloud. *The Ballad of Henry Hoplingsea* is written in rhyming couplet. Not all are perfect rhymes, but are instead Julia's 'half rhymes' or 'lazy rhymes'. This means they almost rhyme, but instead of all consonant and vowel sounds rhyming ('sighs'/'eyes'), only some of them rhyme (pearls/world; clops/lost). Julia's verse is so perfectly balanced in pace, voice and mood, however, that the half rhymes are almost impossible to notice.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Lucia Masciullo's illustration style follows Julia's lead in terms of emotional tone—it is an entertaining mix of tradition and humour. Like Julia, Lucia creates humour by subverting traditional motifs, and she enhances the humour of the text by adding subversions of her own. For example, she creates a 'squire' character in the form of a loyal chicken, complete with chicken armour. For this project, in order to create a sense of 'otherworldliness', Lucia chose a deliberately restricted palette, aiming for two predominating hues, orange and blue. To add visual interest to each page, however, each page always includes spots of complementary and contrasting hues, often in the form of Pollock-like splatters of paint, which are seemingly random, but in fact are carefully orchestrated on the page.





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AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Born into a RAF family Julia spent her early years shunting round England – which was great fun in some ways: always plenty of kids, sneaking onto assault courses and huge games of Bulldog’s Charge. The edge of Leeds, where her family settled, was a fantastic place to grow up. She spent hours roaming woods and moorland with her dog, building a love of countryside and nature – a pool of inspiration to draw on when writing.

Another big source of inspiration has been her children, who have enchanted, amused, intrigued, educated and tormented Julia from toddlers to teens. When her kids were all in school, Julia started to write during her days off from a part-time architecture job; she now writes full-time in between family demands.

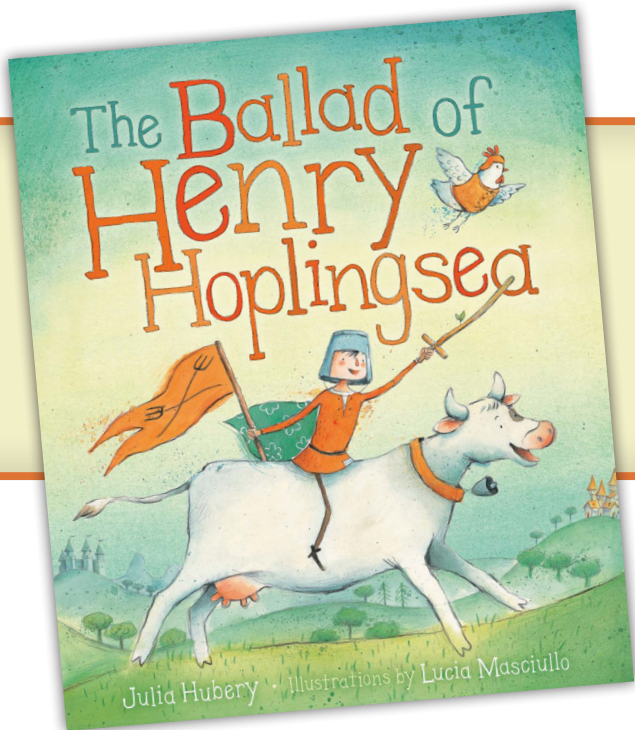
During any spare (and rare) leisure time Julia plinky-plonks on the piano (adamant that it’s never too late to learn!) or she goes walking. She promises herself she will do pottery again one day, and watch grass grow. But just now, whatever time isn’t devoted to writing is mostly absorbed by the delights and dramas of teenage years.

ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Lucia is an award winning children’s book illustrator born and bred in Livorno, Italy. She moved to Australia in 2007 and she now lives and works on the beautiful Gold Coast.

Lucia has collaborated with several top Australian and English Publishers and illustrated fifteen books, among which the CBCA Honour Book and Prime Minister Award shortlisted *Come Down, Cat!*, written by award winning author Sonya Hartnett, CBCA shortlisted *Family Forest* and the best selling series *Our Australian Girl*. *The Ballad of Henry Hoplingsea* will be Lucia’s second book with Little Hare. Her first title, *Together Always*, was published in March 2016.





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STUDY NOTES

1. The theme of *The Ballad of Henry Hoplingsea* can be encapsulated by several traditional proverbs. One such proverb is 'the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence'. What other proverbs can you find that encapsulate that same theme?
2. The author has created verse that seems both traditional and modern. What devices does she use to give her verse its friendly feel? Which textual elements create the 'olden days' feel?
3. Find examples of 'half-rhymes' and consider how Julia has stuck to the rules for half-rhyming in order for them to ring true to the ear.
4. Julia has written the style of verse that is pleasurable to recite aloud. Lord Tennyson was also famous for writing mellifluous verse. Find a piece of Tennyson verse and consider how both he and Julia uses vowel sounds, consonant sounds, and word endings/beginnings for ease of recitation.
5. Both author and illustrator subvert traditional motifs in *The Ballad of Henry Hoplingsea*. What are some of the motifs that the text alone has subverted?
6. What are the traditional motifs subverted by the illustrations alone?

ACTIVITIES

- Ask your students to rewrite the story directly from the point of view of Henry. Encourage them to use rhyme and ask them to explore how the character might be feeling throughout the story.
- Once your students have rewritten their story, ask them to illustrate their own pages. As the story is highly visual, how would they portray their words through illustration to convey the story?
- As a class discuss the importance of heroism. What makes you a hero? There is a large emphasis on being bold and strong, but in the end Henry displayed kindness. Did this still make him a hero to Carmelita? Can you display various emotions but still be classed as a hero?