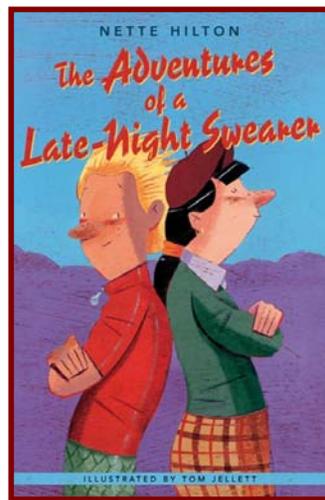


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THE ADVENTURES OF A LATE NIGHT SWEARER

Nette Hilton



Teachers' Notes Written by Nette Hilton

ISBN: 978 07022 3652 5 / AU\$14.95

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Synopsis	2
Themes	2
Writing Style	3
Author Motivation	3
Study Notes	4
About the Author	5

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SYNOPSIS

Nette Hilton's latest book *The Adventures of a Late-Night Swearer* is a funny, interactive and adventurous story.

Speedy Simpson is the absolute best at everything: chucking stones, not doing his homework and, most especially, cycling. He might even have stayed the best if it wasn't for Bebe LaMouche who has a special talent with words that is going to take some beating.

'It's Bebe!' the Year 4s said. 'She's just the best ...'

There was a sudden silence in the playground.

'The best what?' asked Miss Lena as she dabbed at coffee on the front of her shirt.

'Just the best,' said Mikey. 'Just the very, very best!'

Not if Speedy has anything to do with it! Speedy searches high and low until he stumbles upon a secret word that he is sure will impress Bebe and his classmates. But an encounter with an Oompha mum—one of the creatures that lives in the hills that surround the town—forces him to change his personality. When Speedy stops concentrating on being the best he finds that life is not quite as difficult. He even discovers that he is good at teaching others and sharing his skills.

Students will enjoy creating imaginative and fantastic new words from the make-your-own-word section. With lots of secret word bits, hilarious footnotes and comical illustrations from Tom Jellet, *The Adventures of a Late-Night Swearer* is a funny tale with a difference.

Note for teachers: There are no actual swear words in this book.

THEMES**Friendship**

In the beginning, Speedy is in control of the knowledge he shares with his friends and because they are keen to know his secrets his friends are willing to play second best to his knowledge. This friendship is a dependent friendship that can only survive as long as his friends do not challenge Speedy and continue to allow him to be the best. At the end of the book we see a friendship that is more evenly balanced. Speedy begins to actively share his skills, and his friends, in turn, respond to his generosity and support.

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Sharing

Being the best is sometimes a lonely path. Speedy is quickly cast aside when Bebe arrives at school because she involves her class mates in her games. Speedy is unable to join in the fun because he believes that he must be the best and be in control to be liked. A humbling encounter with an Oompha mum causes Speedy to recognise his shortcomings and understand that these can be accepted without losing friends.

Self Respect

Speedy learns to like himself when he is forced to admit being the best isn't everything. His decision to change his behaviour provides him with insight into his own personality and his place in friendships.

WRITING STYLE

Nette has used a variety of styles, with the main story having a linear narrative. However, because of the wide range of reading abilities in young readers, the book has been structured to allow for different reading styles and experiences. The opening page outlines the intention of the book to include different ideas that meander around the narrative. Each page has additional footnotes that are written in a smaller font and in a more challenging style to accommodate independent readers. These footnotes are humorous and inviting but do not change the narrative in any way. They allow the reader to move at their own pace and in their own direction. At the end of the book there are pages dedicated to structuring new words to be used instead of swearing.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

This text was originally written as a poem about a dreadful boy named Toady O'Malley, but it was too long and too difficult to be published as a book so Nette decided to try it again as a narrative text. When she rewrote the story in prose a new story began to take shape—Speedy's story. This often happens to Nette when she rewrite stories and she can see now how it would be possible to go back to naughty Toady and write another narrative that would be different again. Nette loved the Oomphas but has absolutely no idea where they came from. In the verse version the Oompha mum was reading a romance novel and wishing that the moon would send her down a new husband to love—she had fun writing her!

STUDY NOTES

1. Several of the chapter heading pages are suitable for using as worksheets.
 - Chapter 3 (p.19): lists the characteristics of an Oompha. Students, in partners, could draw outlines of each other and add features to make

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- an Oompha. They could then be asked to describe their illustrations and explain why they chose them.
 - Chapter 6 (p.49): lists instructions on how to draw a map of Oomphalala. Based on this list, and their knowledge of Oomphalala from the story, students could be asked to design an ad or tourist brochure for Oomphalala.
 - Chapter 7 (p.55) & Chapter 9 (p.69): shows newspaper headlines from the local paper. Students could be asked to compile a news report for TV based on the article and information from the corresponding chapter.
 - Chapter 8 (p.63): lists instructions for making Gran's boardshorts. Using this list as a guide, students could design a new set of boardshorts or swimmers and explain to their classmates their special features.
2. How does Speedy change from the beginning to the end?
 3. Brainstorm as a class the characteristics of Speedy. Use a graphic organiser with Speedy in the centre.
 4. Why does the author use Oomphas in the story? How do they help the author advance the story?
 5. Look at the new words in the back of the book. Students could be given sets of words and asked to make up fun ones themselves. The class could then vote on their favourite in a silent ballot.
 6. Students could interview someone in their school or community asking them about learning English as a second language and then relate this back to the character of Bebe. Discuss what languages your students speak and what countries they have visited. Discuss the differences between difference countries and Australia.
 7. To further discuss the themes of self awareness, students could be asked to discuss all the things that they can do now that they couldn't do when they were younger.
 8. Prior to this exercise, ensure the students know each other well by engaging them in different bonding games. Then, in pairs, have students tell their partner things they like about their partner. Use prescriptive language structure to enable everyone to participate, for example: 'I like the way you ... do your hair, make us laugh, play the flute' etc.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nette Hilton is one of Australia's finest writers on relationships between children. Her work is intuitive and gentle but assertive. Her books are usually concerned with young children negotiating school dynamics and finding a place in the world or the search for identity. Nette is consistently listed in the CBCA

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Notable Book collections, and has received awards for several of her picture books and novels for younger readers.

Nette Hilton's sweet and gentle book about standing up for yourself is, as usual warm and well imagined. The novel is great for early readers to help them build confidence with a familiar school scenario.

Star of the Circus Magpies

This is an enchanting story, thoroughly satisfying on many levels. Easily negotiated by newly independent readers, it is a story with a realistic setting and, more importantly, a story complete in itself...Hilton manages to create a thoroughly convincing narrative with wholly believable characters...

Star of the Show Magpies