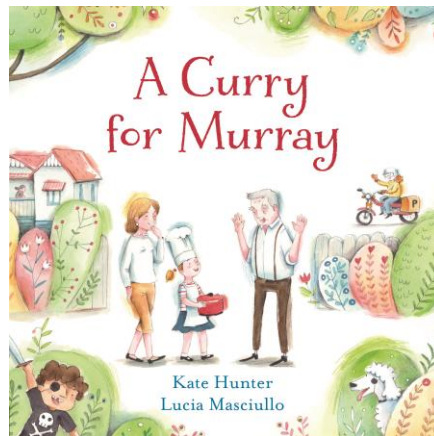


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A CURRY FOR MURRAY

Kate Hunter & Lucia Masciullo



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian
in context with the Australian curriculum
(English)

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SYNOPSIS

When Molly's neighbour goes into hospital, she wants to help somehow. So she rolls up her sleeves and decides to make a curry for Murray. Before long, her cooking is in demand. She soon finds herself serving people not only in her neighbourhood, but in other parts of the world as well.

But when Molly hurts herself in an accident, her generosity and thoughtfulness are not forgotten. Now it's her turn to accept the help – and the food – of others.

A Curry for Murray is a delightful and engaging story about community, kindness and the importance of looking out for one another.

THEMES

Community:

- The importance of community and neighbours is highlighted in the story.
- Members of communities help one another.
- Communities reach beyond the immediate vicinity of one's home; they extend globally.

Relationships:

- Molly values her relationships with neighbours and willingly helps those around her, even those she doesn't know personally.

Service:

- Molly serves others by sensing their needs and fulfilling these needs in her own way.

Empathy and Kindness:

- The values of empathy and kindness feature in the text. Molly can imagine what it would be like to be sad because a loved one is in hospital (empathy), so she does something for Murray that she thinks will cheer him up (kindness).

Poetry:

- The text is written using poetic devices such as rhythm and rhyme.

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WRITING STYLE

A Curry for Murray is written in third person, past tense, and uses a whimsical and rhythmic style. The illustrations add meaning to the narrative, showing the various personalities in Molly's community as well as the ingredients that make up her delicious recipes. The text is suitable for independent readers and is a great story for reading aloud.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the text, examine the cover and endpapers carefully. Make predictions about the storyline. Share these with a friend.
- Read the text aloud in its entirety, allowing students to enjoy the illustrations and the poetic nature of the narrative. Discuss the use of rhyme and rhythm. How does it add to the mood and pace of the story?
- Share with a partner what you think the main message of *A Curry for Murray* is.
- What is your relationship like with your neighbours?
 - Have you ever needed help from them? Has there ever been a time when people have cooked for your family?
 - Have your neighbours ever needed help from you? Does your family cook for elderly or sick people? Do you show you care in some other way?
 - Do you have special events in your neighbourhood, such as Christmas or New Year's functions?
 - Write a reflection that shares some of your thoughts and ideas about ways your neighbourhood can connect with each other.
- Why is it important to connect with others in your neighbourhood? Why do you think Kate Hunter decided to write a story like this?
- Interview people about their neighbourhoods and compare them to your own. Devise open-ended questions that help those you interview to share their memories. Present your findings in a creative way, sharing the differences and similarities.
 - Interview your parents and/or grandparents about what their neighbourhoods were like when they were growing up. Compare their stories with your own experiences.
 - Discuss with classmates whether different cultures have different stories about and relationships with their neighbours – or is there a common thread?

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- *A Curry for Murray* allows for great visual literacy. Examine the illustrations carefully. What are they telling us in addition to the text?
- How has humour been used in both the text and the illustrations?
- What values does Molly have that are clearly seen in *A Curry for Murray*? What can you learn from Molly?
- Does your family ever eat any of the dishes Molly cooks? Is there a food that rhymes with your name? Choose a recipe of Molly's to cook and bring in for a shared class picnic.
- Choose a local charity or nursing home and plan to bake for them. Invite members of that community to your classroom to share your food, or alternatively, have some class representatives take your food to them.
- Often when people get sick or a community faces a disaster such as a flood or fire, community organisations support by cooking and providing food. Find out more about these sorts of organisations, such as local churches, parent support groups at schools, or larger charity organisations such as The Salvation Army. There are even specific organisations devoted to cooking during disasters, such as Baked Relief.
- Discuss how this story incorporates the notion of a 'global community' and 'international-mindedness'.
 - On a world map, track Molly's gifts of food to cities such as Sydney, Seoul and New York.
- In small groups, create a list of other ways besides cooking that could be used to support those in need.
- Create a menu of Molly's food offerings. Include a description of each dish.
- Create a 'Recipe for a Great Community'. What are the essential ingredients? What methods could be used to create such a place?
- Many of Molly's recipes include healthy ingredients. Learn about the Healthy Eating Pyramid and the importance of making informed eating choices. Categorise the ingredients in Molly's dishes into the main food groups.

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- Take a digital photo and then sketch a picture of your street, including your own house. Draw and write the names of any neighbours you know, similar to the first page opening of *A Curry for Murray*. What foods could you cook for them? Write an accompanying text for these illustrations, and include drawings of the ingredients in your dishes.
- Discuss the concept of 'paying it forward'. How does *A Curry for Murray* highlight this philosophy?

AUTHOR MOTIVATION – KATE HUNTER

I'm a keen traveller but I love life in the suburbs and I cherish relationships with friends and neighbours. *A Curry For Murray* happened because my younger daughter wanted to cook for our neighbour, who really is called Murray. Murray told us his wife Maureen was in hospital. They're a lovely couple who have lived in our street for fifty years, so my husband mowed their lawn and I decided to cook a meal for them. My younger daughter Sally, who was seven at the time said, 'We should make a curry for Murray!'

So we did.

I thought Sally's rhyme was cute so I decided to pen a children's story, something I said I would never do! It was Lucia's idea to break the dishes down in terms of ingredients in the illustrations. I really enjoyed it because the story spirals into a ridiculous craziness and we had heaps of fun coming up with rhymes ... Is there a name that rhymes with 'spare ribs'? Is there a dish that rhymes with 'London'?

More than that, I'm always touched by how eager people are to help out with gifts of food. It's the first thing we offer when someone is sick or sad. When so much is said and written about how we're becoming disconnected from our neighbours and communities, I think of how quickly people mobilise the 'casserole crew' and the world feels like it's actually all right.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate Hunter is a writer of all sorts of things: books, ads, articles and 'to-do' lists that rarely get done. Her favourite things are conversation, food, friends and family, preferably enjoyed all at once. Originally keen on journalism, her inclination to embellish the truth got in the way of a credible journalistic career. After twenty years as a copywriter, Kate still writes ads but prefers writing books. In 2010, Kate published her first middle reader novel *Mosquito Advertising: The Parfizz Pitch*, followed closely by *Mosquito Advertising: The Blade Brief* (2011) and *Mosquito Advertising: The Crunch Campaign* (2012). *A Curry for Murray* is her first picture book. She lives in Brisbane with her

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husband, their three kids, a dog, and – after rain – more than a few mosquitoes. One day she would like to live in New York City or on a remote tropical island.

You can find Kate online at www.katehunter.com.au

ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION – LUCIA MASCIULLO

When I read Kate’s manuscript the first time, I immediately loved the quirky and funny mood of the story. I was also very happy there were so many bizarre characters that I could work on creating. In my opinion, working on the characters and the early sketches is the best part of illustrating a book and certainly the part I enjoy the most. The reason I like it so much is because it’s a very creative process, and I am particularly appreciative of authors like Kate who allow that. She doesn’t over-describe any characters in the text, so my imagination was free to create the characters and the other elements of the book the way I wanted!

Finally, as it happens, I also like good food (who doesn’t!) and this book was a great opportunity for me to work on illustrating and showcasing so many different, yet delicious dishes. For this particular book my main sources of inspiration have been cooking and recipe books. I have studied the way photographers compose different types of food to make them look delicious and appetising. Like for all visual art forms, photographing food requires a subtle balance of light, colour and texture. I learnt that is possible by altering the right balance of these elements, to make a dish look completely revolting! My main challenge for this project was to convey that deliciousness with my watercolour paints instead of by taking a photograph. When the food that I illustrated was beautiful and even mouth-watering, I knew I had done a good job.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Born and bred in Italy, Lucia Masciullo now lives on the Gold Coast, where she works as an illustrator. She defines herself as a ‘visual explorer’ and while she works traditionally, her dynamic compositions and whimsical characters give her illustrations a fresh, contemporary feel. She likes running, surfing and eating homemade pizza. She has illustrated Sonya Hartnett’s picture books *The Boy and the Toy*, *Come Down, Cat!* and *The Wild One* and Kim Kane’s *Family Forest*.

You can find Lucia online at www.luciamasciullo.com