

The Tales Of Mrs Mancini

by Natalie Jane Prior

Illustrated
Cheryl Orsini

Book Summary:

The Tales of Mrs Mancini tells the story of a cat who, together with her human friend, Filippina, runs a cake shop full of delectable treats. Alongside her flair for flan, Mrs Mancini also has a special ability to bring lonely children together.

A collection of three fully illustrated short stories celebrating friends and friendship!

Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes:

The Tales of Mrs Mancini suits the following Australian Curriculum content descriptors:

Foundation (Kindergarten/Prep)

English

ACELT1575

ACELT1783

Year 1

English

ACELT1581

ACELT1586

Year 2

English

ACELA1469

ACELT1591

ACELT1833

Design and Technologies

F-2

ACTDEP007

ACTDEP009

General Capabilities

Personal and Social Capability

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Notes by: Christina Wheeler

Appropriate Ages: Ages 3+

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- English
- Design and Technologies

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

The Tales of Mrs Mancini combines effective storytelling with beautiful illustrations, creating three short stories that are relatable and appealing. Centring on the theme of friendship and the special bond shared by siblings, the book tells the tales of Mrs Mancini, who is perceptive, thoughtful and generous, stepping in when she sees her friends struggling. It is a perfect text for early childhood audiences, as it emphasises the importance of noticing and reacting to others' feelings and helps navigate the difficulties that arise when apologies need to be made or when feeling anxious or lonely.

THEMES

- Friendship
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Siblings
- Perseverance
- Generosity

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Natalie Jane Prior is the award-winning author of numerous books for children and young adults. Her work includes the classic picture book *THE PAW* (illustrated by Terry Denton), the internationally successful fantasy series *LILY QUENCH* and *THE FAIRY DANCERS* (illustrated by Cheryl Orsini). She lives in Brisbane with her husband, daughter and two Dachshunds. For more visit www.nataliejaneprior.com

Cheryl Orsini has illustrated more than twenty children's books, including the much-loved *ABC BOOK OF CARS, TRAINS, BOATS AND PLANES*. Her work also regularly appears in magazines and exhibitions. For more visit www.cherylorsini.com

STUDY NOTES ON THEMES AND CURRICULUM AREAS

Pre-reading Questions

- Before reading, look carefully at the front cover, end papers and title page of *The Tales of Mrs Mancini*. Make predictions about Mrs Mancini with the clues given, such as her body language and the expression on her face.
- Explain that there are three short stories that make up *The Tales of Mrs Mancini*. Take time to discuss the rhyming couplet on the title page of each tale. What do these reveal about the story about to unfold?
- Discuss the way in which illustrations help tell stories, offering another layer of meaning in addition to the written text.

Reading and Viewing

- Trace the narrative structure of each of the short stories on a simple story graph, highlighting the introduction, complication, climax and resolution for each. Discuss the message in each story.
- What can we tell about the relationships between the main character of each story and their siblings? How do we know that Claudette and Ziggy are close? Even though Sam has only just been born, how do we know how Jack feels about him? What can we tell about the special bond between the twins, Daisy and Rose?
- Examine the illustrations in which Mrs Mancini uses her Tail Magic. How do the illustrations help us to see the magic at work? Discuss the play on words in the title – tale and tail.
- How do the body language and facial expressions in the illustrations add meaning to the text? In Jack's Tale, for example, Jack's body language tells much of the story. What words would you use to describe Jack's emotions just by reading his body language (see Worksheet 3)?
- Why is Jack feeling anxious? How can we tell from the illustrations that something is bothering him?
- Why does Jack feed his banana muffin to the pigeons?
- Discuss ways in which to deal with bullies. Likewise, discuss the motivation of the bullies.
- Mrs Mancini is a good friend to Claudette, Jack and the twins. What makes a good friend? How does Mrs Mancini show friendship in *The Tales of Mrs Mancini*?
- In what ways does Mrs Mancini display perseverance?

Speaking and Listening

- In reading groups, take turns reading the text aloud. Ask for help with any unfamiliar words. Add these new words to your Word Wall.
- Which is your favourite page opening in *The Tales of Mrs Mancini*? Why is this your favourite? Share with a friend.
- What words would you use to describe Mrs Mancini's character?
- Which is your favourite of the three tales in *The Tales of Mrs Mancini*? Discuss with a friend.
- What do you think the relationship between Mrs Mancini and Filippina is like? Use evidence from the text to support your responses.
- Listen to a partner retell one of the stories in *The Tales of Mrs Mancini* in their own words, then swap and tell your version. Alternatively, record your own retelling using an app such as Explain Everything.
- Discuss Rose's comment that she 'just didn't know how to say sorry'. Have you ever felt like Rose? Role play different ways in which to mend a friendship after a misunderstanding.

Writing and Representing

- Use role-play to retell one of the stories in *The Tales of Mrs Mancini*. Perform a scene to your class.
- Write and illustrate a new tale in which Mrs Mancini helps another character in the book, such as Filippina.
- Write a journal entry describing a typical day in Mrs Mancini's cake shop.
- Choose one of the other shops such as the florist, book shop or fruit shop on which to write an original tale.
- Draw your own portrait of Mrs Mancini. Consider holding your own art show at which to display the class's work.
- In the role of one of the children, write a recount of Mrs Mancini's birthday picnic.

Grammar, Punctuation and Vocabulary

- Use the streetscape of the square to practise giving directions, left and right, for example 'the fruit shop is to the right of the cake shop'.
- Use the text on the page opening in which Ziggy's hat gets blown away to introduce prepositions such as under and through.

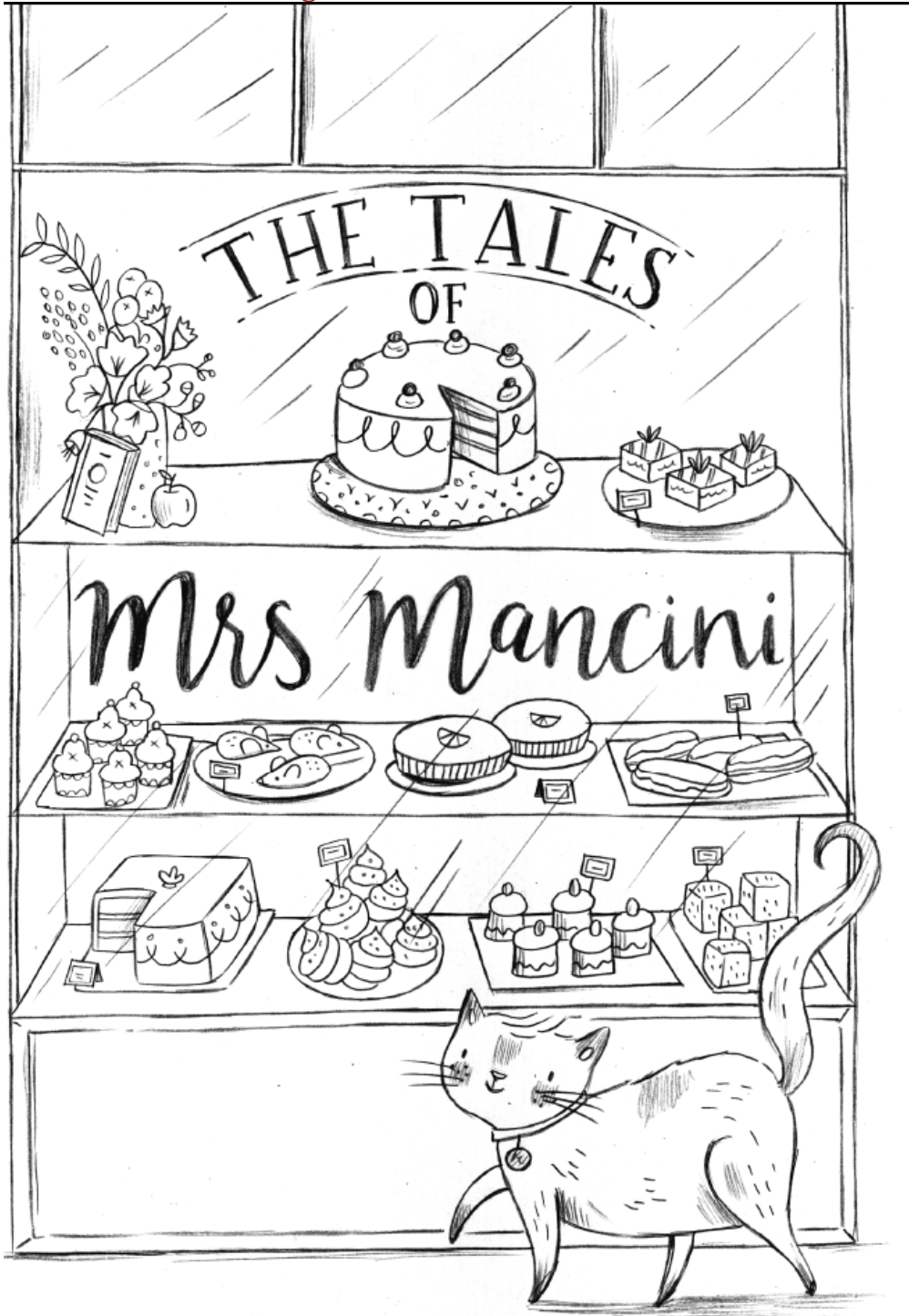
Design and Technologies

- Create a menu for Mrs Mancini's cake shop, including the foods that she gives the children such as meringues, chocolate éclairs and banana muffins. Other items in her shop include sugar mice, gingerbread, cakes and fruit pies.
- Hold your own birthday picnic for Mrs Mancini, making special invitations for classmates that match their interests or likes. Once you have received your invitation, design and make the gift for your given person.
- In small groups, design and create a model of the town square, using recyclable materials such as cereal boxes and other resources to construct its shops and buildings. Label and decorate the town square.
- Create Mrs Mancini's cake shop in a corner of your classroom. Create pretend baked goods or use the cut-outs in Worksheet 4. Take turns either being Filippina and the customers, using play money to complete transactions.









About the Author of the Teachers' Notes

Christina Wheeler is a teacher-librarian who works with primary and lower-secondary students. She completed an Arts degree, majoring in English and History, at the University of Queensland, followed by a post-graduate diploma in Education. She later received a graduate diploma in teacher-librarianship from QUT. One of her favourite aspects of her job is what she calls the 'goosebump effect' – those moments when students share their insights and experiences of texts. The joy of being able to bring non-readers to books is another of her passions.

Worksheet 1 - Colouring In



Worksheet 3 – Jack’s body language (non-verbal communication)

Worksheet 3 – Classroom Cake Shop

<p>Meringues \$1</p> 	<p>Banana Muffins \$1.50</p> 
<p>Chocolate Éclairs \$2</p> 	<p>Sugar Mice 50c</p> 
<p>Cake \$3</p> 	<p>Cookies 20c</p> 
<p>Slice \$4</p> 	<p>Cup Cakes \$2</p> 