



Teachers' Notes

Thorpey

RUTH STARKE
ILLUSTRATED BY KATE JARDINE

OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Young Readers
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Author	Ruth Starke
Illustrator	Kate Jardine
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INTRODUCTION

It's hard being a good pet owner.

And when your pet is a Comet fish, and should be swimming around, very fast, but is floating upside down, what can you do? What's wrong with Thorpey? Is he unhappy? Is it tummy trouble? Only little sister Annie knows for sure.

From tall tales to spooky stories and everything in between, the Mates are All-Australian stories for Aussie kids, illustrated in colour on every page.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

South Australian author **Ruth Starke** teaches English and creative writing at Flinders University and TAFE. She started writing fiction for young people in 1992 and has since earned such accolades as an Honour Book (Younger Readers) in the 2001 CBC Awards, a CBC Notable Book, 1998, and an Aurealis award in 1997. Some of her books include *Nips XI*, *The Twist in the Tale*, *Coming Out*, *Stella by the Sea* and *Noodle Pie*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Katie Jardine has been designing and illustrating for as long as she can remember. She loves it so much she doesn't consider it work! She lives on a farm with her husband Phil, her two little boys Ben and Jack, her workmate Daisy (a cuddly pet Labrador) and a rowdy bunch of Kelpie dogs. When she isn't creating something, you can find her relaxing in her hammock.

ACTIVITIES

The following questions can be used to begin a class discussion, or they can be answered individually, in pairs or in groups.

1. English

a) *Thorpey* is told in the first-person narrative. This means that the main character tells the story to the reader as if they are having a conversation with you.

You can tell if a story is told in the first person if the main character uses *I* to say something. So if you were to write *I went to the beach with my family* that's writing in the first person. But if you were to write *Jacob went to the beach with his family* or *Shelley went to the movies with her friends* then you would be writing in a style that we call second-person narration.

But the names really aren't that important! What's interesting is how you write when you begin a story. Tell your partner a story using first-person narration and then have them tell a story to you using second-person narration. After you've done this, write a paragraph using first-person narration. Now, try rewriting this in the second person.

2. History

The first people to keep goldfish as pets lived in China in 800 AD. These goldfish were kept outside and are still considered to be very valuable. It wasn't until the late 1800s that people began to have them indoors. In Australia, goldfish were introduced in 1876 as pets and were then released in streams, ponds and dams throughout the southern half of Australia where they compete with native fish.

- Find out everything you can about goldfish in Australia's river systems.
- Why do you think people have kept goldfish as pets for over a thousand years?
- Do you keep goldfish as pets or do you know anyone who does?

Thorpey is named after our famous swimmer Ian Thorpe. Australia is surrounded by water so it's important that we learn to swim properly. Australians have always been great swimmers. Freestyle is based on the Australian crawl, a stroke invented by an Australian over a hundred years ago.

- Tell about an incident that happened to you while you were swimming or learning to swim.

Australian swimmers have competed in the Olympics since the 1900 games in Paris, where Freddy Lane won our first gold medal in the 200 metre freestyle. He went on to win gold in the obstacle race too. Female swimmers did not compete in Paris, because women's swimming events weren't introduced until 1916.

- Who is your favourite Australian swimmer and why?

You might not know it, but there used to be some really unusual events at the Olympics. The obstacle race that Lane won involved swimming around boats and diving off them! There was also underwater swimming and the plunge, an event where you held your breath for as long as you could.

- If you could invent a new swimming event at the Olympics what would it be?

We also have a history of surf lifesaving in Australia. The first surf lifesaving clubs were founded over a hundred years ago in 1907.

- Write an exciting story about beach rescue.

3. Creative Activities

a) Draw a portrait of a wonderful pet. It doesn't have to be real. Include captions that show what this pet can do.

b) Imagine you have to live in a fish tank. Using a cardboard box make a model of a tank and fill it with pictures of things that you think you would need to live.

c) Using all the information in the story, write an advice column on how to take care of goldfish.

d) Create a class mural of all your pets.

e) Imagine you are writing an Aussie yarn for the Mates series and come up with a plot outline for your book. Make up a catchy title and design a cover. You could present your ideas to the class and say why you think your book should be published in this new series.

4. Pets

a) Looking after a pet is a big responsibility. It's like Ben says, 'I'm the most important person in his world', because Thorpey relies on Ben for everything. Ben also says that it's hard being a pet owner. What qualities do you need to be a good pet owner? Do you think you have these qualities? What would your ideal pet be and why?

b) Some pets need much more care than others. Make a list of pets in order of how much care they need. Take each pet in that list and write down all the things that pet needs if it is to be cared for properly.

c) Give a class talk about your own pets. Be sure to say what you do to look after them. What do you like most about your pet? What do you like least about your pet?

5. Geography

a) What identifies this as an Australian story? Do you think it could take place anywhere in the world?

c) Imagine you had to write a story based somewhere in Australia. Where would you choose and why?

d) Goldfish were introduced into the wild in the southern part of Australia. Mark in the main rivers that flow into the southern half of Australia. What other landmarks can you fill in?



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