

Educational Applicability

Cousin Georgina can be used across many key learning areas in an early to middle years classroom. This is the type of book that can be used for many different purposes depending on the targeted audience. There are opportunities to use this book through all the years in primary school. A section of activity ideas are listed below:

Before the text:

- What does the jacket suggest the book will be about?
- Discuss Style of jacket and end papers
- Investigate this type of illustration - what are some examples of other artists who use this style (both on TV, comic strips, book illustration, famous artists)

Getting into the text

- The use of rhyming and rhythm is used throughout the text - find examples of when the rhyming works and when the pattern is broken suddenly. What effect does this have on the flow and momentum of the text?
- Visual imagery is a key element that makes this book so entertaining. Every page is filled with visual details that add to the humour of the story e.g. pp. 3-4, Dad's tie is in the bowl of Thai food he is stirring while Mum's reading a Thai cookbook upside down. Gallate uses a very familiar motif to end the book - From where did it originate?
- Close up illustration bubbles occur throughout the book e.g. p. 5 and p.15. What impact does this have on the story, does it add to the story, give it another dimension/perspective?
- Multiple perspectives: The story is told from the perspective of Harry. Encourage students to write sections of the story from the perspective of another character e.g. Georgina, Mum, Dad, The Lion, The Taxi Driver.

Drama activities:

- Hotseat different characters from the book
- Write a script for the story and perform as a play. Small groups could act script and act out different scenes.
- Sound and movement are depicted throughout the book - What devices are used to show sound and movement e.g. Sound bubbles p. 5, kicking movement pp. 7-8, swimming movement p. 19, thought/feeling symbols p. 11. Can you think of any other place you have seen this device being used - e.g. cartoons such as Batman and Robin, comic strips. (Link to Visual Art)

- Sequencing of time: The story is structured around the days of the week - Create a story map that shows the sequence of events of the story

HSIE (Social science) Linkages

- Subverting the stereotypes of the 1960s: Stereotypes and caricatures of people in the book are pivotal to the humour of the book. What are some of the stereotypes that can be associated with family life in the 1960s and 70s? e.g. Mum in the kitchen, Dad working - what did they wear?

Find examples of stereotypical images in the book that have been subverted - e.g. Dad looks like a dad in the 1960s with his big hair, shirt and tie, BUT he is doing the cooking while mum is sitting down reading. E.g. Tough kids and their car p. 25, are being scared off by a girl.

- Look closely at the people in the illustrations, some may remind you of animals or famous people e.g. p. 15 the flea is a prominent Australian politician, p. 19 The husband and wife next door look like sea dwelling creatures!

Personal Development/ Health Linkages

- Discuss how Harry might have felt when he heard the news of his cousin's arrival. Have there been situations when visitors have come to your house and taken over for a period of time - Was this a good, not so good, OK experience?
- How does change make us feel, how do we cope with change in our lives? Brainstorm
- Explore subject of bullying

Visual Art Linkages

- Pop Art/Retro Art: What are characteristics of this style of art? E.g. Flat colour, lots of colour - not necessarily realistic, exaggeration of form, characterised figure action/movement. Experiment with creating your own Pop Art masterpiece

Culminating Activity - Language, Maths, Art, Group Work

- In small groups create a Cousin Georgina board game - This allows students to use sequencing, comprehension, artistic, creative skills as well as working together cooperatively on a project.

<i>Nobody's Meaner Than Cousin Georgina</i>	0733611796	\$27.95
<i>Nobody's Meaner Than Cousin Georgina Teachers Notes</i>	9999012787	Free

Author Motivation

My desire to write and illustrate my own book, *There's Nobody Meaner Than Cousin Georgina*, was born out of the creative though often frustrating years I spent working in the animation industry. Animation is about intensive, it takes an enormous amount of work to produce a few minutes of animation. In a large studio, each worker usually only performs one function and then passes the work on to someone else. In some ways it is like working on a process line. Often I didn't even know what the story we were working on was about. I yearned to have more creative control over what I was doing instead of always working on someone else's ideas. I also wanted to work on something that I actually believed in from start to finish. I thought a book would be the answer.

Initially I painted a series of pictures to get my creativity flowing again. I think that before you get too serious about things you need to play a bit first. One of the pictures had two kids and a gorilla in it. I didn't realise it at the time but the two kids were the beginnings of Harry and Georgina and the action depicted in the painting came to be part of the story. Incidentally, the original painting was inspired by a very early childhood memory I had of the zoo. Georgina began to grow as the main character in my mind before any sense of plot developed though. I chose the name Georgina because it rhymes with meaner, not because I have both a cousin and a brother called George.

Georgina's character was inspired by a number of people in my life and I can even see a little of myself in her. She does a couple of "mean" things to Harry but she is not mean spirited. She is a free spirit. Georgina is brash and impetuous, a feisty renegade who has the knack of creating mischief but slithering out of trouble. Harry who is more the quiet, sensitive type, naturally feels quite threatened by her. She comes as one who initially challenges the natural order of Harry's safe known world (his room, his appearance or sense of self and his relation to his parents) and then takes him out into the wider world of experiences. Often as a child or even an adult we feel imposed upon and sometimes even controlled by another person or circumstances. I began writing the story from this experience of feeling like you are losing control which can be scary and unpleasant and exhilarating all at the same time. Sometimes the people or situations that irritate us or threaten us the most can be the catalysts that bring about the greatest changes and moments of growth in our lives.

That all sounds a bit serious but one of the most important things about the book was that it was meant to be fun otherwise I wouldn't enjoy it and people wouldn't enjoy reading it. Halfway through the writing I tried to make it more serious and "explain" why Georgina was naughty but that didn't work well at all and I am thankful to my editor, Belinda, for helping me to see that. The story was reduced by two thirds and what in itself was a slightly painful but ultimately liberating experience. A number of the little episodes in the book were cooked up with ingredients taken from my own life but they were blended with a large dollop of fanciful thinking and embellishment. I see myself in Harry as well as Georgina and I hope that my readers delight in relating to both of the characters. In a sense they represent different aspects of personality and I hope that this is reflected in both the style of writing and illustration. The text has a bouncy rhyme which is very "Georgina" but is written from Harry's point of view and includes his occasional asides. Likewise the style of illustration is brash like Georgina, so loud it is almost yelling but the more ponderous and observant reader will be able to discern the subtle "whisper".

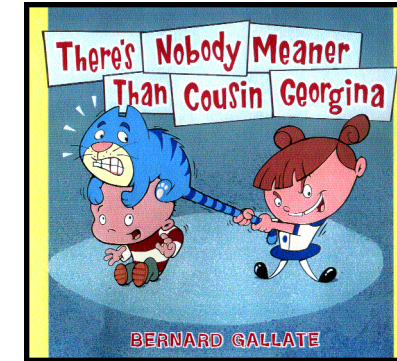
The story is very simple and yet there are complex notions within. It has been hard work but the reward of seeing something come to fruition that you have conceived yourself is very fulfilling.

Bernard Gallate



HODDER HEADLINE
AUSTRALIA

Teachers Notes



There's Nobody Meaner Than Cousin Georgina Bernard Gallate

When Harry's cousin, Georgina, comes to stay for the week, Harry steels himself for disaster for Georgina's reputation as a trouble-maker is well known...

Style

Bernard Gallate has worked as an animator, and so has used his skill as a cartoonist to illustrate this hilarious picture book. The cartoon style has a retro feel to it in terms of characterisation and colour, and the device of using the 'Looney Tunes' circle to signify the end of the book on the last page plays on this idea of traditional cartoons.

The design of the book complements the illustrations by employing a quirky typeface and using blocks of colour behind the type to create the feel of a cartoon. A range of bright colours has been used for the endpapers to draw the child into the book and again to add to the 1960s/retro feel of the illustrations.

Throughout the illustrations, Bernard has incorporated a number of visual jokes for the adult reader and more sophisticated child reader. For example, on the second spread, we see the father cooking, not knowing that his tie has fallen into the bowl he is mixing. At the same time, Harry's mother is reading a book entitled 'Thai Cooking'. The more aware reader will also notice that the flea on the lion's back on the zoo pages bears a striking resemblance to one of our more prominent politicians.

The book is written in rhyme, however to add to the subversive nature of the story, the author often changes the rhyming pattern mid-stream. The single un-rhyming lines, such as 'Georgina carried her own bags' on one of the early spreads, serve to highlight the sentence and are usually a grand understatement, adding to the comedy of the story.

While the book employs rhyme to tell the story, the words and the structure of the rhyme are fairly sophisticated, ensuring that the book appeals to a wide age group.