Harry's Secret

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary

SYNOPSIS

Harry loves fishing, footy, camping and skateboarding with his best mates. But Harry has a secret – he also loves to draw. The problem is, Harry's friend Gav thinks drawing isn't cool, so Harry keeps his talent hidden from everyone. Whenever he's alone, Harry fills his sketchpad with drawings of his family, his favourite footy players, his friend Lulu and life around his town of Cowra. Somehow, though, his artwork never seems to survive. Sketches are blown away by the wind, stolen by curious magpies or accidentally tossed onto the campfire! When Harry spots an advertisement in the local paper for an art competition to find the town's best artist, he secretly enters under the name 'HB' and paints a portrait of the new Mayor. To his amazement, he wins! But now Harry has to reveal that he is the mysterious artist. Worried about what his family and friends will think, Harry eventually finds the courage to tell the truth with a little help from Lulu. He soon discovers that the people who matter most are proud of his talent and that being yourself is something worth celebrating.

THEMES

- Peer pressure - Recognising how concern about other people's opinions can influence choices and self-expression.
- Courage, persistence and overcoming fears - Harry keeps drawing, and eventually finds the courage to be honest and share his passion for drawing, despite being afraid of what his friends might say.
- Identity - Recognising and celebrating the interests, talents and qualities that make us who we are.
- Family and friendship - Recognising how the support of family and friends can build confidence and a sense of belonging.
- Kindness - Lulu encourages Harry to claim his prize.
- Disappointment - Managing setbacks and difficult feelings when things do not go as hoped.
- Character - Exploring how a character's actions, choices and relationships reveal their personality and motivations.
- Setting - Understanding how Cowra and Wiradyuri Country shape the story and its characters.

CURRICULUM LINKS

Australian Curriculum v9

- Learning areas:
  - English - AC9E2LY01, AC9E3LY01, AC9E2LA05, AC9E3LA05, AC9E2LE01, AC9E3LE01, AC9E2LY06, AC9E3LY06
  - Visual Art - AC9AVA2E01, AC9AVA4E01, AC9AVA2E02, AC9AVA4E02, AC9AVA2C01, AC9AVA4C01, AC9AVA2P01,

AC9AVA4P01

- General capabilities:
  - Literacy
  - Critical and creative thinking
  - Personal and social capability
  - Ethical understanding
  - Intercultural understanding
- Cross-curriculum priorities:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
  - Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP)

- Transdiciplinary theme:
  - Who We Are - Identity, courage, belonging, community and culture
  - How the World Works - Problem-solving, cause and effect, STEM, design, systems thinking, forces, contraptions
  - How We Organise Ourselves - Community helpers, asking for help, circles of trust, teamwork, roles and responsibilities
- Key concepts:
  - Perspective - Harry assumes his friends will judge his love of art; different characters value 'cool' differently; art as a way of seeing and telling stories
  - Responsibility - Harry takes ownership of his talent and steps forward to claim his prize
  - Causation - fear of judgement causes Harry to hide his passion; choosing courage changes his relationships and self-acceptance
  - Connection - to culture and place and between community members
- Related concepts:
  - Identity
  - Courage
  - Belonging
  - Culture and heritage
- Student Agency/ Action:
  - Choosing to share a personal talent or interest, even when it feels risky
  - Standing by your own choices despite peer pressure
  - Celebrating and valuing diverse talents within the classroom community
- Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills:
  - Self-management skills - persisting through setbacks, managing fear and anxiety
  - Social skills - navigating friendship dynamics, understanding why peers aren't always kind
  - Communication skills - expressing identity and ideas through art
  - Thinking skills – reflecting on why he hides his talent and weighing the consequences of honesty
- Learner Profile Attributes:
  - Risk-taker – entering the competition and claiming his prize despite fear of judgement
  - Open-minded – appreciating his own culture and reconsidering what counts as 'cool'
  - Reflective – considering his fears, choices and growth across the story
  - Caring – Lulu's encouragement and support for Harry

WRITING STYLE (FROM THE AUTHOR)

I wrote *Harry's Secret* because I have a connection to Cowra, and I wanted to put some of the local kids into Australian literature, especially the deadly young Kooris. Many like to swim at the local pool, ride the skateboard ramp, go camping and fishing, and some are very creative; they can draw, beatbox and dance. I also wanted to tell a story for young boys, encouraging them to be proud of whatever skills they have, and to never be embarrassed about being good at

something. Someone is always watching and wishing they could be like you! Harry, as it turns out, is to be admired for his ability to draw portraits.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE (FROM THE ILLUSTRATOR)

I created all the illustrations digitally in Procreate on an iPad. I love finding pieces of real life to weave into my work. I've spent a lot of time at the skatepark with my niece and nephew and watching them helped me capture the movement and energy of the skateboarding scenes. In some ways, Harry reminds me of myself. When I first started drawing, I wasn't always confident about sharing my work. I worried about making mistakes, drawing something silly or having people think my art wasn't very good. Like Harry, I preferred to keep my head down rather than be the centre of attention. As I grew older, I realised that every artist makes mistakes, and creativity is much more fun when you stop worrying about being perfect.

Now, one of my favourite parts of illustrating is sharing my work with readers. It's amazing that drawings created in my little studio can reach children everywhere. I hope Harry's story encourages young readers to share what they love, whether that's drawing, skateboarding, writing, singing or something completely their own.

STUDY NOTES

PRE-READING

Activate prior knowledge

- Have you ever had a secret?
- Did you tell someone or keep it to yourself?
- Do you know what a portrait is?
- If you were to draw a portrait of someone, what features might stand out the most? Who would you draw?

Prediction questions

- Do you think this is an imaginative text or an information text?
- What clues tell you this?
- What kind of secret do you think Harry might have?
- Who do you think the characters are on the front cover?
- Read the blurb. Predict what the story might be about.

Vocabulary and language talk

- Cowra is a town in the central west region of New South Wales. The book is set on Wiradyuri Country. The Kalari River is mentioned in the book, which is also known as The Lachlan River. Find these places on a map or on Google Earth. Where is Cowra in relation to where you live?
- Sakura Matsuri Cherry Blossom Festival is held in Cowra each year. Find out more about this flowery festival.
- Japan and Cowra have a history from World War II. Find out more about this.

Inference and imagination

- What do you think Harry's secret might be?
- Are there any secrets that you don't think you would want people to know?
- If you had a special talent, would you want to let your friends and family know?

POST-READING

Recall and literal understanding

- Who is nicknamed 'Flipper' and why?
- Who is nicknamed 'Carps' and why?
- What type of pencil does Harry use?
- Who else keeps a pencil behind their ear besides Harry?

- What NRL team does Harry barrack for?
- What NRL team does Bailey and Yindy barrack for?
- How much money does Harry win from the competition?

Character thinking

- What words could you use to describe the characters in the story – Harry, Gav, Laurie, Charlie, Lulu, the twins Bailey and Yindy, and Harry's dad.
- Why did Gav think that Harry's dad was 'the best'?
- Why do you think that Bailey and Yindy were not always kind to Harry?
- What are some characteristics of 'deadly' people?

Cause and effect

- Why do you think that Harry was afraid of what other people might think of him, especially Gav, if they found out he enjoyed sketching portraits?
- Each time a portrait was ruined, Harry didn't give up. Why do you think he kept sketching?
- In some parts of the book, Gav is kind to Harry by saying encouraging words, but there have also been times when Gav has said some unkind things. Why do you think this is?

LEARNING ACTIVITY PROMPTS

Hidden Talents Gallery

Learning intention: Students identify the story's message and connect it to their own experiences.
Related outcomes: AC9E2LY01 / AC9E3LY01, AC9E2LA05 / AC9E3LA05, AC9AVA2C01/ AC9AVA4C01, AC9AVA2P01/ AC9AVA4P01

- After reading the story, ask students:
  - Why did Harry hide his sketching?
  - How did Harry feel before and after the art competition?
  - Have you ever been nervous about trying something new?
- Students then draw themselves doing something they enjoy or would like to learn. Beneath the picture they complete:
  - One talent I have is ...
  - Sometimes I feel ...
  - I hope people know that ...
- Display the work as an 'Everyone Has Hidden Talents' Gallery.

Character Feelings Timeline

Related outcomes: AC9E2LY01 / AC9E3LY01, AC9E2LE01 / AC9E3LE01

- Students create a timeline showing Harry's emotions throughout the story.
- Include five key moments:
  - Skateboarding with friends
  - Sketching alone
  - Losing another sketch to an accident
  - Entering the art competition
  - Winning the competition
- For each event, students:
  - Draw Harry's facial expression
  - Choose an emotion word
  - Explain why Harry felt that way
- Extension for Year 3: Students justify their answers using evidence from the story.

'Cool or Courageous?' class debate

Learning intention: Students practise expressing opinions respectfully using evidence.

Related outcomes: AC9E2LE01 / AC9E3LE01, AC9E3LY01

- Write statements around the room:
  - 'Only sporty people are cool.'
  - 'Everyone should show their talents.'
  - 'People shouldn't judge others.'
  - 'Being yourself is more important than fitting in.'
- Students move to Agree, Disagree or Unsure corners and explain their thinking using sentence starters such as:
  - I agree because ...
  - The story shows ...
  - Harry teaches us ...
  - Finish by discussing how Harry changed everyone's thinking.

Write Harry a Letter

Related outcomes: AC9E2LY06 / AC9E3LY06

- Students write a friendly letter to Harry.
- Prompts:
  - Congratulate him.
  - Tell him what you admire.
  - Give him advice.
  - Share one of your own talents.
- Encourage the use of:
  - A greeting
  - Paragraphs
  - Questions
  - A closing sentence
- Year 3 extension: Include persuasive language explaining why everyone should celebrate different talents.

Design a book cover

Learning intention: Students understand how illustrations communicate ideas and themes.

Related outcomes: AC99E2LY03 / AC9E3LY03, AC9E2LY06 / AC9E3LY06

- Students imagine they are the illustrator.
- Design a new front cover showing both sides of Harry:
  - skateboarding
  - sketching portraits
- Include:
  - a title
  - illustration
  - short blurb
  - colours and symbols that hint at the story's message
- When finished, students present their cover and explain why they chose their design.

Extension Activity (Optional): Class Mural: 'Everyone Has Something Special'

- Each student contributes a portrait of themselves and writes one sentence beginning with: 'People may not know that I ...'
- Combine all the portraits into a collaborative mural to reinforce the story's central message: Everyone has unique talents, and we don't need to hide who we are to belong.
- This activity also supports social and emotional learning by celebrating diversity, confidence and acceptance

alongside the English curriculum.

Going in Deep - Aboriginal Artwork

Learning intention: Students explore First Nations artwork understand why it is important to culture.
Related outcomes: AC9AVA2E01/ AC9AVA4E01, AC9AVA2E02/ AC9AVA4E02

- In the book Harry mentions that he and his friends enjoy looking at the Aboriginal artwork on the pylons. Explore the actual artwork onthese pylons here: https://www.visitnsw.com/destinations/country-nsw/cowra-area/cowra/attractions/cowra-bridge-pylons
- Aboriginal art is a form of storytelling and serves as a visual language to help preserve history, map the land and to pass down cultural knowledge.
- Ask students to:
  - Write what pictures they see on the pylons and other surrounding artwork in the area.
  - Write what significance might these pictures have to the town of Cowra and surrounds.
  - Create your own style of artwork showing what is special and unique to the area that you live, including animals, waterways etc.
  - When finished, students discuss and explain their choice of special and unique symbols used in their artwork.

Educator Bookmark - Front

Note to educators: this bookmark is designed to be used as a quick prompt card for you or an adult helper. Consider it a summary of much of the content of these teaching notes to have beside you while reading.

This educator bookmark could also be sent home with a copy of *Harry's Secret* as a homework task and as a guide to parents/caregivers as to how to extend the book reading experience.

Before Reading

- Preview the front cover. Ask: Why might it be called Harry's Secret?
- Activate prior knowledge about secrets, talents, friendships and First Nations' culture.
- Encourage predictions: What kind of a secret might Harry have?
- Introduce focus vocabulary: wusses, pylons, controversial, caricature.
- Encourage visualising the setting: What does it feel like to have a secret?
- Set the reading purpose: find out what Harry's secret is and why he feels he must keep it a secret.

Educator Bookmark - Back

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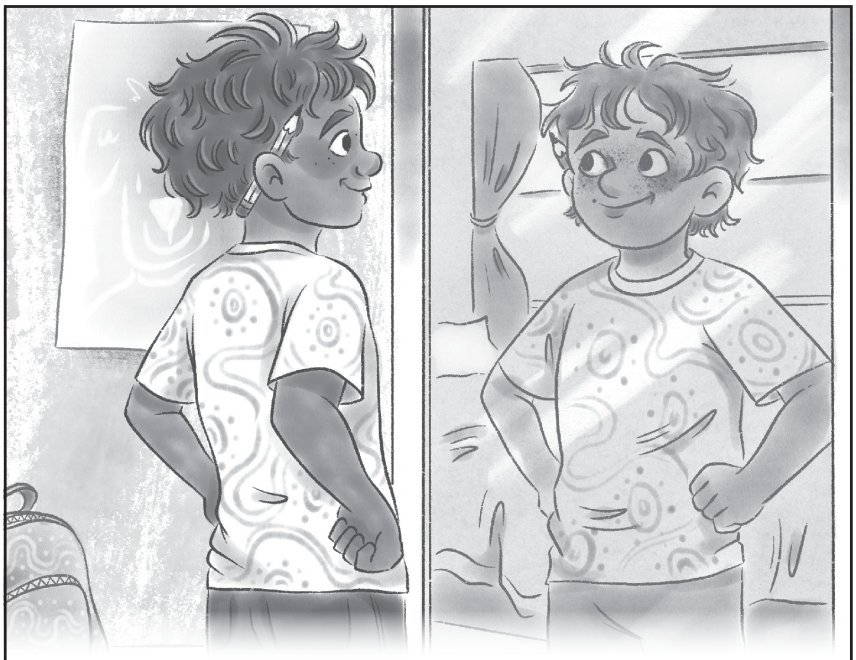

After Reading

- Retell the main events in sequence from fun at the skatepark to winning the art competition.
- Discuss cause and effect: What made Harry feel like he had to keep his talent a secret?
- Discuss the main themes: First Nations, persistence, courage, kindness.
- Revisit vocabulary through oral retell and acting out key words.
- Make a prediction about what Harry might do with his winnings.
- Extend into writing: write what happens to Harry next.

Student Bookmark

Note to educators: this bookmark is designed to be photocopied (2 to an A4 page) and placed inside the front cover of *Harry's Secret* and is for independent use by a student or reading group.

If you have class sets or multiple copies of *Harry's Secret* , a laminated bookmark could be added to each copy for use in small group sessions. Laminated bookmarks can be sent home with a copy of *Harry's Secret* as a homework task.

Keep this card alongside you as you read

HARRY'S SECRET

Before You Start

- Look at the cover and the title:
- Think: What might this story be about?
  Why do you think Harry has a secret and what could that secret be?
- Say the tricky words: wusses, pylons, controversial, caricature.
- Make one prediction.

After Reading

- Tell someone the story in order.
- What was the big problem and why did Harry feel as though he had to keep his talent a secret?
- Who helped Harry admit his talent and how did this help Harry with his friends, especially Gav?
- What was your favourite part?
- Say one new word you learnt.

Creative Challenge

- Draw a portrait of a person who is special to you, highlighting characteristics that stand out about them.

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