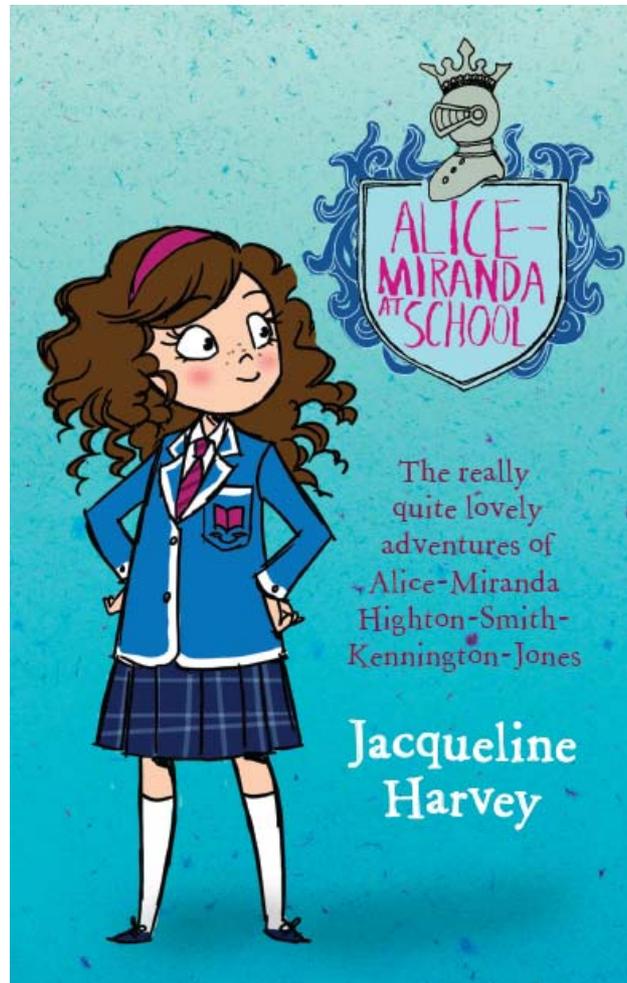


Alice-Miranda at School

Jacqueline Harvey



TEACHING SUPPORT KIT

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Teaching Support Kit

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1. BLURB

Alice-Miranda Highton-Smith-Kennington-Jones is waving goodbye to her weeping parents and starting her first day at boarding school. But something is wrong at Winchesterfield-Downsfordvale Academy for Proper Young Ladies. The Headmistress, Miss Grimm, hasn't been seen for ten years. The prize-winning flowers are gone. And a mysterious stranger is camping in the greenhouse.

Alice-Miranda must complete a series of impossible tests. Can she really beat the meanest, most spoilt girl at school in a solo sailing race? Could she camp in the forest all on her own for five whole days and nights? Well, of course. This is Alice-Miranda, after all.

2. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jacqueline Harvey has combined a successful career in education with her love of a good story. She has been a teacher and Deputy Headmistress her whole working life but has recently taken on the position of Director of Development at Abbotsleigh, the girls' boarding school where she had been Deputy Head of Junior School for a number of years. Her new role was described to her by one of her students as being 'in charge of all the parties' – but she's quite certain there's a bit more to it than that! Jacqueline is pleased to say that she has never yet encountered a headmistress like Miss Grimm, but she has come across quite a few girls who remind her a little of Alice-Miranda. She particularly loves to teach writing and has conducted many workshops for aspiring primary aged writers.

Alice-Miranda at School is Jacqueline's fifth published book. The second in the series, *Alice-Miranda on Holiday* is due out in September and then in 2011, the books will be published in the United States, fulfilling a lifelong dream for the author.

A passionate advocate for Indigenous education, Jacqueline learned as an adult that her maternal great-grandmother (who the family had always thought to be from New Zealand) was in fact a Wiradjuri woman who was born on the banks of the Bogan River in Peak Hill. She works closely with Yalari – an organisation providing scholarship opportunities to Indigenous students.

Jacqueline has previously published three novels for young readers. Her first picture book, *The Sound of the Sea*, was awarded Honour Book in the 2006 CBC Awards. She lives on the Upper North Shore of Sydney with her husband Ian and is stepmother to Olivia. Jacqueline is currently working on Alice-Miranda's next adventure.

3. AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

In the author's own words...

Alice-Miranda has been part of my life for quite some time now. Initially I had imagined her adventures being played out on the pages of a picture book; however, it soon became apparent that this little girl demanded more – at least 40,000 words more.

I don't know exactly where she first appeared from but I suspect she'd been gathering momentum for a long time. Her name was the first thing that came to me. For some reason, Alice-Miranda just sounded like two names that belonged together – and then came the surname. It was deliberate that she would have four – that her parents would both want her to have their already hyphenated names joined together. It was also deliberate that one was quite a plain name – hence Smith and Jones alongside another name, Highton and Kennington – and I wanted it all to roll off the tongue.

I had already written another series with a strong female character, but with Alice-Miranda I wanted her to be more unusual – both in terms of her outrageously wealthy background and the fact that she's blissfully unaware of her quite remarkable situation in life. She treats everyone the same, no matter who they are or what they do. Her consistent character was very important to me and the development of the story.

Writing Alice-Miranda gives me immense pleasure. I feel as though this delightful, precocious child sits just over my left shoulder telling me her stories, which I obediently type into the computer. Having been a teacher for such a big part of my life, she is so many children I have adored. Children who have made me laugh and cry and who have continually surprised and inspired me with their determination, their humility, generosity and humour.

I think Alice-Miranda Highton-Smith-Kennington-Jones is a powerhouse of positive thinking, a problem solver and friend to all, quite simply unstoppable.

4. CHARACTERS

Alice-Miranda Highton-Smith-Kennington-Jones

Despite being only seven-and-a-quarter years old Alice-Miranda has a life experience that would rival many adults'. She is the height of positive thinking. Although she comes from enormous wealth she doesn't use it to show off or big-note herself. She is genuinely concerned for others and is an avid problem solver – although some problems take a lot longer to sort out than others (and then there are those that no amount of energy can repair). She's always up for an adventure and is unafraid of even the most terrifying adults.

Cook (Mrs Doreen Smith)

Mrs Smith is the long-suffering cook at Winchesterfield-Downsfordvale Academy for Proper Young Ladies. She has quite a reputation with the girls – not for her cooking skills, but rather her ill temper.

Mrs Dolly Oliver

Mrs Oliver is the Highton-Smith-Kennington-Jones's beloved family cook and also a rather clever food technology scientist.

Mr Charles Weatherly

Mr Charles is the head gardener at Winchesterfield-Downsfordvale, as his father was before him.

Millicent Jane McLoughlin-McTavish-McNoughton-McGill

Millie is Alice-Miranda's roommate and soon becomes her best friend despite being almost three years older.

Jacinta Headlington-Bear

Jacinta is known as the school's second best tantrum thrower. She is a talented gymnast but her parents appear far too busy to be bothered much with her.

Miss Ophelia Grimm

Miss Grimm is the school's headmistress. She hasn't been seen by anyone other than her Personal Assistant Miss Higgins for over ten years and appears to run the school by remote control. When we first meet her she is a frightening and angry woman.

Miss Livinia Higgins

Miss Higgins is Miss Grimm's exceptional Personal Assistant – who it would appear does a lot more than secretarial duties.

Miss Louella Reedy

Miss Reedy is the school's English teacher, and has a formidable reputation for being very strict and bossy. The girls describe her as a 'fire-breathing dragon with a toothache'. Alice-Miranda discovers a much softer side to her.

Alethea Goldsworthy

The school's number one tantrum thrower and recently elected Head Prefect. Alethea's father is incredibly wealthy and he recently donated the money to build the new school library, which was then named in his daughter's honour.

Cecelia Highton-Smith

Cecelia is Alice-Miranda's doting mother. She loves her daughter dearly but accepts that she wants to be at boarding school.

Hugh Kennington-Jones

Hugh is Alice-Miranda's father. He adores his daughter but is realistic about her ability to look after herself.

5. THEMES AND ACTIVITIES

Theme 1: Boarding school life

Over the years boarding schools have featured in many stories for children – from *Tom Brown's School Days* to *A Little Princess*, *Madeline* and *Harry Potter*. Alice-Miranda attends a boarding school for primary school aged children – Winchesterfield-Downsfordvale Academy for Proper Young Ladies. Although it looks perfect on the outside, the school has a dark secret. Nonetheless, Alice-Miranda loves being at boarding school and quickly sets about meeting people and uncovering the mystery which has seen Miss Grimm locked away in her study for more than ten years.

Research/Reflect

- Use the Internet to investigate the following aspects of a boarding school in either a)Australia, b)England or c)the United States
 - Location
 - History of the school
 - Subjects offered
 - Famous past students
 - Traditions
 - Any unusual characteristics

Evaluate

- Nowhere in the story does it mention in which country Winchesterfield-Downsfordvale Academy for Proper Young Ladies is set. Where do you think the school is and why?
- List the positives and negatives of going to boarding school.

Create

- Invent your own ideal boarding school
 - Create a 'prospectus' (an advertising brochure) to entice students to attend your school (you can use **BLM 1** for this).
 - Create a map of your perfect school.
 - Make sure that you give the school a name and list its special features.
- Imagine you are a student at Winchesterfield-Downsfordvale. Write a letter to your parents about your first week at a boarding school

Debate topic

'The friendships made at boarding school are stronger than any other'

Theme 2: Positive thinking/positive attitude

Alice-Miranda is a powerhouse of positive thinking. No matter what happens she always thinks the best of people and looks for positive outcomes.

Research/Reflect

- What is meant by the saying 'the power of positive thinking'?
- Use the Internet to find out about the 'positive psychology' movement. What is it and what are its main ideas?
- How does 'positive psychology' help people?

Evaluate

- Do you believe that you can increase your happiness?
- How could you do this?

Create

- Keep a 'Celebration Journal' where each day you write something that you are thankful for – it can be as simple as being grateful a lovely home-cooked meal or a special gift you have received. (You can use **BLM 2** as a template.)
- Practice small acts of kindness for a week – expect nothing in return but write about how these acts make you feel.

Debate Topic

'Positive thinking can change your life'

Theme 3: Friendship

Friendship is central to the story and Alice-Miranda makes friends with many characters. Her relationship with Millie is tested though when Millie sees the Highton-Smith-Kennington-Jones's helicopter heading towards the mountains while Alice-Miranda is on her Wilderness Walk. Millie is left wondering if Alice-Miranda has cheated and if she's simply too good to be true.

Research/Reflect

- What makes a good friend?
- Are there different types of friends?
- Reflect on a challenge you have had with a friendship. How did you overcome it?
- In your opinion, why do Millie and Alice-Miranda become such firm friends so quickly?

Create

- Be a good friend – write anonymous notes to your friends telling them what you value about their friendship – make sure they don't know who sent them.
- Create a friendship recipe. (You can use **BLM 3** for this.)
- Food is an important focus in the story – cakes and yummy dinners help to make the girls feel at home. Cook a favourite recipe and share the cake/meal with your friends.

Debate Topic

'Friends are more important than family'

Theme 4: Empathy

Alice-Miranda demonstrates great empathy for people around her.

Research/Reflect

- What is empathy?
- How can you demonstrate empathy?
- Can you learn to be empathetic?

Create

- Select one of the following characters and write about meeting Alice-Miranda for the first time from their point of view a) Mrs Smith, b) Mr Charles, c) Alethea d) Miss Grimm.
- Put yourself into Alice-Miranda's shoes and write a letter to Jacinta's parents explaining why she should be allowed to attend the gymnastics championships (see **BLM 4**).

Debate Topic

'Empathy is more important than sympathy'

Theme 5: Adventure

Alice-Miranda heads off into the mountains to complete a 20-kilometre Wilderness Walk as one of the challenges set by Miss Grimm. She loves the idea of this adventure. The sailing race is also a wonderful challenge.

Research/Reflect

- What is the most adventurous thing you have done?
- Select a famous Australian adventurer and find out what motivates them.

Create

- Use magazine cuttings and drawings to design a poster representing your favourite Australian adventurer.
- Imagine you are a sports commentator reporting on Alice-Miranda's sailing race live for television. Write a script then record the action to play back for the class (see **BLM 5**).
- Create a soundscape for the race on the lake.

Debate Topic

'Adventures are what make life interesting'

Theme 6: Courage

Alice-Miranda demonstrates great courage, both when she deals with difficult people like Miss Grim and Alethea, and in tackling Miss Grimm's challenges. She isn't afraid of anything or anyone – at least not that she lets on to others.

Research/Reflect

- What is the definition of courage? Is this different from bravery?
- Discuss the following quote from Franklin P Jones: *'Bravery is being the only one who knows you're afraid'*.
- What does it mean and how does this apply to Alice-Miranda?

Create

- Alice-Miranda demonstrates great courage throughout the story. Give three examples of times when she demonstrates great courage.
- Write a newspaper report outlining Alice-Miranda's courage in completing the three tasks set for her by Miss Grimm – make sure you include a gripping headline and subheadings (see **BLM 6**).
- Perform a play based on one of Alice-Miranda's meetings with Alethea e.g. when she gets into the car with her, when Alethea demands to get the mineral water, the hair washing incident or the final race on the lake.

Debate Topic

'Courage is more important than intelligence'

Theme 7: Bullying

Alethea Goldsworthy and her friends Danika, Lizzy and Shelby are bullies. Alethea is clearly the Queen Bee. Alice-Miranda is not afraid of Alethea and tries to work out why she behaves as she does.

Research/Reflect

- What is your school's policy on bullying?
- Is it effective? Why/why not?
- Give examples of where Alethea's behaviour could be seen as bullying.
- Compare the ways in which Millie and Alice-Miranda deal with Alethea and her bullying ways.
- Why do Alethea's friends abandon her in the end?

Create

- Write an anti-bullying policy for Winchesterfield-Downsfordvale Academy for Proper Young Ladies (see **BLM 7**).
- Produce a television commercial to promote positive behaviour and anti bullying.

Debate Topic

'The bully needs as much help as the victim'

Theme 8: Good versus Evil

Alice-Miranda has to overcome a series of challenges set for her by Miss Grimm as well as dealing with the nastiness of Alethea Goldsworthy and her group.

Research/Reflect

- Good versus Evil is a common theme in many books and movies. Create a list of some examples where a main theme is good versus evil.
- Find out what a book trailer is – view at least three of them and analyse what makes them effective. There are examples on the Random House website.

Create

- Create a book trailer for *Alice-Miranda at School* (see **BLM 8**)

Debate Topic

'There's a little bit of good in every villain'

Theme 9: Problem solving

Alice-Miranda loves helping people solve problems. Some of these she solves with the help of her parents but others she works out for herself.

Research/Reflect

- Could Alice-Miranda help solve as many problems if she didn't have the support of her parents and their wealth?
- What's the biggest problem you have ever faced?
- How did you solve it?

Create

- Imagine Alice-Miranda wasn't able to call on her parents to help her solve problems.
- How else could she help a) Mrs Smith (Cook) b) Mr Charles?

Debate Topic

'A problem shared is a problem halved'

6. BLACKLINE MASTERS

BLM 1: Your Ideal School

BLM 2: Celebration Journal

BLM 3: Friendship Recipe

BLM 4: Letter

BLM 5: Race Commentary

BLM 6: Newspaper article

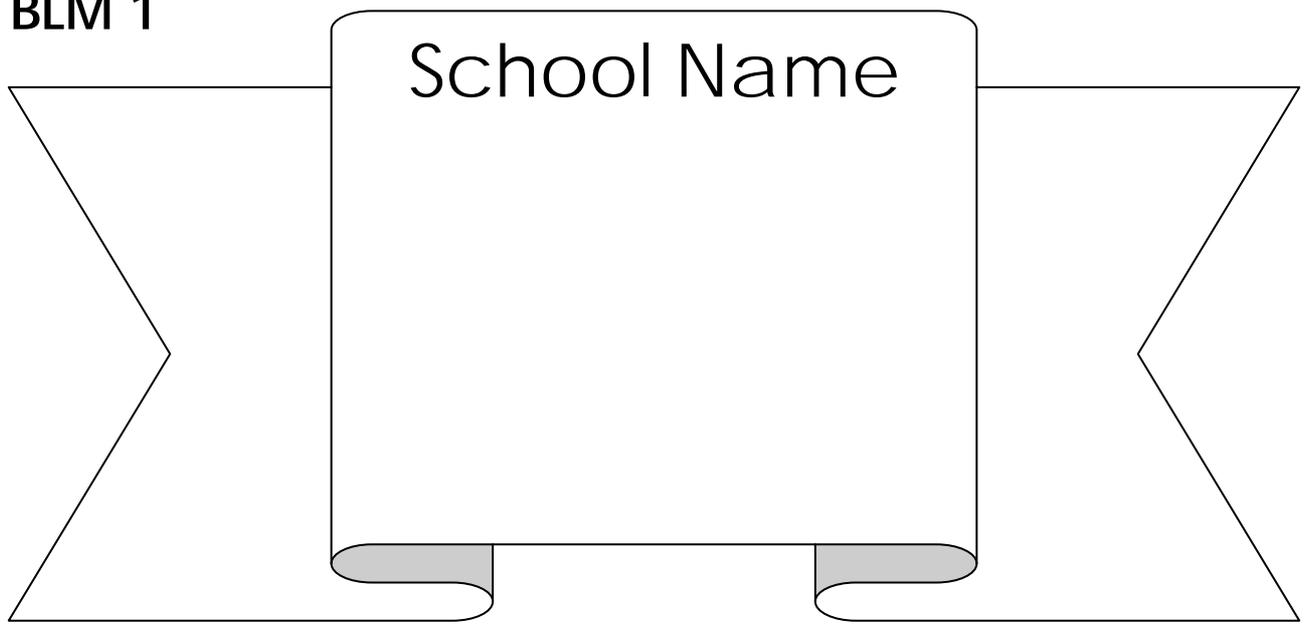
BLM 7: Anti-Bullying Policy

BLM 8: Book Trailer Storyboard

BLM 9: General Knowledge

BLM 10: School Rules

BLM 1



Insert text about your perfect school

My Celebration Journal

Date:

Today I celebrate

Date:

Today I celebrate

Date:

Today I celebrate

Friendship Recipe

Ingredients:

Method:

BLM 4

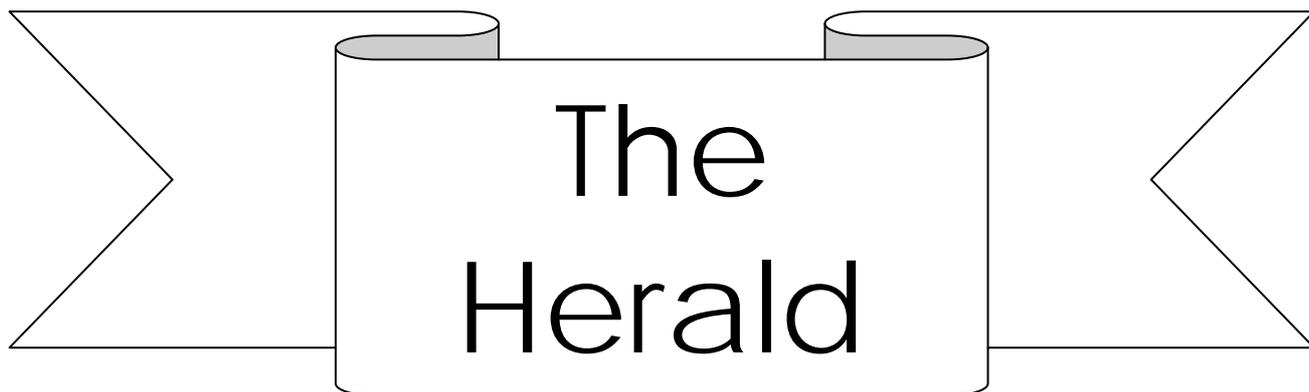
*Alice-Miranda
Hickton-Smith-Kennington-Jones
Hickton Hall
Via Hickton Mill*

Dear Mr and Mrs Headlington-Bear,

BLM 5

Write your own
commentary for
the sailing race

*And the race is
set to begin...
but where's
Alice-Miranda?*



A large empty rectangular box for writing.

A large empty rectangular box for writing.

A large empty rectangular box for writing.

BLM 7

Anti-Bullying Policy Winchesterfield-Downsfordvale Academy for Proper Young Ladies

BLM 8

Storyboard: Make a book trailer

Filmmakers and advertisers use storyboards to plot out scenes. Create a storyboard to show what would happen in your book trailer or TV advertisement for *Alice-Miranda at School*

BLM 9

General Knowledge

What are the following things?

A duvet	
Eggs Benedict	
A skiff	
A regatta	
A scholarship	
A ferret	
A limousine	
Pound cake	
Orchids	
A laboratory	
Brownies	
Detention	
Spectacles	
Mona Lisa	
Chesterfields	
A tramp	

BLM 10

School Rules

Create your very own list of quirky school rules.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.