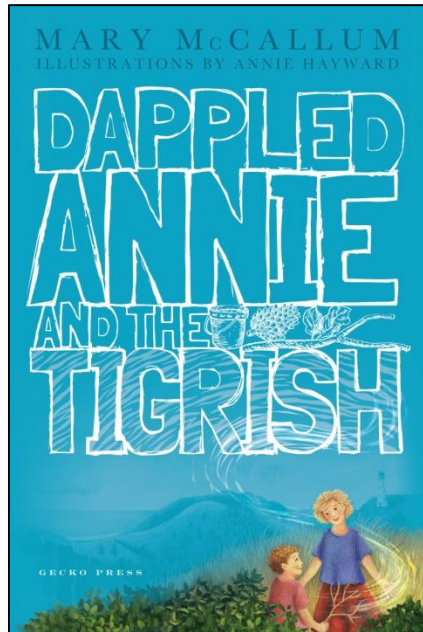




GECKO PRESS

Teaching Notes
Dappled Annie and the Tigrish
by Mary McCallum
Illustrated by Annie Hayward



Synopsis

There are faces in the hedge at the end of the garden, and a nest of tiny fantails, and that's where nine-year-old Annie goes to play one hot summer while her father works up at the lighthouse.

One after another, an earthquake and a terrible wind leave Annie with losses that seem irreplaceable, and her little brother Robbie emerges as the only person who can help her find what she's lost. Alongside the magical tigrish.

The Author

Mary McCallum is a writer, reviewer, bookseller and creative writing tutor. She has an MA in Creative Writing from the International Institute in Modern Letters, and her novel *The Blue* (Penguin, 2007) won Best First Book Award for Fiction and the Readers' Choice Award in 2008. Mary lives in Wellington, New Zealand. *Dappled Annie and the Tigrish* is her first book for children.

The Illustrator

Annie Hayward is primarily an abstract and figurative artist. She lives in Wellington, New Zealand.



Themes

This beautifully written novel with an adventurous and dramatic storyline has several themes.

One of the main themes in the book is that of nature. Annie and Robbie immerse themselves in the natural world around them. Whether playing and conversing with the hedge or helping the nest of fantail chicks they seem to be in touch with and delight in the wonders of nature. The harsh side of nature is also explored when earthquakes and winds cause chaos in their lives and they manage to survive the torments of the giant woods.

Another theme explored is the complexity of family relationships. Annie's mother forces her to spend time with her little brother. As the book progresses and they face losses and challenges together, she realises she needs Robbie as much as he needs her. The children also discover they share a secret with their father which draws them closer to him. The adventure with the tigrish and the chicks helps Annie appreciate some of her mother's feelings and concerns. All relationships in the book are tested and strengthened as the events of the novel unfold.

The theme of an alternative job and lifestyle is also seen in the book as the author describes the life, job and perils of Annie's lighthouse keeper father.

Loyalty and bravery are further themes found in the book and are demonstrated by several characters in a variety of situations, for example, Annie's loyalty to the hedges, as well as her and the hedges' loyalty to the fantail chicks. This sees them embark on a dramatic adventure into the unknown, along with Robbie and the tigrish, in which they all face adversity. Each character in turn shows remarkable bravery.

Some other themes that are illustrated are those of magic, imagination and wonder. From the faces in the hedge, to the tigrish and the adventures Annie and Robbie share with them, these themes are found in abundance throughout the book.

Activities

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this story might be about?
2. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that might otherwise be difficult to express. One example of figurative language is a simile. There are a plethora of similes throughout the book, for example, 'Annie made a noise like air coming out of a balloon.' (p. 12) and 'The light made no sound but it *felt* like somebody laughing, or like lemonade being poured into a cup.' (p. 121). Find ten more examples of similes from the book.



3. Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech for a word which imitates a noise or action. What examples of onomatopoeia can you find in the book? Think of some more examples that could have been used to describe some of the other action in the book.
4. In pairs, make two lists of some of the main magical versus realistic elements found in the book. Research the literary term 'magic realism'. Do you think that this book fits the criteria of this literary term? Why or why not?
5. Annie is conflicted about whether she should break a rule in order to help her friends (p. 56). As a class, divide into debating teams to debate the moot: Is it acceptable to break a rule in order to be loyal to a friend? Use examples from the book to support your argument.
6. The book explores the relationship between Annie and her younger brother, Robbie. In groups, discuss the following: Do you like Annie and Robbie as characters? What do you think of their reactions to different situations and what do their reactions tell us about them and their personalities? Do you think they have a realistic brother-sister relationship? Why or why not? Do you believe that their relationship develops and changes through the book? If so, what are the main events which contribute to the development and change?
7. The book is full of strong and magical characters, such as Mr. and Mrs. Hedge, the tigrish and Robbie. Choose your favourite character from the book and write, illustrate and publish a picture book about them and any further adventures you imagine for them.
8. The book has many beautiful descriptions of places, imaginings or things, for example, when Annie is in the lighthouse and feels she is noticing it for the first time (p. 104), or when Robbie imagines he is an apple tree (p. 78), or the descriptions of Robbie's 'shinies' (p.70). Using the author's style as inspiration, write your own descriptive paragraph or poem about either a place, object and/or imagining that are important to you.
9. The narrative of the book is told in third person. Choose a passage about one of the main events of the novel. Re-write the passage as a first person narrative monologue in another character's voice, for example, Dad, Mr. Hedge, the father fantail, the tigrish or Robbie. Think about the kind of vocabulary your chosen character would use, and how their perspective of the event might differ from Annie's. Present your monologue to your class.

10. The book is full of line drawings, as well as four colour plates, that feature a quotation from the book below each. Choose your favourite quote from the book and create your own artistic interpretation of it. Use, for example, a diorama, painting, model, poem, cartoon strip, movie storyboard, video, etc. Or, create an illustrated timeline of the main events of the novel.
11. Which is your favourite chapter in the book? Why? Write a plot summary of it.
12. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What did you like about the book? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.



THE HEDGE – a Teacher’s Guide by the author Mary McCallum

All the trees and shrubs, except Russell and Sylvie, are specific tree species.

RUSSELL – A rustly thin-leaved soft sort of tree – perhaps a pittosporum. Russell is at the end of the hedge and the one closest to the house. He is a sentinel who watches out for danger and watches out for Annie. He giggles when ‘tickled’ and has kind eyes.

HOLLY – A holly tree with spiky dark leaves as well as light-green frilly soft new leaves. Holly stands next Russell. It’s summer, so she doesn’t have any berries, or they’re hidden underneath. Shy, she has black, shiny eyes that she keeps under cover as much as possible.

SPROUT – A karaka tree (NZ native) who stands beside Holly. Sprout has long orange berries and some green (unripe), and thick strong leaves. Sprout is a nickname which came from his fast growth as a youngster. He says ‘hah’ when he loses berries or they’re eaten by birds (wood pigeons love him) and a loses a lot in the big wind. He’s an older tree but not tall, with crinkly eyes.

SID – A small pohutukawa (NZ native), latin name: *Metro-**sid**-eros excels*, hence Sid. He stands between Sprout and the Hedges. Sid’s blossoms are bright red and needle-shaped with yellow tips. He’s an opinionated teenager with bright eyes.

TUP/MR HEDGE – A **taupata** or coprosma (NZ native) with flat mirror leaves hence Tup. He and Mrs Hedge stand in the middle of the hedge and are the oldest shrubs. There is a brightness and confidence about Tup, he has small clusters of pale berries under his leaves, and while not tall he stands upright. When dehydrated, his leaves curl up like tongues.

PITTY/MRS HEDGE – A **pittosporum** called Lemonwood or Tarata – hence Pitty. She stands beside her husband and has light-green wiggly slender leaves and black/dark brown branches. A little shy, Pitty has shy eyes, and can blush an orange colour when embarrassed. She is very maternal and protective - so has a nest and birds and insects sheltering in her branches.

HOG – An unnamed shrub with lots of water shoots growing into the soil (hence his nickname: he ‘hogs’ the space), and thin new branches. Hog stands beside Mrs Hedge and is a bit thick but very friendly. Open, honest eyes.

SYLVIE – A small olive tree with silver leaves that flash in the sun – and a French varietal (Picholine), hence her name. Elegant and kind with a big heart, Sylvie has trouble fruiting and so is sympathetic to Mrs Hedge’s mothering of birds and insects and such like..



GECKO PRESS

GEORGE – A hydran-**gea** with blue flowers as big as dinner plates, hence his name. Only one flower left after the big wind, but new ones are sprouting (small green buds). George can be proud and get cross, but be charming the next minute. He stands next to Sylvie.

MANNY – A **manuka** (NZ native) with pin-like leaves and little dark red flowers (and eyes) the size of peas. Manny is at the end of the hedge, furthest from Russell. He is very grumpy about noisy neighbours like Pitty, and interlopers like birds and insects, and would prefer to be a standard plant off on his own somewhere. Or so he thinks.



Photos: Taupata like
Tup (*left*), and 2 x
pittosporum like Pitty
(*below*)

