



# Teachers' Notes The Smartest Dog of All

IAN HORROCKS  
ILLUSTRATED BY SUE  
DEGENNARO

## OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Young Readers
Title	Mates: The Smartest Dog of All
Author	Ian Horrocks
Illustrator	Sue deGennaro
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## **INTRODUCTION**

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*My dog Whitlam was a bit of a runt. Both of his ears should have stood straight up, but one always fell over, no matter how hard he tried to make it stick up. Because of that floppy ear, Whitlam always looked a bit dumb.*

But Whitlam is really a smart dog, and he has to be treated carefully, or who knows what will happen!

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

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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**Ian Horrocks** left home to work as a jackaroo and overseer on sheep stations around Australia. He spent over twenty-five years working with Indigenous communities to promote opportunities in education, the arts and employment. Ian first began to create characters and stories for his two daughters. He has owned a dozen dogs, trained working dogs on cattle stations and currently has a beautiful border collie that can talk, but gets her sums wrong when she does maths. This is Ian's first book.

## **ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR**

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**Sue deGennaro** studied film at university, learnt how to weld and draw at art school and moved to Sydney to become an aerialist/performance artist. She now lives in Melbourne with her partner, two girls and three chickens. Her days are spent writing stories of things that make her giggle and painting pictures to stick on the fridge. She is currently writing and illustrating a picture book.

## **ACTIVITIES**

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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) Names are very important. Did you know that names have meanings? Rachel means lamb, Tom means twin and Lucy means light. What does your name mean?

b) Have you ever had to name something? What name did you choose and why? If you haven't had to, imagine you are given the task. How would you proceed?

c) Whitlam the dog is named after a famous prime minister. Were you named after someone famous or do you share a famous person's name? What does this mean to you? Who would you most like to be named after?

d) Would you like a new name that no one else has or would you prefer a name that has been around for a while? Make a list of the most unusual names you have heard.

## **2. History**

Gough Whitlam became Australia's twenty-first prime minister on 5 December 1972. He is our only prime minister ever removed from office. Robert Gordon Menzies was Australia's longest serving prime minister. He held the position twice, from 1939 to 1941 and from 1949 to 1966. Altogether he was prime minister for over 18 years.

Did you know that when you are referring to the current prime minister you use capital letters, but when you are writing about a past prime minister, you use lower case?

a) How many prime ministers has Australia had?

b) Harry's dad and grandpop argue about whether or not Gough Whitlam was a good prime minister. Do you know who the current prime minister of Australia is? What qualities make a good leader? Do you think you could be a good leader?

c) Politics may seem confusing, but it is important to have an opinion. Have you ever disagreed with someone when you felt sure you were right? What happened? What do you think would happen if everyone had the same opinions and thought the same things? Can you imagine living in a world where everyone ate vegemite sandwiches for lunch, wore green clothes and went to bed at eight every night?

## **2. Creative**

a) Create an artwork of your pet, or a pet you would like to have, and list all the reasons why you think it is the smartest pet of all.

- b) Have a conversation with your partner and see how many times you can drop Wit in without it sounding too silly. Try this using your own pet's name.
- c) In groups, pretend you are television reporters presenting a story about the dog that can read. You can have scenes where you interview people at the party, Harry's friends, or even someone playing a dog expert reporting on the likelihood of the event.
- d) Choose a page and redraw the artwork in your own style. See if you can come up with something different from the illustrator that suits the text.
- e) What do you think of the title of the book? Can you think of an alternative you prefer?

### **3. Pets**

- a) Looking after pets is a big responsibility. At what age might you be responsible for caring for a pet? What qualities make one a responsible person? What qualities make an *irresponsible* person? What sort of person are you? Why?
- b) If you have a pet, does it know any tricks? How do you teach an animal to perform a trick? What do you think are the best tricks an animal can learn?
- c) Talk about your own pets and what you do to look after them. What do you like most about your pet? What do you like least about your pet?
- d) Conduct a class survey and find out what animal makes the most popular pet, and what is the most popular name.
- e) Some pets need much more care than others. Make a list of pets in order of how much care they need. Take each of the pets in that list and write down all the things that pet needs if it is to be cared for properly.

### **4. Geography**

- a) Make a list of ten Australian prime ministers. Find out what state they came from and which town. Mark these on the map.



## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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