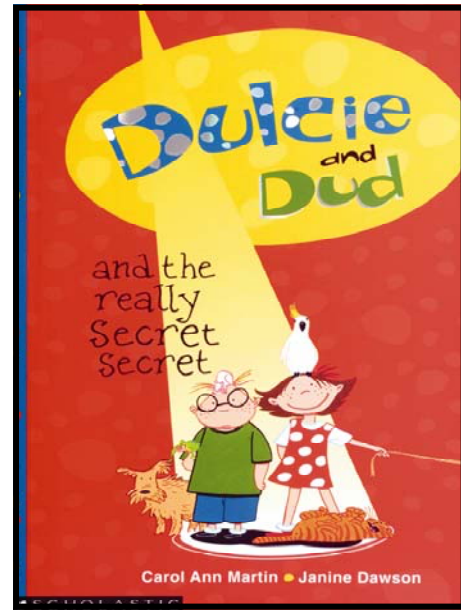


TEACHER'S BOOK NOTES

Dulcie and Dud and the Really Secret Secret

Written by Leonie Norrington
Illustrated by Beth Norling



Publisher's comment

The first Dulcie and Dud manuscript, *Dulcie and Dud and the Really Dumb Play*, arrived in the Publishers office unsolicited, and sat in the pile of manuscripts (rudely called the slush pile) for several weeks before it was picked up and read. The assessment was instant: this is wonderful stuff—funny, appealing, beautifully written: clearly the work of a writer of rare character. It's not often that you laugh out loud—in a good way—at an unsolicited manuscript.

The Dulcie and Dud stories are perfect for newly independent readers. They show appealing and instantly recognisable characters in familiar situations, set in an archetypal Australian country town (beautifully mapped at the beginning of each book). Things go wrong, but everything turns out all right in the end; no-one gets hurt; and you know that the irrepressible Dulcie, far from being discouraged by reversals of fortune, will be happily inspired to make the same sorts of innocent mistakes all over again. These are stories that are funny without being crude, witty without being facile. Their humour is character-based, and is concerned primarily with exploring the odd and endearing things humans do, their very individual personalities, and their different ways of ways of relating to each other.

In Dulcie and Dud—Dulcie so headstrong and confident, Dud so retiring and unsure of himself—Carol Ann Martin has created the perfect odd couple.

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About the author

Carol Ann Martin (she has adopted the Carol because as Ann Martin she was constantly being mistaken for the author of the Baby-Sitters series) was born in England and came to Australia in her early twenties. She is married to a jazz musician, Paul, and they live in a cottage on a small landholding in southern Tasmania, with two sheep, one donkey, three dogs, two cats and four canaries. 'We're supposed to be retired,' says Ann, 'but he can't stop playing music and I can't stop writing.'

Ann, now a grandmother (three granddaughters and four grandsons), has been a book person since she was very young. She began working in publishing at the age of 17 as a junior publications assistant, and over the years has been a proofreader, general book editor, children's book editor, feature writer and TV scriptwriter. Her first love is writing for children, and she sees herself as carrying on the wonderful tradition of storytelling, 'a universal tradition as old as the human race ... To be practising such an ancient craft, as relevant and popular today as it has ever been, means a lot to me.' While she was working as a children's book editor for a Sydney publisher she was invited to contribute some stories of her own, and from there began writing for other publishers. Between 1992 and 2001 she wrote a great number of titles for the popular Cockey's Circle series published by Murdoch Books.

Dulcie and Dud and the Really Secret Secret is the fourth of Ann's Dulcie and Dud books: the other titles are *Dulcie and Dud and the Really Dumb Play*, *Dulcie and Dud Give a Really Big Party*, and *Dulcie and Dud and the Really Cool Club*.

About the illustrator

Sydney-born Janine Dawson has worked for many years as an animator for Hanna-Barbera, first in Australia, then in the United States and Canada, eventually becoming a director for the company in Taiwan. She lived in Asia for seven years—Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and India—and returned to Australia in 1991 with her small daughter Rosie. After further work with Disney and Film Graphics in Sydney, she decided to move into the area of children's books and is 'having a ball learning all over again'. She still lives in Sydney—with Rosie, two cats and a goldfish—and is rapidly building a reputation as an illustrator of children's books. Her work to date includes several titles for Blake Education, Hodder Headline's Lily Quench books by Natalie Jane Prior, and three Solos for Omnibus (*What's in the River?*, *Toto and the Turkey*, and *Talk to Me!*). A couple of picture books are in production, too. Janine's animator background reveals itself in the confident lines of her artwork—as well as its great characterisation, mischievous sense of humour and perceptive use of detail.

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About the illustrator cont

Janine loved the Dulcie and Dud stories. 'I approached the job of illustration with anticipation and great enthusiasm. I tend to like to show the personality of the characters. I love character. I like to show how people think. I also like little subplots in the background to illustration and around the main story.'

Ann Martin was delighted with Janine's interpretation, thanking her for 'pictures that are so absolutely Dulcie and Dud'.

About Dulcie and Dud

Ann Martin says of her favourite character, 'Dulcie came into my head about five years ago and refused to leave. With her never-failing inventiveness, her unsquashable confidence and her eternal optimism, she reminded me of several little girls I know. But I was never sure what to do with her. Finally the day came when I knew that Dulcie had to have a life, so I gave her one. With her home in the country town of Waddygong, her family, her friends and her very best friend Dud, Dulcie made her entrance in *Dulcie and Dud and the Really Dumb Play*.'

With his nervousness, his ill-fitting glasses, his extreme shyness and a generally negative outlook on life (which doesn't prevent him from having really good ideas once in a while), Dud is the perfect foil for the bubbly Dulcie. Dud's is the voice of caution that Dulcie always ignores. An only child, his family consists of his cheerful single mum and his grandmother, a livewire always out on the town with Mr Vincelli, who owns the local snack bar.

Dulcie's family is traditional and nuclear, with a father who loves to cook, a mother who tells the best stories and goes in for modern dance, and a baby brother, Ben, who doesn't do much at all.

Moving in and out of Dulcie and Dud's lives are various school friends, among them Danny Turnbull, Callum Carter, Jemima Jones and Sophie Simpson. But the major characters are not their friends. Not quite enemies, either, but definitely people who see themselves as being on a different social scale from the rest of the residents of Waddygong. They are, of course, the wealthy Mrs Besome and her granddaughter Portia Pratt. Directly or indirectly, spoilt, snobby Portia provides the impetus for many of Dulcie and Dud's adventures.

Dulcie and Dud and the Really Secret Secret begins with Mrs Besome announcing to the schoolchildren that there will be a Grand Pet Parade at the Waddyong Show. Everybody knows why: Mrs Besome herself is organising it so that Portia Pratt recently the proud owner of a very sniffy

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Afghan hound called Titania can win it.

All the kids want to enter their pets. So does Dulcie, who doesn't have one. But, carried away by the general excitement, she puts up her hand and says to Mrs Besome, 'I'll bring Muriel!'

Finding a non-existent Muriel is a bit of a problem, but Dulcie is determined, and one day, out walking with Dud, she is nearly bowled over by a runaway goat. This is the perfect Muriel. All she and Dud have to do is to keep Muriel a secret until the day of the Show, and then spring her upon an unsuspecting Waddygong.

There are problems. Muriel turns out to be a billygoat. And a very smelly billygoat. And a very smelly billygoat with a taste for eating roses. All things that impact quite strongly on what eventually happens at the Waddygong Show Grand Pet Parade.

Mrs Besome's rose-covered hat will never be quite the same after Muriel's great interest in it, but everybody agrees that Mrs Besome herself will be all right after a cup of tea. And as for Dulcie—well, now that she and Dud have experienced the joys of owning a goat now discovered to be called Harry, she is keener than ever to have a real pet. Perhaps a puppy, named Muriel ...

Of interest to teachers

1. Use the map at the front of the book to pinpoint where all the main characters live. Show how their homes are situated in relationship to each other. Look for special landmarks—the school, Mr Vincelli's snack bar, Mrs Besome's house. Where, on the map, did Dulcie and Dud discover Muriel? Where do the Turnbolls live? Where is the Waddygong Show held?
2. Talk about shows—the Royal Show in your capital city; country shows. Who has been to a country show? Write about such an experience, or create drawings and posters.
3. Draw a map of the Waddygong Showground, showing where all the different stalls might be.
4. Talk about pets. List all the different pets named in Dulcie and Dud and the Really Secret Secret. Class might discuss their pets, and which pets they would enter for a Grand Pet Parade.
5. Would a goat make a good pet? Why, or why not?
6. Talk about the illustrations in this book. Janine Dawson, the illustrator, has been an animator for Hanna-Barbera. Look at her artwork and talk about how this particular skill shows in her style. Compare different styles of cartooning/animation.

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