



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary
(ages 9–11)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and Creative thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Structure
- Exploring imagination
- Discussing personal values and responsibility
- An example of finding your place in the family, community and among friends.

THEMES

- Identity
- Kindness and acceptance of others
- Friendship
- Loss and Grief
- Humour
- Creative thinking
- Imagination
- Magic
- Responsibility and resilience

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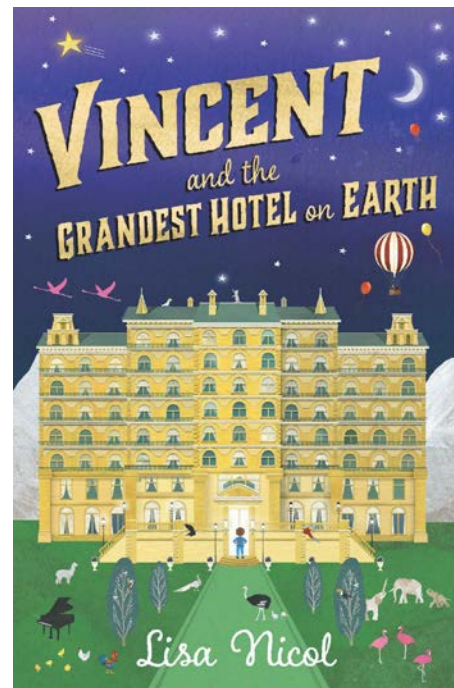
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Vincent and the Grandest Hotel on Earth

Lisa Nicol

'This is absolutely GRAND! I adored it.
What a wonderful read!'
Karen Foxlee, author of *Lenny's Book of Everything*

PLOT SUMMARY

Vincent is an ordinary boy – he lives in an ordinary house in an ordinary town. But Vincent's life changes dramatically when he meets young Florence from The Grandest Hotel on Earth. From shining shoes next to a dirty train station, to working in a hotel where your wildest dreams can come true, Vincent's world is turned upside down.

But of course, dreams have a funny way of taking strange and surprising corners and, before long, Vincent is torn between right and wrong, friendship and family and the most enticing of desires – to see into the future . . .

From ordinary to extraordinary, *Vincent and The Grandest Hotel on Earth* is a marvellous ride that will delight readers of all ages.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Nicol is a writer and documentary-maker. Her feature documentary *Wide Open Sky*, about a children's choir in outback NSW, won the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the 2015 Sydney Film Festival. Her first children's book *The Ballad of Dexi Lee* was illustrated by artist Lucy Culliton. Her second children's book *Dr Boogaloo and the Girl Who Lost Her Laughter* is currently being adapted as a musical for the stage. Lisa lives on the east coast of Australia with her three children and a dog who totally stinks.

A NOTE ABOUT THE GRAND CO-AUTHOR, FINLEY WRIGHT CURNOW

In 2017, my very favourite godson, nine-year-old Finley Wright Curnow became very sick. He was diagnosed with an incurable brain tumour. Living just across the railway line, I visited Finley often. But as he became more unwell, sometimes I would write to him and leave letters on his front verandah. One day I told him about my idea for this book and asked Finley if he could help me create *The Grandest Hotel on Earth*. Perhaps he had some ideas for rooms? No mind if he didn't. I knew just being sick took up a lot of energy.

Well, the very next day, I received a letter from Finley.

Did he have ideas for rooms?

Did he what! He had incredible ideas for rooms!

The Levitation Room, the Roller-coaster Room, the Baby Memories Room . . . these were all Finley's ideas.

But there was more. And one of his ideas struck me like a bat. 'A Room of Mirrors of the Future. The shoeshine boy discovers the secret room and sees the bad future of the grandest girl and has to alter time to save her.'

BOOM!

It was like an explosion in my head.

Just like the one Vincent experienced when he entered the Mirrors of the Future Room.

Writing this now I am reminded how much I am indebted to Finley for this story. How much it is his story too. And I'm reminded what a terrible loss it is that Finley is no longer around to tell us all his wonderful, incredible, brilliant ideas. He had his own dreams and I know he would have grown into the grandest man.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Vincent

Vincent is described as ordinary at the beginning of the book. 'Average in height, with no unusual or distinguishing features whatsoever – not even a freckle – Vincent was so ordinary that being mistaken for someone else was the only time he was noticed at all.'

Questions

1. Is the word 'ordinary' considered to be a positive or negative description?
2. If someone thinks of themselves as ordinary, what can that mean?

Activities

1. Discuss the idea of 'ordinary' versus 'extraordinary'.
2. Hold a classroom debate about the pros and cons of being ordinary.
3. The story begins with a discussion about moments: 'There are *some* moments that change everything. Some moments that set you on a different path, altering your life forever. Some moments, from which no one and nothing will emerge the same.' Has there been a moment in your life that has changed things significantly for you? Write a poem, short story or create a visual work about that moment and your feelings at the time.

When Vincent begins working as the shoeshine boy at The Grand, he's given a uniform to wear. 'Before putting on his uniform he had been ordinary, eleven-year-old Vincent from Barry. But now he felt completely different. Suddenly he felt like someone important.' (Ch 8)

Questions

1. How can a piece of clothing make you feel different?
2. Do you have a piece of clothing or another item, like jewellery, that you wear or use to make yourself feel different?

Activity

1. Often superheroes use clothing as a disguise or to show their powers. Design a cape or mask for your own superhero.



Florence

For a girl her age, Florence holds a lot of responsibility running The Grandest Hotel on Earth.

Questions

1. Would you like to run a hotel like The Grandest Hotel on Earth?
2. The hotel is the Wainwright-Cunningham family business. Does your family own a business that you have to work at? What sort of things do you learn when you help out your family with their work?
3. Once Vincent begins work at the hotel, the two become friends. How does having a friend her own age impact Florence?
4. Do you think Florence made the right decision when she asked Vincent to leave The Grand?

Activities

1. In two separate columns, write the things Florence likes about running the hotel and the things she sometimes doesn't like.
2. 'Her Aunt Violet was a famous jazz singer and her Uncle Earl was the first man ever to jump from the edge of space. Already twenty-nine Wainwright-Cunninghams had found their way into the *Guinness World Records* book.' Many members of Florence's family have accomplished extraordinary things. Create a family tree for the Wainwright-Cunninghams.

Thom

Vincent's four-year-old brother, Thom, has difficulty interacting with people. Ch 2: 'Unfortunately, Thom wanted a big brother even less than Rose did. In fact Thom didn't seem to know he even had one. Almost as if Vincent was invisible. And that was probably the hardest bit.'

Questions

1. How do you think Vincent felt about this?
2. At the beginning of the story, Thom doesn't speak so his frustration at not being able to communicate is often expressed physically by smashing things. Have you ever experienced the sensation that you can't express yourself in words?
3. The thing that calms Thom is classical music. When you are angry or frustrated or upset, is there something you listen to or do to help you feel better?

Activities

1. Putting yourself in Vincent's shoes, write a diary entry explaining how Thom's behaviour makes you feel.

2. Listen to the piece of music Erik Satie's *Gymnopédie No. 1*. During or after the music has finished, jot down your thoughts on the following points:
 - Do you like this piece of music?
 - Why or why not?
 - How does the music make you feel?
 - What happens in your mind when you sit and listen to this piece? For example, do your thoughts go quiet or does your mind wander to something else?
 - Why do you think a kid like Thom might find this music soothing?

The Grandest Hotel on Earth

At the beginning of the story Vincent is described as 'Nothing grand, but grand is what we do, so that won't be a problem.'

Questions

1. What do you think makes something grand?
2. What are some other words or synonyms for 'grand'? Do words have different meanings when used in certain contexts?
3. Vincent discovers that, 'everyone who worked at The Grand was treated like family and what a wonderful big family it was.' (Ch 10) Can the people around you make something grand?
4. Florence explains to Vincent that '... most people don't choose to stay at The Grand, The Grand chooses them.' (Ch 10) What do you think this means?

Activities

1. Research some other grand buildings or sites, like the Taj Mahal, Uluru or the Golden Gate Bridge. Write a report about why they are grand and how they have been built or formed.
2. Write a letter to a friend or member of your family and describe to them what it's like to stay at The Grandest Hotel on Earth. Don't forget to include the activities you've participated in as well as a description of the yummy food eaten.

Rooms

The Grandest Hotel on Earth contains an array of fantastical rooms for guests to explore, such as the Inflatable Room, the Levitation Room, the Tropical Island Room, the Crashing Waves Room ... and the room that gets Vincent into trouble – the Mirrors of the Future Room.



Questions

1. Why do you think the author designed the hotel with different types of rooms?
2. Why was Vincent drawn to the Mirrors of the Future Room?
3. Would you like to see into the future of your own life? What types of things would you like to know? Could this get you into trouble down the track?

Activities

1. Imagine that you are the creator of The Grandest Hotel on Earth. Make up rooms of your own and describe them like a hotel manual with drawings and sketches.
2. When Vincent saw the vision that predicted something terrible would happen to Florence, he 'solemnly committed every bone, every muscle and every cell in his body to the protection of Florence.' (Ch 15). As a class discuss Vincent's loyalty and the consequences of him keeping the burden from Florence about her future. On butcher's paper write the positives and negatives of keeping secrets such as this.

Structure and writing style

This book has a unique narrative voice as the author has used an omniscient point of view for the perspective of the book. This means she talks to the reader, with using terms such as, 'you, dear reader' and also includes comments or thoughts from her co-author.

Questions

1. Why do you think the story is structured this way?
2. How does the note about the co-author impact the story?

Activities

1. Look at a published piece of writing, such as a picture book or short story and rewrite the story from another character's point of view. You can explore different structures like first-person perspective or third-person perspective. For example, with the book *Where the Wild Things Are* can you tell the story from the Wild Things' perspective or even from the point of view of Max's mum?
2. Imagining you are a travel journalist, write a review of the hotel for a newspaper or magazine. Or create a video version of your review like a TV journalist.

The D'Silvas family are first described as Mr and Mrs Ski-Jump-for-a-Nose. "Over this way, boys,' said the parents of three large youngsters with noses that would have made excellent ski jumps at any Winter Olympics. "Come and choose a rocket dog! They look just like those critters you love blowing up in Battle for Beejaa III." Mr and Mrs Ski-Jump-for-a-Nose jostled their offspring as far away from Max and his crumbling mother as they could.' (Ch 4)

Questions

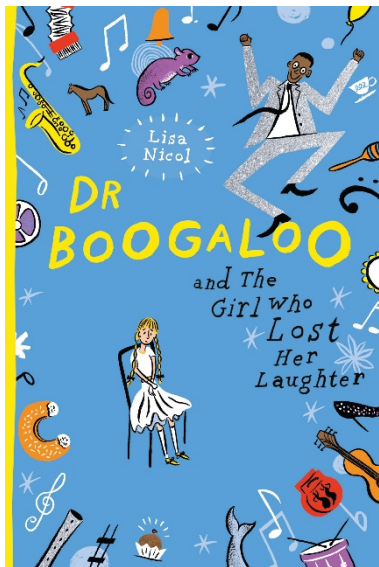
1. Why do you think the author has chosen to use this type of writing device to portray the D'Silvas family? Does this description help you to visualise these characters?
2. Are there any other descriptions of the characters in this book that perhaps portray their personality too?
3. On the second day at the hotel, Vincent notices a change in the D'Silvas family. 'Aha, thought Vincent. It's their ski-jump noses! Yesterday they were a steep black run and this morning they were more like a gentle beginner's slope.' (Ch 8) Do you think it's possible for people's physical appearance to change like that?

Activities

1. Think of a character from another story you have read or seen on TV. Write a short story depicting them as having the physical characteristics of their personality.
2. While reading the book, note down some of the writing devices the author uses such as similes, personification and other metaphors.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



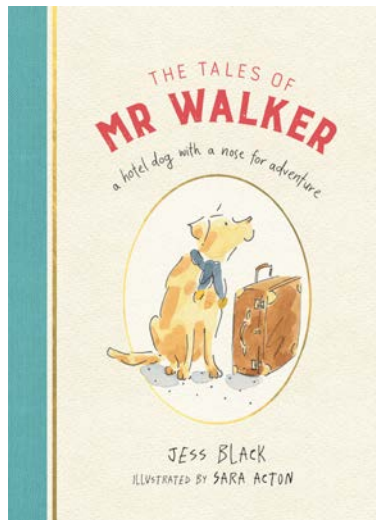
Dr Boogaloo and the Girl Who Lost Her Laughter
by Lisa Nicol

Dr Boogaloo was no ordinary doctor. Not at all like the one you might visit if you had a sore tummy. No, Dr Boogaloo was a very different type of doctor. He treated folks who suffered from rather unusual complaints. And how did he treat them? Why, with the most powerful medicine known to mankind . . . Music!

Blue was no ordinary girl. For starters, her name was Blue. But what was truly extraordinary about Blue was the fact that she hadn't laughed for 712 days. Not a hee hee, a ho ho or even a tiny tee hee.

Can Dr Boogaloo compose a cure before Blue loses her laughter forever?

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



The Tales of Mr Walker
by Jess Black & Sara Acton

On a brilliant autumn's day, Mr Walker arrives at the grandest hotel in town. While things get off to a wobbly start, this charming labrador is determined to put his best paw forward. And it's just as well because the most unexpected adventures await . . .

The Tales of Mr Walker contains four delightful stories inspired by the real-life Mr Walker, a Guide Dog Ambassador who now calls Park Hyatt Melbourne home.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Friday Barnes 1: Girl Detective
by R.A. Spratt

When girl detective Friday Barnes solves a bank robbery she uses the reward money to send herself to the most exclusive boarding school in the country, Highcrest Academy.

On arrival, Friday is shocked to discover the respectable school is actually a hotbed of crime. She's soon investigating everything from disappearing homework to the Yeti running around the school swamp. That's when she's not dealing with her own problem – Ian Wainscott, the handsomest boy in school, who inexplicably hates Friday and loves nasty pranks.

Can Friday solve Highcrest Academy's many strange mysteries, including the biggest mystery of all – what's the point of high school?

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Vincent and the Grandest Hotel on Earth	Lisa Nicol	9781760890681	3-6	\$16.99		
Dr Booglao and the Girl Who Lost Her Laughter	Lisa Nicol	9781760892364	3-6	\$14.99		
Friday Barnes 1: Girl Detective	R.A. Spratt	9781760890735	3-6	\$15.99		
The Tales of Mr Walker	Jess Black, Sara Acton	9780143793076	3-6	\$24.99		
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