

# TEACHERS' NOTES

### **RECOMMENDED FOR**

Middle to upper primary (ages 9–11; Years 4 to 6)

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2

2

2

3

7

7

8-9

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#### **KEY CURRICULUM AREAS**

- Learning areas: English; Art; Australian history & culture
- General capabilities: Literacy; Critical and creative thinking

### **REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK**

- Studying the short story form
- Studying visual literacy
- Exploring creative writing, inspiration and imagination
- Tips on writing stories through words and pictures

#### THEMES

- Imagination and inspiration
- Humour
- History of Ginger Meggs and Aussie culture
- Storytelling through pictures and/or words

### PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia, Tristan Bancks and Jason Chatfield

### PUBLICATION DETAILS

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# Ginger Meggs Tristan Bancks & Jason Chatfield

## PLOT SUMMARY

Four fresh stories to celebrate the one and only Ginger Meggs!

Celebrating 100 years of the iconic character and Aussie legend Ginger Meggs, these four brand new and original stories are written by Tristan Bancks, the greatgreat nephew of creator Jimmy Bancks, and illustrated in full colour by the current Ginger Meggs comic-strip cartoonist, Jason Chatfield.

Kids and grown-ups alike will revel in the rambunctious adventures and comical capers of the ginger kid who never gets old.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tristan Bancks tells stories for the page and screen. His books for kids and teens include *Two Wolves, The Fall, Detention*, the Tom Weekly series and *Nit Boy*. His books have won and been shortlisted for many awards, including a Children's Book Council of Australia Honour Book, the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, ABIA, YABBA, KOALA, NSW Premier's Literary Awards and Queensland Literary Awards. His new release for 2021 is *Ginger Meggs*, a 100th anniversary book of brand-new short stories based on characters created by his greatgreat uncle, Jimmy Bancks, in 1921.

Tristan is a writer-ambassador for literacy charity Room to Read. He is currently working with producers to develop a number of his books for the screen. He's excited by the future of storytelling and inspiring others to create. You can find out more about Tristan's books, play games, watch videos, join his Young Writers' StorySchool and help him try to change the world at tristanbancks.com

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jason Chatfield is an Australian cartoonist and illustrator based in New York. His work has been published in magazines and online, and in books published by Penguin Random House and Harper Collins. He is a past President of the Australian Cartoonists Association (Est. 1924) and the current President of the National Cartoonists' Society (Est. 1946) and an internationally syndicated cartoonist, writing and drawing the iconic comic strip *Ginger Meggs* which is published daily in 34 countries.

# INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR: TRISTAN BANCKS

# What made you write a book to celebrate the 100th anniversary of *Ginger Meggs*?

My great-great uncle was Jimmy Bancks who created *Ginger Meggs* 100 years ago, in 1921. When I was a kid, *Ginger Meggs* was very popular. There was a movie and books and stamps and coins. Ginger Meggs was known as Australia's favourite boy. My connection to Jimmy Bancks was part of the reason I started telling stories and, having now written lots of books for children, I decided that I'd like to try writing some *Ginger Meggs* stories. I was a bit nervous but, with the 100th anniversary looming, this was my chance.

# What was it like having a famous relative and a connection to this iconic Australian character when you were a kid?

I was so proud of it. I'd tell anyone who'd listen. Jimmy Bancks died in 1952, so I didn't have a chance to meet him but I heard the stories about him. I read as much as I could, as well as reading the comic every Sunday. I would always look up at the original Ginger Meggs artwork on the wall of my grandmother's house (that artwork now sits on the wall of my house) and it inspired me and my cousins to draw our own comic strips. Mine weren't very good. I'm not great at drawing, but they taught me a lot about storytelling and, most of all, they were fun to make. (Sam Garner, in my book, The Fall, creates his own comic books, inspired by that time in my childhood.) I also remember being so excited when I won a Ginger Meggs showbag at Sydney's Royal Easter Show and had the chance to meet James Kemsley, the *Meggs* cartoonist at the time.

# Were you anything like Ginger Meggs when you were a kid?

I didn't have red hair. And I wasn't illustrated. But I did see myself as a Ginger Meggs-type character. Ginger is a battler, an underdog. He has the odds stacked against him, but with hard work and resilience he triumphs. Sometimes. I saw myself that way, too. I didn't feel as though everything came easily for me. I always felt as though I had to work hard in order to succeed at anything. But, like Ginger, I loved throwing myself at life and seeing what might happen. I'm still like that.

## Was it scary writing a book with characters who have been around for 100 years? Were you ever concerned that you would mess it up?

I knew it was a big responsibility and I wanted to do a great job because there are so many fans of *Meggs* who have been reading it for longer than I've been alive. I was a bit nervous, but never worried. And nerves can be a good thing. They can drive you to do your best. I felt as though the characters were in my DNA. I've been reading the comic strip for so long and I've read all the books and, once I put the characters into difficult situations, they just came to life and I felt that I knew how they would react and speak and move. In a way, I've been preparing to write this book since I was 6 or 7 years old. My Tom Weekly series and Nit Boy books were the perfect training ground to tackle *Ginger Meggs*.

### Is the book set in the past or present?

The book, like the current comic strip, is contemporary. It's set in the present day, but I've tried to capture the energy and vitality of the characters that has seen them through a century of Australian history. There's Ginge, Benny, Min, Aggie, Tony the monkey, Mike the dog, Eddie Coogan, Jugears Jonson and Tiger Kelly, as well as new characters like Rahul, Penny and Gloria.

# What was the hardest thing about writing the book?

*Ginger Meggs* has to be funny and action-packed. He never stops moving, is always on the run, so I had to describe all that action with just the right pacing while also coming up with funny dialogue. That takes a lot of drafts. Also, *Ginger Meggs* has mostly been a comic strip which is words and pictures. The characters do things and say things but they don't often think things (apart from the odd thought bubble). The great thing about a book is that you get to find out what the characters are thinking, so my editor, Niki Foreman, really pushed me to use the medium of the book and to get inside Ginger's thoughts, which adds an extra layer of story to what readers of the comic strip might be used to.

### What was the most fun?

I loved mashing my own childhood experiences and my sons' childhood experiences into stories featuring these classic characters. I had to preserve who the characters are, and who they have been, but also make them very now so that they feel real and funny and true to 2021 kids. Also, I felt as though I got to hang out with these characters in famous locations from the comic strip, which was fun. I wrote the book partly at home in Australia but, mostly, while I was living in the US for a few months. I was writing a screenplay at 'Charlie's', Raleigh Studios in Hollywood, an apartment that Charlie Chaplin once owned, and I wrote part of the book there, too. It was a place with a strong connection to classic comedy writing. I wondered if Jimmy Bancks ever met Charlie Chaplin. He almost certainly would have been a fan.

I also spent a morning writing in a reading room in the New York Public Library and, that night, I caught up with Jason Chatfield, *Meggs* comic strip artist and illustrator of this book. I told him where I'd been writing and he said that he goes to that room to write *Ginger Meggs* comic strips! Somehow, being away from Australia in order to write the most Australian of stories really helped. Sometimes, when you're in a place, it's hard to write about it.

# What was it like working with current *Ginger Meggs* artist, Jason Chatfield?

He was very difficult. I'm kidding. He's a legend. Funny man, a stand-up comedian and a cartoonist for *The New Yorker* and he's worked for my favourite mag as a kid, *Mad Magazine*! Like me, Jason is very dedicated to his work. He always delivers the very best he can. He's fascinated by the creative process, as am I. He was supportive of this book from the beginning and he was incredibly generous to allow me to write stories using the characters that he writes in comic-strip form every day. His illustrations are absolute dynamite. Full-colour, action-packed and engaging. (And beautifully laid out on the page by Christa of Christabella Designs.) I'd love to work with Jason again. (I might have to go to New York to have regular meetings with him!)

# INTERVIEW WITH THE ILLUSTRATOR: JASON CHATFIELD

# How did you get the job as '*Ginger Meggs* cartoonist'?

I was asked by James Kemsley, the strip's fourth cartoonist, to write and draw *Ginger Meggs*. I took on the job not long before Kemsley died. He was a dear friend and mentor. It was a very bittersweet way to inherit such a huge honour.

## Did you have to practise how to draw the characters a certain way? Or did you bring your own illustration style to the strip?

I had to adhere to a set of strict illustration guidelines, which were sent to me by James Kemsley. His feeling was that if the strip changed too much too soon, the newspapers would receive complaint letters and editors would use it as an excuse to drop the strip from their paper. Interestingly enough, I read James Kemsley's 'How-to-draw cartoons' books growing up, so I had already adopted many of his drawing techniques from a very young age. It was at least 10 years before I started introducing my own small stylistic changes to the strip.

# How did it feel to hand over the writing of *Ginger* to someone else for this book?

If it were anyone else, I'd have been nervous about it. But knowing it was Tristan at the reins, I didn't think twice. He's not only a talented writer: his knowledge of the *Ginger Meggs* characters and universe made him the perfect candidate to create these stories. He always reached out and asked me for clarification on characters and stories if he ever had questions, and we worked in a very easy, collaborative spirit.

# What was the main difference between creating *Ginger Meggs* the comic strip and *Ginger Meggs* the book?

With any newspaper comic strip, you only get a few seconds of the reader's time to a) read the strip and b) 'get' the strip. And you only have 3-4 panels to accomplish this in! It takes a lot of practice to keep your word count and illustrations to the exact needs of the story or joke – it is a very restrictive art form. Creativity

within constraints can be a wonderful challenge, but there really is nothing like being able to open your wings and explore a world of characters in depth. I really enjoyed the space on the page to be able to draw lots of fun details into the book illustrations; since the newspapers run the comic strip smaller every year, I can barely draw a fence and a bush in the background before the comic panel is overcrowded. As well as all the extra space to play visually and add more details, I got joy from knowing that the paper would be high quality, which means the illustration colours are really showcased. Newsprint paper is designed to be ephemeral (have a short life-span), so low quality inks and paper are used to print them. Getting to see Ginger printed in full colour on high-quality paper as a top-end hardback book was a real joy.

# When you're coming up with a new *Ginger* story for the strip, do you write the words first, or do you write and draw at the same time?

It's sort of a strange combination of the two. Ideas come in odd forms, so sometimes a story or a joke comes first and I then need to think of a visual accompaniment to make it work. I sit and write many strips at a time, so that I can keep the tone of them consistent, and so that I can really get in the zone and immerse myself in the *Ginger Meggs* world. Other times, it's neither words or pictures, but just a vague feeling I want to capture. I always write/draw by hand, as there is something very special that happens between the brain and the hand when I write, that is lost when I type on a laptop, tablet or phone.

# Where do you find inspiration? And how do you come up with story ideas for all the *Ginger* strips you create?

I tap into my own childhood for a large part of it. I was lucky to grow up in a cul-de-sac with lots of interesting characters as neighbours, and I'd be out playing, riding my bike and galavanting all over the neighbourhood because we couldn't afford video-game consoles. I drew a lot as a kid, so I accidentally captured a lot of my younger brain on paper, which my mum kept in a big box in the wardrobe and unashamedly use as inspiration. There are small things here and there that I put in the strip that result in a text from my mum saying, "I wonder where you got this idea, hmmm?" (My mum is a bit like Ginger's mum.)

# Do you have a favourite character (other than Ginger) to write/draw in the strip?

Yes, I really like writing jokes for Penny and Fitzzy. They're both real fish-out-of-water characters within the group of friends in Ginger's world. Fitzzy is a bit of a geek (I can relate), and Penny is always trying to get through her day without someone asking her a silly question. She has a good sense of humour, so it's funny to watch her and Fitzzy navigate (tolerate) the challenges they bump up against throughout their friendship journeys. Penny Chieng is named after a friend of mine, Ronny Chieng, who helped me develop her as an authentic Malaysian-Australian character. Ronny is a comedian by trade, so there is a little bit of his attitude in her humour.

## What is your all-time favourite *Ginger* strip?

The one that means the most to me was the tribute strip to Ginger's grandmother. In it, Ginger's grandfather reminisces with Ginger about her while they're fishing down at the creek. It wasn't a particularly funny strip, but it got a lot of kind responses. My grandparents played a very large role in my upbringing, and the newspaper ran this strip on the one-year anniversary of my grandmother's passing, and so my grandfather got to read it in the paper. He passed away a few years later.





## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Writers often use inspiration from their own lives when writing stories. Jimmy Bancks, the creator of *Ginger Meggs*, based Ginger's mum and dad partly on his own mum and dad. And Ginger was based partly on his friend, Charles Somerville. The town Ginger lives in is based on Hornsby where Bancks grew up.

In *Ginger Meggs*, the book, author Tristan Bancks drew on his own life for story ideas. Read on to discover how each story has a personal connection.

# **KEY STUDY TOPICS**





'The Dead Man's Hill billycart race is the quintessential *Ginger Meggs* story. It has action, danger, high stakes and comedy all rolled into one. This story was partly inspired by the animated book trailer which you can view here. The animation was made by illustrator Jason Chatfield and producer Miranda Latimer a few years ago, and when I saw it I knew that Dead Man's Hill would make a thrilling start to the book.'

### Activities

The great thing about a race story is that you have a clear main character (protagonist) and you have a clear opposition (antagonist). The 'want' is clear – to win the race. The stakes are high (What does the character stand to lose if they don't win?). And it's your job as the writer to imagine all the conflicts and problems that happen along the way as your character strives to win. *Detail* is really important! Writing the story in enough detail and using all of your senses so that we can see and hear and feel and taste and smell the action.

1. Read *Dead Man's Hill* and write down who you think the main character (protagonist) is, who you

think the 'baddie' (antagonist) is. What does Ginger stand to lose if he doesn't win the race (stakes)?

- 2. Can you jot down five times in the story that Tristan has used his senses to show us what something looks, sounds, feels, smells or tastes like?
- 3. Set yourself a timer for five or ten minutes and write your own story about a race. It might be based on a race that you have competed in. Or it might be a race that you'd like to take part in a go-kart race or a horse race or a swimming race. Whatever it is, try to show us who the main character (protagonist) is, who the antagonist is, why they need to win this race, what they stand to lose if they don't win, and add lots of detail, so it feels as though we're right there inside the race.



## Lamington Billionaire

### Author's Inspiration

'I loved setting up little businesses when I was a kid. I had a lawnmowing business and a dance party business and, when I was younger, my cousins and I would set up ice cream stands, but end up eating all the ice cream ourselves.

My son started a cupcake business when he was twelve years old. He would bake 44 cupcakes at lunchtime on a Sunday and spend three hours walking around the neighbourhood (with me following him as security guard) selling them for \$4 each. He would make around \$150 profit after expenses. So, I thought, what if Ginger did the same thing, but with lamingtons? And he's making more money than he's ever seen in his life? He's so happy that he lets it slip to his best mate, Benny, who then starts his own, rival cupcake business. This

## Ginger Meggs Tristan Bancks & Jason Chatfield

pits the two friends against one another in a dog-eatdog race to become a lamington billionaire.'

### Activities

 Have you ever started your own business or had a money-making scheme? If you haven't, what kind of scheme would you love to set up in order to start making lots of money? Once you've decided, set the timer for five to ten minutes and start writing a story about that money-making scheme and how it goes wrong. Do the character's parents find out? Does someone try to steal the profits? Does a brother or sister, jealous that the main character is making so much money, try to undermine them?



### Ginger Meggs for PM

### Author's Inspiration

'I found a line in an old *Ginger Meggs* comic that went something like, "You'll either be Prime Minister one day, Ginger Meggs, or you'll end up in jail" and it captured so much of what I love about Ginger. He has big dreams, gigantic plans that, even when he means well, often end up in disaster. And I was a bit like that as a kid, too. I had big dreams that would hit the brick wall of reality at a hundred kilometres an hour. So, I thought: What if Ginger hears this line about becoming prime minister and takes it seriously. I mean, what if ... and his imagination slips into overdrive and he sets off on a mission to become class captain, then principal, mayor and prime minister.'

### Activities

 Do you have a dream? Something you would love to be or do if you could choose anything in the world? Could you set a timer for five minutes and imagine a character, a kid about your age, who decides that they're going to do this thing. Tell the story of it and one or two of the BIG hurdles along the way.



### The Great Outdoors

### Author's Inspiration

'A few years ago, I was watching my sons at the skate park and a line popped into my head. "Stick's dad thinks he's Bear Grylls, but Stick's dad is not Bear Grylls. He's a twit and he's going to get us all killed." I'm not sure where the line came from, but I had Stick and his best friend Noob (the narrator) and they were going to go on a camping trip with Stick's dad who was such a terrible camper that he would endanger all their lives. I never did write that story. I used the name "Noob" for some other stories, but the camping trip idea was put on the backburner until now.

Mr Meggs is a character who has always told stories of what a brilliant cricketer / footballer / fill-in-the-blank he was when he was a kid and he's the perfect character to take his son camping and for everything to go, terribly, horribly wrong.

The story was also partly inspired by my own lack of survival skills in the wild and a few experiences when I've taken my sons camping.'

### Activities

 Have you ever been camping? Or on a long bushwalk? A hike? School cross-country? Or another activity in the wild? Do you love being in nature or hate it? Who was with you? Did anything go wrong? Did it take a long time? Did you get bitten by bugs or other creatures?

Your challenge is to start telling the story of a reallife outdoor activity or camping trip you've been on, but to add in details that didn't happen, too. So, it's a mash of fact and fiction. And when you read your story back, people have to guess which bits you made up. So, try to make it all seem true! Set a timer ... And ... Go!



## VISUAL STORYTELLING

Teachers, you could try offering your students the opportunity to choose the medium through which they tell the above stories. Words and/or visuals? Students can choose to tell a story with pure visuals if that's their forte – to play with the idea of the different ways to present a story – not purely through words written on a page. Some stories can be purely visual, some text and some a mix of the two.

Here are some other visual storytelling challenges:

- Try telling a story with a drawing and just a few words in a single-frame cartoon.
- Try telling a story in three or four frames.
- Try telling a story in an eight-ten frames cartoon.

Find some examples at gocomics.com/gingermeggs

See the worksheet on page 9 for tips from Jason Chatfield to keep in mind when you're drawing Ginger Meggs.

You can also watch this video for inspiration.

## GINGER MEGGS HISTORY

*Ginger Meggs* is Australia's longest-running comic strip, and one of the world's longest-running strips. (About the fifth-longest in the world, but quite a few strips make claims to be in the top ten.)

Read the *Ginger Meggs* timeline section at the back of the book and then see if you can answer these tricky questions:

- 1. What year was Jimmy Bancks born? And where?
- 2. What was Ginger's original name in the first *Us Fellers* strip in 1921?
- 3. Can you name a famous Australian or a moment in Australian history that was featured in the *Ginger Meggs* comic strip?
- 4. Can you name three of the five *Ginger Meggs* cartoonists?
- 5. Can you name one of the *Ginger Meggs* Little Golden Books?
- 6. When *Ginger Meggs* moved from The Sunday Sun to The Sunday Telegraph in 1951, how many readers moved with him?
- 7. What's the name of the famous Australian cricketer who said that Jimmy Bancks was 'a kind and loveable man with a great sense of humour' after he died?

- 8. How many kids auditioned for the role of Ginger Meggs in the movie?
- 9. Where was *Meggs* artist, Jason Chatfield, born?
- 10. Can you name one of the new characters introduced in 2019 / 20?



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hidden items in his messy bedroom: Help Ginger and Mike find these 16

- **Tennis Racquet**
- Fork
  Rubber Glove
  Tennis Racquet
  Mike's Bone
  Ginger's Vest
  Bow Tie
  Medical Mask
- 9. Microscope
  10. Mystery Fingers
  11. Half-eaten Apple
  12. Rubber Snake
  13. A House Brick
  14. Shoelace
  15. Fish-out-of-water
  16. Rope

8. Ginger's New Book

# DRAW YOUR OWN GINGER MEGGS



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There's so much more at penguin.com.au/teachers

then the ears ...

bottom of the

mouth

guidelines – Voila!

press too hard)

all in black pen

# FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*The Tales of Mr Walker* by Jess Black & Sara Acton

Introducing Mr Walker – a hotel dog with a nose for adventure!

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.

Royalties from sales of this book go to Guide Dogs Victoria.



*Two Wolves* by Tristan Bancks

One afternoon, police officers show up at Ben Silver's front door. Minutes after they leave, his parents arrive home. Ben and his little sister Olive are bundled into the car and told they're going on a holiday. But are they?

It doesn't take long for Ben to realise that his parents are in trouble. Ben's always dreamt of becoming a detective – his dad even calls him 'Cop'. Now Ben gathers evidence and tries to uncover what his parents have done.

The problem is, if he figures it out, what does he do? Tell someone? Or keep the secret and live life on the run?

Teachers' notes available.



*Tom Weekly 1: My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up* by Tristan Bancks & Gus Gordan

I'm Tom Weekly. This is a nail-biting – make that toe-biting – thrill ride through my life.

This is where I pour out whatever's inside my head. Like the time a bloodthirsty magpie was out to get me. Or when I had to eat Vegemite off my sister's big toe. And don't forget the day I ate 67 hot dogs in ten minutes. My life gets a bit weird sometimes but that's how I roll.

Top 3 reasons to read this book:

- 1. Cures for nits
- 2. Hover underpants
- 3. Instructions for teleporting

Teachers' notes available.



# ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Ginger Meggs	Tristan Bancks & Jason Chatfield	9781760894818	4–6	\$24.99		
The Tales of Mr Walker	Jess Black & Sara Acton	9780143793076	2-4	\$24.99		
Two Wolves	Tristan Bancks	9781760892661	4–6	\$16.99		
Tom Weekly 1: My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up	Tristan Bancks & Gus Gordon	9780143790082	4–6	\$9.99		
				TOTAL		

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