



# TEACHERS' NOTES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Middle primary (ages 6-9; Years 1 to 3)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English; The Arts
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and creative thinking; Ethical understanding; Personal and social capability

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Studying storytelling through cohesive words and pictures
- Studying visual literacy
- Exploring creative writing, inspiration and imagination
- Tips on writing stories through words and pictures
- Studying the different types of narrative and narrative voice

## THEMES

- Imagination and inspiration
- Humour
- Right and wrong
- Friendship and belonging
- Fitting in and being different
- Visual storytelling

## PREPARED BY

Tim Harris and Penguin Random House Australia

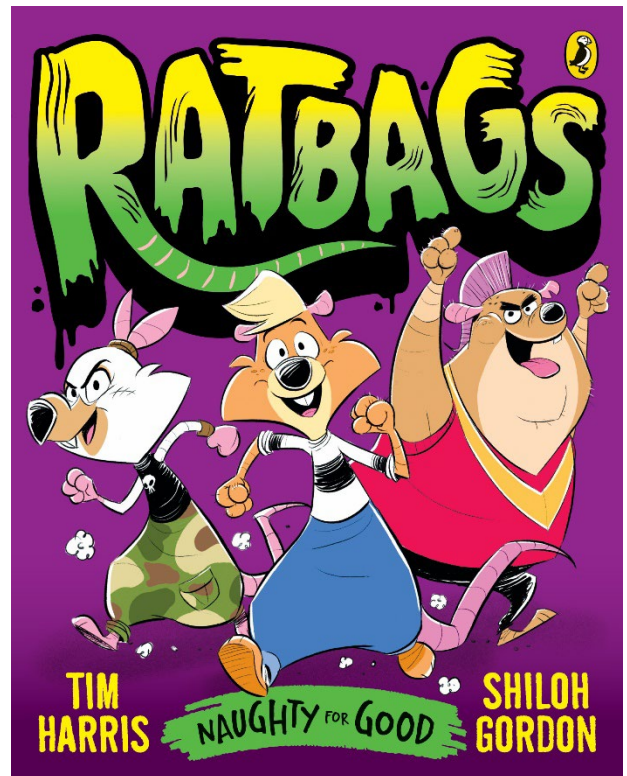
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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## Ratbags: Naughty for Good

Tim Harris & Shiloh Gordon

### PLOT SUMMARY

*From award-winning, bestselling author and funnyman Tim Harris comes this stupendously rat-tastic new series.*

***These are the Ratbags. They have pizza, and they are NOT afraid to use it.***

Let's face it – rats are mischief. Rats are rule-breakers. Rats are ratbags. They're all the same. All, that is, except one...

When Jigsaw runs into two of the most ratbaggy Ratbags known to rats, his orderly world is turned upside down and he pulls off one of the best pizza heists EVER! Will his newfound pizza obsession make Jigsaw the naughtiest Ratbag yet? Or will Jigsaw figure out how to be naughty – for good?!

**Brace yourself for a rip-roaring ride into the world of the Ratbags.**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tim Harris is the bestselling author of several laugh-out-loud series for kids, including *Toffle Towers*, *Mr Bambuckle's Remarkables* and *Exploding Endings*.

A former primary school teacher of 15 years, Tim fills his stories with quirky scenarios, loveable characters and plenty of imagination. Tim's 'humour with heart' writing style has seen his books receive multiple awards, including five KOALA Honour Books (2017, 2019 and two in 2020, and 2021) and a CBCA Notable (2018). His books have been published in Australia and the USA, and have been translated into numerous languages.

An advocate for creativity and short stories, Tim conducts presentations and workshops that are both dynamic and entertaining. He is a sought-after presenter, having worked in hundreds of schools across Australia. Tim lives in Sydney with his wife and four young children.

Find out more about Tim, including how to book a dynamic, engaging and entertaining talk or workshop for your school or library, at: [timharrisbooks.com](http://timharrisbooks.com)

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Shiloh Gordon has a passion for creating lively, engaging illustrations that are full of character and fun. He graduated with a BA in animation from the Queensland College of Art and has worked as a professional illustrator for over 20 years. His work has included illustrations for magazines, books and educational materials.

Shiloh lives in Brisbane with his wife and three kids, who are an endless source of fun and inspiration.

## INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

**What (or who) was your inspiration for this story?**

This story was inspired by the title – yes, title! I have known the word 'ratbag' for a long time and may have even been called it (by a cranky adult) when I was a kid! It's a colloquial (informal) word that we use for someone who is a bit of a rascal – someone who is cheeky and does not always follow the rules. I was thinking about the word one day and had a little lightbulb moment. 'Ratbags' would be an interesting title for a book. Then I got brainstorming. What could the book be about? Could ratbags be actual rats? What could happen in the story?

**What came first – the plot or the characters?**

The plot came first. I knew that the rats would be very naughty and full of energy, and I brainstormed a lot of things that the ratbags might like to do. After thinking about a whole bunch of different scenarios, it was time to test out the ideas with some early drafts. These drafts were not whole versions of the book, they were chapter samples and small snippets of... *experimenting* would be the best way to put it! It was difficult to find the right way to present the plot, and it went through several pitches and samples before it felt right. Once the plot/style felt more comfortable, a lot more thought went into each of the characters.

**Are any of the characters based on people (or animals) you know?**

Sometimes my own kids feel a bit like the Ratbags – they've been known to pinch the odd chocolate from the cupboard. Oh, hang on, that's me. Sorry, that's me who does the chocolate nicking. No further comment.

**Do you have a favourite scene in the book?**

It's so hard to choose! I'll go with the Naughty Awards scene for this one. I love it when the Ratbags come together – there is sooooo much naughtiness in one room! Having a crowd of naughty characters in one place means that there is a lot of fun to enjoy in the writing process. I never quite know what will end up happening because the rats take over! Then, of course, poor old Jigsaw is stuck in the middle of it – sometimes literally!



Are there any secret jokes in the book that readers should look out for?

For readers with an eagle eye, they might see some top-secret evidence that Derek the Cockroach has been around the city. I wonder if anyone can find each of Derek's secret clues?



I've also been working on a secret joke for seven years! You heard that right – seven years! The joke is very hard to find in *Ratbags: Naughty for Good* because it is so small. And the only way to find it is to read some of my other books like *Mr Bambuckle's Remarkables* or *Toffle Towers*. But never fear, the secret joke will be back in other *Ratbags* books!

Read more about how Tim and Shiloh collaborated on the *Ratbags* books here:

[penguin.com.au/articles/3766-tim-harris-shiloh-gordon-interview-ratbags](http://penguin.com.au/articles/3766-tim-harris-shiloh-gordon-interview-ratbags)

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover. What do you think the story is about? Look carefully at how the different characters are drawn, including their clothes and expressions and stances. Is there anything you see that tells you something about each character's personality?
2. The title of this first *Ratbags* book is *Naughty for Good*. Thinking about the title, what themes do you imagine the story might cover?
3. Design an alternative cover for *Ratbags: Naughty for Good*. Why did you design the cover this way?

WRITING STYLE

The *Ratbags* series is written in a graphic-novel style, with the words and pictures working seamlessly together to tell the story, and with speech bubbles from each character to show the dialogue (what each character is saying).

There is also a narrator who tells you what is happening, but who also has a strong voice and personality that speaks directly to the reader *and* the characters in the story. This type of narrator is called a second-person narrator.

Questions and activities

1. The author is the person who writes the book. The narrator is the voice that tells the story. Discuss the differences between the author and the narrator with your class.

2. There are three different types of narrative style:
  - first person narration is when a character in the book is telling the story
  - second person narration is when the narrator speaks directly to the reader and/or characters
  - third person narration is when the narrator is someone not in the story.Discuss with your class these different types of narration. What are the similarities and differences between them?
3. The narrator who tells the story in the *Ratbags* series is sometimes funny and gives their opinion on what is happening. This is called a subjective narrator. What examples can you find in the book of the narrator being subjective (telling us what they think rather than just relaying the facts of the story)?
4. Look at pages 10–11. What do you think was done first? The words or the pictures? Give a reason for your answer.
5. Turn to the last page of the book, which shows Cracker promising to get his revenge on Jigsaw and the other rats. This is called a cliffhanger and shows that the story will be continued in another book. Why do you think the author decided to end the book with a cliffhanger? Discuss your answer with your class.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Characters

The *ratbags* are all rule-breakers, and they all enjoy making mischief and causing mayhem. But Jigsaw is different . . .



**Questions and activities**

1. After reading chapter 1, make a list of the ways in which Jigsaw is different from the other rats.
2. Do you think Jigsaw feels sad that he doesn't fit in with the other rats? Or does he seem happy enough by himself? Link your answer to a point in the story to explain why you think this.
3. Think about the three main characters: Jigsaw, Ripple and Onion. What words would you use to describe each rat? Here are a few examples to get you started:

*Thoughtful Naughty Funny Mean Friendly  
Selfish Hungry Confused Clever Rule-breaker*

4. Ratty McRatty has a long family history of being the Ratbag master and hosting the Naughty Awards. Is there anyone in the history of your family who has done something famous or infamous? Ask members of your family, and share your stories with your class.
5. Cracker is a cat and an enemy of all rats, whether they're ratbags or not. What other stories can you think of that include cat and rat characters (or cat and mouse)? In those stories, are the cats and rats friends or enemies? Discuss with your class.
6. Derek is a cockroach who appears at different parts of the story in the background. Look closely at the pictures throughout the story. What do you know about Derek?
7. This book is part of a series. Imagine you were the author or illustrator and needed to include a new character in the next story. Either write about your new character, or draw what they look like. Think about whether your new character is friends with Jigsaw, or a new enemy of the ratbags . . .

**Friendship and belonging**



Jigsaw really wants to have friends, but he just doesn't fit in with the other Ratbags. Jigsaw is a thoughtful rat, who has similar values to humans – he is polite, likes to do the right thing and doesn't like getting in trouble. When he bumps into Ripple and Onion, the two ratbags are rude and talk about being naughty

and causing trouble. They make Jigsaw do things that he doesn't want to do. Jigsaw does the right thing in the end, but he does it in a way that makes the other

rats want to be his friends, and, most importantly, accept him for who he is – ratbag or not.

**Questions and activities**

1. At what point in the story do you think Ripple and Onion start to like Jigsaw for who he is and to see him as a friend rather than a pizza-getter? Give a reason for your answer.
2. In small groups, discuss what qualities you like in a friend. Write them down. Do Ripple and Onion show any of these qualities? Here are some friendship qualities to help:

*Friendly Kind Funny Supportive Trustworthy  
Listen Respectful Loyal Caring Honest*

**Right and wrong**

One of the themes in *Naughty for Good* is the concept of right and wrong. Jigsaw wants to do the right thing, but somehow gets mixed up in doing the wrong thing.

**Questions and activities**

1. The title of this Ratbags book is *Naughty for Good*. Is it ever okay if you do the wrong thing for the right reasons? Can you think of a time in the story when Jigsaw does the wrong thing but for right reasons?
2. At the start of chapter 5, Jigsaw wakes up with a cloud of guilt above his head, showing how Jigsaw is feeling guilty about stealing pizza. The guilt he feels tells him it was the wrong thing to do. What other things tell you that something is wrong, and how do you know when something is the wrong thing to do? Discuss your answers with your class.
3. What is the difference between a rule and the right thing to do? Can rules ever be the wrong thing to do? Do Ripple and Onion have rules that they follow?

**TAKE THE QUIZ!**

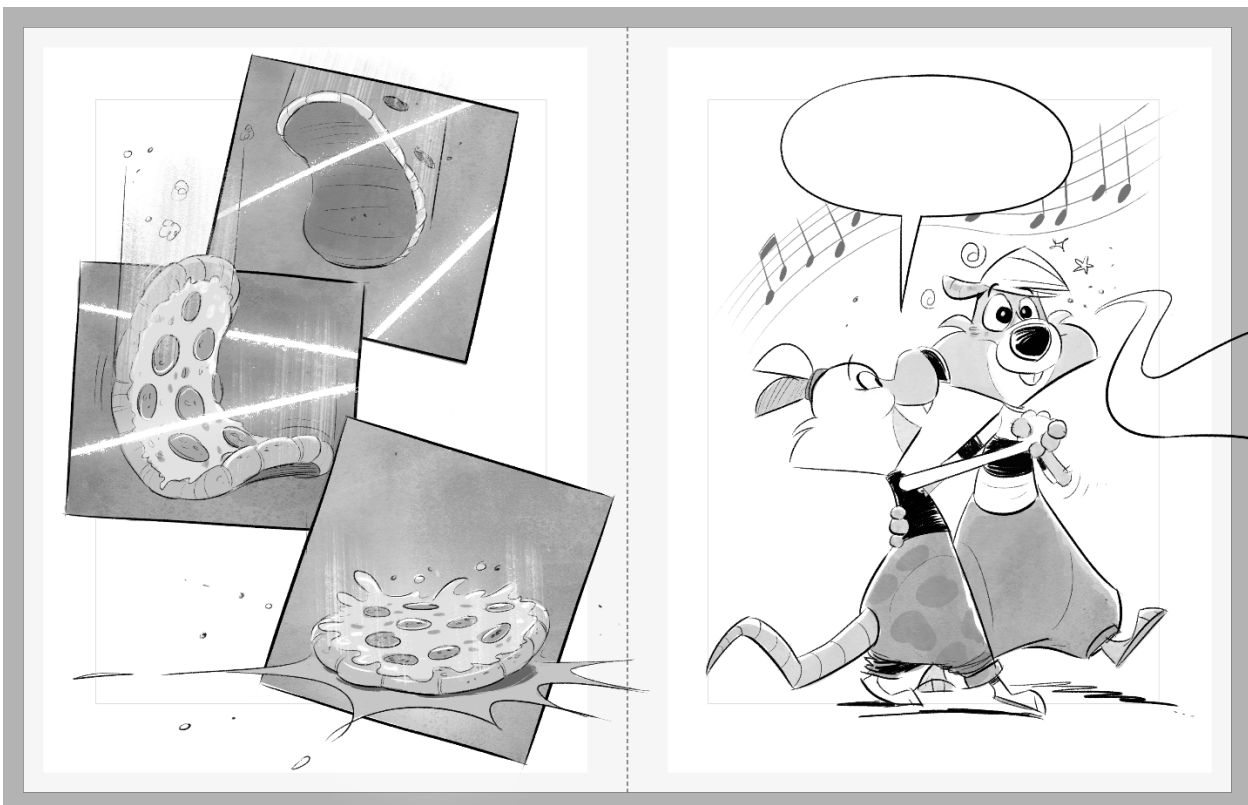
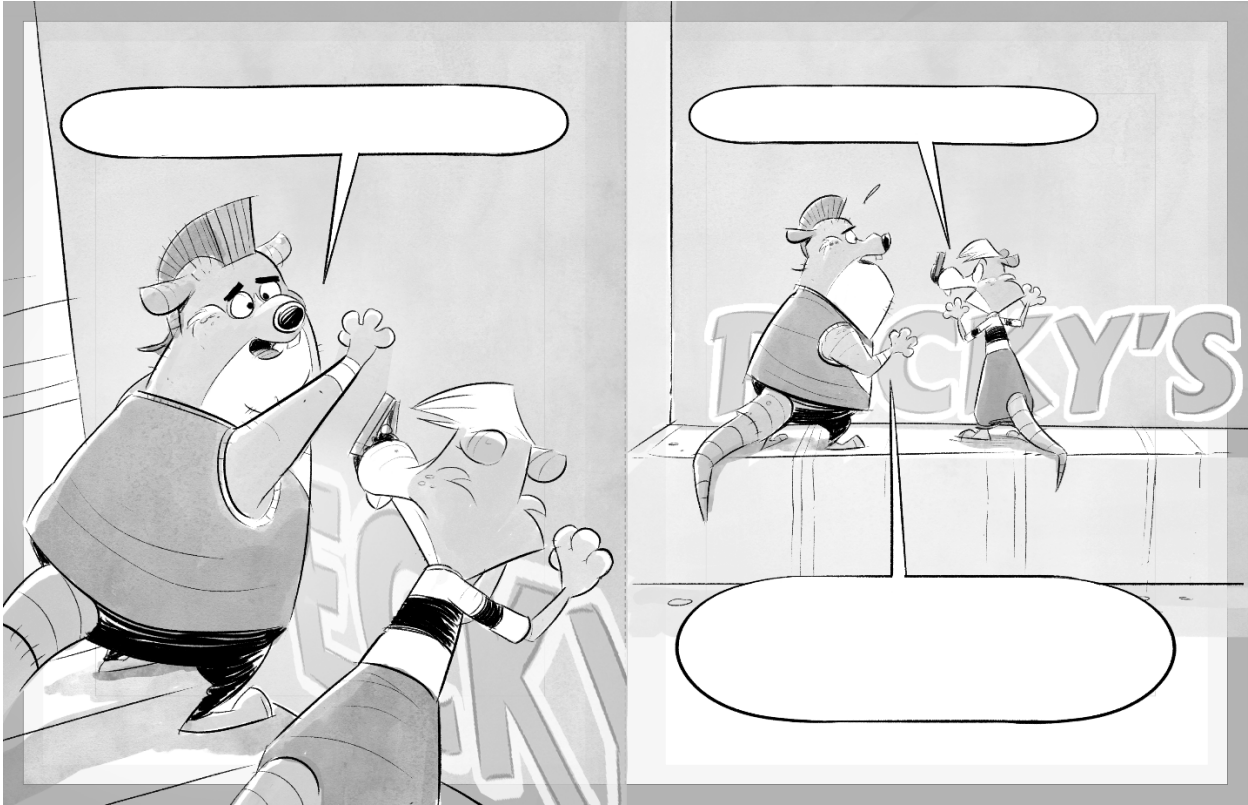
Are you more like Jigsaw, Ripple or Onion? Find out which character you're most like from Ratbags with this fun quiz!

[penguin.com.au/articles/3765-which-ratbags-character-are-you-quiz](http://penguin.com.au/articles/3765-which-ratbags-character-are-you-quiz)



## WORKSHEET 1

Look at the sequence of pictures below from chapter 6 of the book. The text has been removed. Can you tell what is happening just from the pictures? Give reasons for your answers.



## WORKSHEET 2

Jigsaw starts his day this same way every morning, with his morning routine. He makes his bed, brushes his teeth, dusts the books on the bookshelf and practises piano (for exactly 30 minutes).

Choose a different character from the story. In the four boxes below, draw what their morning routine might look like.

A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for drawing a morning routine.A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for drawing a morning routine.A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for drawing a morning routine.A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for drawing a morning routine.

## WORKSHEET 3

Colour in the three Ratbags characters, and write text for each character in the speech bubbles.



## WORKSHEET 4

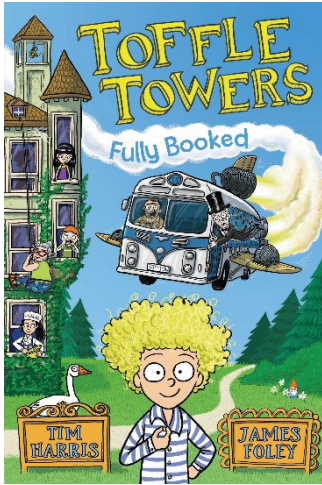
The words below are all used in *Ratbags: Naughty for Good* to describe the characters and their actions. Match each word to its meaning by drawing a line between them.

Devour	A situation where there is no control or order
Presto	A time of utter confusion
Dramatic	To bite or chew on something again and again
Tender	A time of struggle and conflict
Chaos	The sudden appearance of something, as if by magic
Genius	Something that lures someone, gets their attention
Mayhem	Something that is not tough; it is easy to chew
Gnaw	Somebody who has excellent ideas
Decoy	To eat something up very quickly
Strife	A situation that's so exciting it could be in a play





FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*Toffle Towers 1: Fully Booked*  
by Tim Harris & James Foley

Fawly Towers meets Treehouse in Tim Harris's brand-new series to make kids laugh out loud – and get their imaginations soaring.

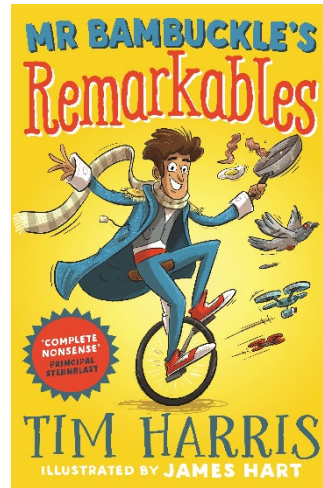
Toffle Towers is about to be inherited by the next generation.

Chegwin Toffle is only ten years old. But he isn't going to let that stop him from turning this run-down hotel into a success. Chegwin is determined to transform Toffle Towers from a boring hotel for grown-ups into an incredibly exciting destination for children (and their families).

But running a hotel isn't easy. Chegwin has a lot to learn, and his tendency to drift off into daydreams isn't helping.

Chegwin has plenty of ideas. But can he turn his madcap daydreams into reality?

*Teachers' notes available.*



*Mr Bambuckle's Remarkables*  
by Tim Harris & James Hart

When Mr Bambuckle arrives, laughs, thrills, silliness and imagination are guaranteed to follow!

He's the first teacher to cook us breakfast.

Is his spark-maker beetle really that dangerous?

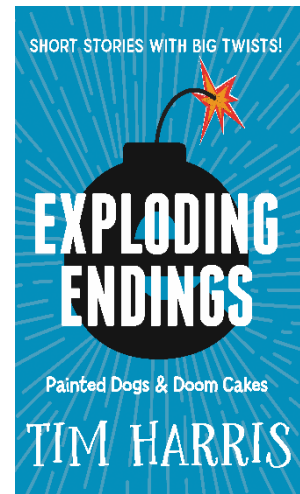
I heard he drank yak's milk in Mongolia.

He's the only person who isn't afraid of Canteen Carol.

My mum says he used to be in the circus.

The class in room 12B has a new teacher, and nothing is ever going to be the same . . .

*Teachers' notes available.*



*Exploding Endings 1: Painted Dogs & Doom Cakes*  
by Tim Harris

A hilarious collection of short stories from award-winning author Tim Harris that will have readers laughing out loud.

What are the 79 wackiest excuses for being late to school? How do you stop a maniac dentist from terrorising children? Why is the new smartphone so ridiculously dumb? And what does it take to get every single student at Milford Junior School put on detention? Find out in this hilarious collection of short stories.

One thing is guaranteed - you will NEVER pick the endings!

## ORDER FORM

PLEASE SEND ORDER FORMS TO YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION SUPPLIER

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Ratbags 1: Naughty for Good	Tim Harris & Shiloh Gordon	9780143777441	1-3	\$14.99		
Ratbags 2: Midnight Mischief *	Tim Harris & Shiloh Gordon	9780143777458	1-3	\$14.99		
Ratbags 3: Best of Pests *	Tim Harris & Shiloh Gordon	9780143777472	1-3	\$14.99		
Ratbags 4: Take Flight *	Tim Harris & Shiloh Gordon	9781761340505	1-3	\$14.99		
Toffle Towers 1: Fully Booked	Tim Harris & James Foley	9780143795421	2-6	\$14.99		
Mr Bambuckle's Remarkables	Tim Harris & James Hart	9780143785859	2-6	\$14.99		
Exploding Endings 1: Painted Dogs & Doom Cakes	Tim Harris	9781760898014	2-6	\$14.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

\* RATBAGS BOOKS 2, 3 AND 4 WILL BE AVAILABLE IN MAY, JULY AND SEPTEMBER 2023.

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