



# TEACHERS' NOTES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary  
(ages 9-11; years 4 to 6)

## CONTENTS

1. About the collection	1
2. About the author	2
3. About the podcast	2
4. Author's inspiration	2
5. Geography of stories	3
6. Writing style	3
7. Key study topics	5
8. Podcasting exercises	6
9. Worksheets	7

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and creative thinking, Personal and social capability

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Communicate through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing
- Use language to shape and make meaning according to purpose, audience and context
- Think in ways that are imaginative, creative, interpretive and critical

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

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## Bedtime Stories with R.A. Spratt R.A. Spratt

## ABOUT THE COLLECTION

From the bestselling author and host of the hugely popular *Bedtime Stories with R. A. Spratt* podcast comes this bumper collection of the show's most popular stories.

Just as the Grimm brothers collected fairytales and Scheherazade told tales of the Arabian nights, now **R.A. Spratt** has assembled the most comprehensive collection of silly stories ever bound together in one book.

Stories so *good* no human mind could come up with them. They were often dictated to R.A. by the world's most glamorous storytelling pig, Nanny Piggins. There's a never-before-seen Friday Barnes mystery, and tall tales from R.A.'s own domestic life. You'd better brace yourself – these are tales so tall you will get altitude sickness.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**R.A. Spratt** was born in the UK and lived in Dursley, Gloucestershire – a town immortalised by Harry Potter’s deeply unpleasant relatives – until she was two years old. Then, like many ambitious English people cursed with regional accents so strong no other British person can take them seriously, her family moved to Australia.

The tedium of growing up in the western suburbs of Sydney was fertiliser to the growth of R.A.’s imagination. The only thing for a kid to do was get on a bicycle and go to the library, so R.A. Spratt did just that. Once there, she read everything, devouring the books of Arthur Ransome, Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl, Robin Klein and Judy Blume, and audiotapes of Shakespeare productions and Sherlock Holmes dramatisations. And so, her young mind was formed, and set on the path of becoming the extraordinary author she is today.

Now based in Bowral NSW, she’s the bestselling writer of dozens of absurd and witty books including *Friday Barnes*, *The Adventures of Nanny Piggins*, *The Peski Kids* and the *Shockingly* and *Astonishingly Good Stories* collections. Her podcast, *Bedtime Stories with R.A. Spratt*, has had over 3 million downloads and connects R.A. with story-lovers across the globe.

## ABOUT THE PODCAST

Many of the stories in this book were originally written for R.A. Spratt’s podcast *Bedtime Stories with R.A. Spratt*. It’s a weekly podcast of funny stories including fractured fairytales and short stories from R.A.’s previous short stories collections, *Shockingly Good Stories* and *Astonishingly Good Stories*, and entirely new tales too.

The stories are perfect for bedtime, long car rides or even if you’re just stuck waiting a really long time at the doctor’s office. They’re written for 7-11 year olds, but the silliness is ageless.

R.A. Spratt says: ‘I hope you enjoy listening to this as much as I enjoy recording it. After years of being a children’s author, typing away in my office with only my goldfish for company, I was bursting to tell my stories out-loud and with lots of silly voices! So please – sit back, get comfy and enjoy some amazing, some silly and some just plain ludicrous tales direct from my imagination to you.’

## AUTHOR’S INSPIRATION

R.A. Spratt says:

‘When I wrote the short stories that became this book, they were originally for my podcast. I had no idea they

would become a book back then. Just after the podcast launched, the COVID pandemic hit. All around the world there were lots of children doing home school or in lockdown. People were scared. There was lots of sad news on the TV. So I wrote these stories for my audience to give them something cheerful and silly to enjoy. I was unsure if anyone would want to listen – or if it was a sensible way for me to be spending my time. But my friend Tony Flowers (the illustrator who did the cover art for the podcast) told me to go for it, to spread some smiles and laughter. Tony is generally wiser and better at being a grown-up than me, so I did as I was told. I went for it.

Now, thanks to online statistics, I know exactly who makes up my audience. 25,000 kids download the podcast every month. Half of them are in Australia, but a lot are in America and Europe, and there are a growing number in India and other parts of Asia.

And my silly stories are having very personal impacts on people’s lives in these distant corners of the globe. A mum in the USA wrote to tell me how she had to take her daughter to work at her office because the schools were closed. Every Wednesday her daughter would listen to my podcast and that was when this mum could make 20 minutes’ worth of work phone calls, uninterrupted, because she knew her daughter was happily occupied by the giggling coming from the other side of the room.

‘The stories in this book are very silly little tales. But sometimes silly little things are what people need. The ability to take someone away to a land of wonder within their own imagination is a powerful thing.’





to the top three moments. Next, determine which humour technique the author used.

- Write about a short humorous event that has happened to you at school or at home using the three types of humour listed above. Next, rewrite the story using only one type of humour. Is it as effective?
- Choose a paragraph from the book and consider which technique (e.g. irony, hyperbole, parody) could be used to make this paragraph even funnier. Then rewrite the paragraph using this technique.

### Characterisation

*Bedtime Stories with R.A. Spratt* features short stories told about three different sets of characters – Nanny Piggins and the Green children, Tammy and Mum, and Friday Barnes and her friends.

- How does the author make each of these characters feel unique? Consider the use of voice and stereotypes.
- Which characters in the stories were your favourites? Why?
- Close your eyes and listen to your teacher read a section of dialogue aloud. Can you tell which character it is? How did you know?
- Pick a character from one of the stories and choose a voice that you think brings that character to life. Create a short speech that that character might give and then present it to the class. Could they guess which character you were from your speech and the voice you used?
- Many of the characters in the Friday Barnes stories are relatively one-dimensional, which the author has used as a literary technique to add humour to the story. Examine the characters in the story *Friday Barnes and the Case of the Purloined Pudding*. What are the main things you know about them from the way they're portrayed in the text? Why do you think this method of characterisation is effective in a short story format?

Writers use a multitude of characters to tell stories. These include main characters (called protagonists), supporting characters and people who act against the main characters, called antagonists.

- Nanny Piggins and Mum use lots of supporting characters when telling stories, like Nanny Piggins' relatives, or the man wearing baggy white clothing in Mum's tall tale. Pick three stories from Nanny Piggins' fairytales and Mum's tall tales and create

a list of characters. Which are protagonists, antagonists or supporting characters?

- Advanced: Nanny Piggins' stories and Mum's tall tales feature stories within stories. Can you identify the main and supporting characters within the stories told by Nanny Piggins and Mum?

### TV-writing axioms

R.A. Spratt's writing style is influenced by her experience writing for television. Behind your favourite TV show is usually a whole team of writers who are frantically writing the next episode, with your entertainment at the front of mind. Here R.A. shares her top writing tips, as learned from writing for TV:

- Paint Your Drainpipes Red.** This means if something is going to be pivotal to the plot later on, make sure you put it in and make it noticeable so the audience won't miss it.
- Kill Your Darlings.** When you write for TV it's really important to be concise. Every line of dialogue should either progress the plot or develop a character, preferably both. If it doesn't, you cut it. It doesn't matter how good or clever the line is: everything in the script needs to be functional.
- Show, Don't Tell.** When you're introducing a character, try not to describe them. Show what they are like through their actions. For example, don't say 'Boris was a very sensitive bear', instead show Boris interrupting Nanny Piggins mid-story by bursting into tears and giving her a bone-crushing hug because a story about a troll who had never eaten cake is the worst thing he has ever heard.
- Think visually.** It sounds strange to talk about what things 'look like' when you're writing a book. But you want your reader to imagine a picture in their mind, and you want that image to be as powerful or as emotional or as cool as possible. Take your audience with you to look at the coolest thing you can imagine.
- Write for your audience.** Storytelling is a form of communication to another person, or a group of people: those people should always be in your mind. You're writing to entertain them. If you were telling your story to a friend would they get bored, would they be offended, would they hate your characters? Think about your audience – even if it is just your teacher marking your assignment – and write for them.

Take one of the short stories you've written for one of the other activities in this study guide and examine it with these writing tips in mind. Can you spot places where you can make important things more noticeable, cut down on words, show your reader



details instead of telling them, make your writing more visual or better entertain your audience?

## KEY STUDY TOPICS

There are three sets of stories in *Bedtime Stories with R.A. Spratt*, each featuring their own set of main characters and type of story: the Nanny Piggins stories, the Tammy and Mum tall tales and the Friday Barnes mystery.

### Nanny Piggins

Nanny Piggins tells a great many fairytales, but she rarely does so in ways that the Green children expect. Fairytales that have been rewritten to include surprising new elements are called fractured fairytales.

In the olden days, fairytales were passed on orally, instead of being written down. Because of this, there are many different versions of each fairytale.

Fairytales can also differ between cultures. For example, many different parts of the world tell stories similar to Pinocchio, but few are the version most of us know.

1. What do you think makes a fractured fairytale fractured and not just a different version of the same story?
2. Consider one of Nanny Piggins' fairytales against the version you know. What are the main differences between Nanny Piggins' tale and the original? All fairytales had a moral or taught a lesson – has that lesson changed in the tale Nanny Piggins tells? How many of the events in the story are the same, and how many have changed? How are the characters different?
3. Pick your own favourite fairytale, and consider its main events and the lesson it teaches. Brainstorm ways you might alter the events of the story – while still ensuring the story is familiar enough that readers could recognise it. Now do the same with the lesson taught. Write your story!

### Tall Tales

Tammy and Mum make up absurdly tall tales by rooting their stories in everyday things and real facts that lend a lot of credibility, like sea creatures making their homes in shells. Mum explains each story point and move onto the next using logic and reasoning.

1. Consider one of Tammy and Mum's tall tales and note each time Mum uses facts or logic to justify the things she's saying. Does each individual point make sense? Fact-check some of the points she makes.

These are stories that snowball. When you roll a snowball down a hill, more and more snow sticks to it until you end up with a huge, out-of-control boulder of snow crushing everything in its path. That's what you want to do when you write this type of story. Only instead of using snow, you're using ideas.

2. Think of an absurd statement (e.g. 'the moon is made of cheese') that you can link to a fact (e.g. cheese is made from cow's milk) and write it down. Use something simple as a starting point, like a picture from the paper, something you've found or something you've overheard.

Now repeat this, linking your first idea to another idea and building off the statement and fact you've already written down. Use this as a starting point to plan out a story – let it grow until you end up with something big and crazy. Then to try and tie it back to your starting point to bring the story full circle.

### Friday Barnes

The Friday Barnes stories are detective stories, with many plot points that leave clues and lead up to the resolution of a crime – they all have a problem, a solution and a lot of clues in between.

1. Read *Friday Barnes and the Case of the Purloined Pudding* then focus on the ending, where Friday explains how she solved the case. Write down each of her key clues, then read the story again. Can you see where the author inserted these clues into the text? Notice how the clues are woven into the story to try and make them less obvious when you first see them.
2. Plan a detective story of your own. What is the mystery that is going to be solved? Now think about what your detective is going to do to solve it. What kind of clues can you plant to help them? Where will you plant these clues? It can be tricky to insert clues into a narrative in such a way that they don't stick out to the reader. How will you manage this? R.A. Spratt's top mystery-writing tip is to plot backwards. This means figuring out the solution first, and then all the clues your main character will need to find. When you write your story, include each story carefully so as not to give away too much too soon.





# TEACHERS' NOTES

## PODCASTING EXERCISES

1. Consider the ways in which the stories in this collection are written. Do you think they lend themselves to an auditory format? Find one of the stories in the book on the podcast. Read it, then listen to the episode. Did listening to the story versus reading it change the way you engaged with the narrative?
2. As a class, brainstorm ideas for your own podcast. What kind of stories might you tell? Would one person read them out, or would you read them like a play, with different students reading the lines of different characters?

## WORKSHEET: Story Structure

All stories have a beginning, a middle and an end. Stories are also full of events, or things that happen. Choose one of the chapters in *Bedtime Stories with R.A. Spratt* and read it carefully. Identify each event and note whether it's part of the beginning, middle or ending of the story. Remember that the middle of a story is usually where the most things happen.

Story: \_\_\_\_\_

Events that make up the beginning of the story

Events that make up the middle of the story

Events that make up the end of the story



## WORKSHEET: Character Traits

Nanny Piggins is a character who jumps off the page. We know that chocolate is her favourite food, that she doesn't like rules, bullies or hypocrites and that she loves Derrick, Samantha and Michael deeply.

Using the worksheet below, think about some of the character traits that make another of the characters in the book – like Friday Barnes – larger than life. Then think about a character you might write in a story of your own. What are some traits you could give them to make them stand out? You could choose things like their general mood, what they do or don't like, how they feel about certain things and more.

Character from <i>Bedtime Stories with R.A. Spratt</i> :	
Character trait	How R.A. Spratt shows this trait in the stories
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

My character:	
Character trait	How I'll show this trait in my story
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	





## WORKSHEET: Podcasting

Planning a podcast can be a lot of hard work! Use this worksheet to help you get started.

**What will the format of your podcast be? Will it be short stories, or perhaps a longer story told over multiple episodes?**

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**Who is the ideal audience for your podcast? How old are they? What other kinds of things do they like?**

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**How long will each episode go for? Will it always be an exact length, or is some variation okay?**

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**Who will speak on the podcast. Will different people speak for different characters, like a play? Or will each story be read by a different person?**

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**What will the theme of the story/stories on your podcast be? Will they be funny stories, mystery stories, fantasy stories, true stories . . . the possibilities are endless. Don't forget you can mix and match too – like a series of funny stories about crime in space!**

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**Now all of that's sorted, it's time to start thinking about the final details! What will you call your podcast? What kind of theme music might you use? When will you start recording it? Use this space to take note of the ideas you haven't written down above!**

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## ACTIVITY: Recipe from the book!

### Microwave Mug Cake

**Equipment:**

- Mug
- Fork
- Tablespoon

**Ingredients:**

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil (canola or sunflower oil would be fine too)
- 3 tablespoons of sugar
- 1 egg (half an egg would probably be better, but it is so hard to halve an egg, so I always just chuck the whole thing in)
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 4 tablespoons of self-raising flour
- 1 tablespoon of powdered drinking chocolate (or cocoa if you've got it)
- Pinch of salt

**Tammy's Tip:** Put in the wet ingredients first or you'll get clumps of dry ingredients at the bottom of the mug and that is gross.

**Method:**

1. Put all the ingredients in a mug and mix them with a fork. (Mix until there are no lumps. Lumps of unmixed flour aren't good later when you're eating it).
2. Microwave for 90 seconds or until it rises up. (It might take 2 minutes. It depends how powerful your microwave is feeling).

That's it. You have a cake! It really is that easy.

To make it prettier you can spread Nutella on top, sprinkle icing sugar on top of that, stab the whole thing with a chocolate bar, then smother it in whipped cream. Whipped cream hides so many dessert flaws.

There is a video of R.A. Spratt making this recipe on her Instagram feed (look in the reels).



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Bedtime Stories with R.A. Spratt	R.A. Spratt	9781761340017	4-7	\$22.99		
Astonishingly Good Stories	R.A. Spratt	9781761345043	4-7	\$16.99		
Shockingly Good Stories	R.A. Spratt	9781761345036	4-7	\$16.99		
Friday Barnes 1: Girl Detective	R.A. Spratt	9781760890735	6-9	\$16.99		
The Adventures Of Nanny Piggins (Book 1)	R.A. Spratt	9781742755298	3-6	\$15.99		
Hamlet is Not OK	R.A. Spratt	9780143779278	7-11	\$16.99		
The Peski Kids 1: The Mystery of the Squashed Cockroach	R.A. Spratt	9780143788812	3-6	\$16.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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