

The Girl Who Brought Mischief



TEACHERS' NOTES

Author: Katrina Nannestad

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Introduction

It's 1911 and ten-year-old Inge Maria arrives on the sleepy island of Bornholm, Denmark with a trunk full of belongings and a head full of fairy tales. Covered in fish guts and now missing one blonde plait (thanks to her only travelling companion - a hungry goat) she meets her grandmother for the very first time. Spirited Inge Maria is determined to make her stern, no-nonsense grandmother and the people of Bornholm (themselves mild mannered and un-imaginative) fall in love with her; but this solo mission is not without its challenges! Broken eggs, loose farm animals, fanciful stories and boisterous church singing all threaten to derail Inge Maria's chance at belonging... but it's this talent for mischief that begins to win her grandmother's heart. Inge Maria misses her home in Copenhagen, brimming with the warmth and kindness of her own mother, but we learn that Inge Maria's mother has died. As the special bond with her grandmother deepens, Inge Maria learns that grief and joy can exist simultaneously and that it is okay to have both. Inge Maria also learns that she and Grandmother, whose nickname was once 'Dizzy', may not be as dissimilar as she first thought! At the rigid Svaneke Folk School Inge meets Klaus, a boy her own age with a mysterious background. Klaus delights in Inge Maria's stories and quickly becomes a trusted friend. It is only when she discovers that Klaus is actually the town 'thief' that she learns he has lost his parents and has no-one to care for him. The two orphans are bound by friendship and imagination and with a little help from madam mischief they each find a place where they belong. This is a funny, heart-warming story about great sadness and joy, finding your place and never losing your imagination no matter what age you are!

About the author

Katrina Nannestad is an Australian author who grew up in Central NSW. After studying arts and education at the University of New England in Armidale, she worked as a primary school teacher. Her first teaching job was at a tiny two-teacher school in the bush. Her first book *Bungaloo Creek* was published in 2001 and was a Notable Children's Book for the 2002 Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) awards. She is also the author of the hilarious *Red Dirt Diary* trilogy. *Red Dirt Diary* (2010) was shortlisted for the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards 2011 and the West Australian Young Readers' Book Award 2012. *The Girl Who Brought Mischief* is her fifth title. Katrina Nannestad now lives in Victoria with her husband, two sons and a 'pea-brained' whippet called Snowy. Check out Katrina's **Facebook Page** for updates on her work.

Author inspiration

Katrina says:

My husband is a Dane and many years ago, we lived on a Christmas tree farm in Denmark. When I decided to write a story set in another time and culture, Denmark seemed the perfect setting. Beyond being familiar, it is a charming country that has so much of the fairy tale about it even today – snowy winters, delicious sweet treats, windmills, thatched cottages, animals living in barns and quaint folk dancing.

Setting my story way out on the Danish island of Bornholm enabled me to take my young character, Inge Maria, to an isolated place where her sense of loss and loneliness would be magnified. It also opened the way for delightful culture clashes. Inge Maria must learn to cope with the change from city life in Copenhagen with a free-spirited mother, to quiet island life amongst a conservative people.

Hans Christian Andersen was, of course, Danish. I read many of his fairy tales before and during the writing of *The Girl Who Brought Mischief*. What an amazing range of characters, plot, humorous commentary and morals in his tales! They are truly inspiring.

Inge Maria Jensen, it seems, agrees with me. She loves reading Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales and often lives in a fantasy world where she converses with pigs and teapots and spoons. She longs to share the joy of stories with others. And her own story is a type of fairy tale in which she travels through loss and grief to a richer, happier life.

Study notes on themes and curriculum topics

a) Themes

▪ **Imagination and Individuality**

Inge Maria has a lively, vivid imagination. She lives in a magical world of talking animals, fairy tales and flying pie dishes. In Copenhagen her teachers encouraged her to write original stories and songs but when Inge Maria starts at Svaneke Folk School the teachers are dull and lifeless and they want everybody to act and think in the same way. No speaking your mind at Svaneke Folk School! In her apology letter to her Her Nielsen, Inge Maria writes:

‘Stories and paintings are the windows to a person’s soul. If we make all our stories and pictures the same, I am scared that we will lose the bits of us that make us sparkly and happy and unique,’ (p 124).

Discussion Point: Do you agree with Inge Maria? How can stories and paintings be the ‘windows’ to a person’s soul? What would your classroom be like if Her Nielsen was the teacher and nobody was allowed to express their individuality?

▪ **Belonging**

When Inge Maria goes to live with her grandmother in Bornholm she feels like she does not fit in. But as time passes, Inge Maria builds a special bond with her grandmother and begins to feel a sense of belonging. When Grandmother says she loves her, Inge Maria exclaims ‘for a moment I think, *this is where I belong*. But then I realise that if I belong here, I no longer belong in Copenhagen,’ (p 161). She is struggling with her place in the world.

Discussion Point: Inge Maria initially feels like she is betraying her mother by finding a new place to belong. Can you belong in more than one place at once? Why/Why not? Where are some different places that you feel a sense of belonging? Why is it so important to have a sense of belonging and what is significant about the last line of the novel?

▪ **Grief and Joy**

For the first part of the book we don't know why Inge Maria has left Copenhagen, we can only guess. When we learn that her mother has died, our worst suspicions are confirmed. She is an orphan, still grieving but determined to be brave and not to cry.

Discussion Point: Inge Maria describes how she was humming at her mother's funeral because if she didn't she would want to scream. 'I will scream at the men to dig that box back up again. I will scream at Oline to stop squeezing me so hard. But most of all I will scream that I want my mama right now,' (p. 77).

How did you feel when Grandmother wrapped her arms around Inge Maria and held her while she sobbed for her mother? Why is it important to share your emotions with a friend or family member?

Discussion Point: Through the characters of Inge Maria and Grandmother, Katrina Nannestad offers us insight into the journey of grief and losing a loved one. Chapter 18 has some particularly good examples and Inge Maria learns that it is okay to feel grief and joy at the same time. It might be appropriate to consider a class discussion about students' experiences with death and loss. Discussion should refocus on Grandmother's positive words:

'It's okay to be sad when someone goes away, because it means that we are blessed. Blessed to have loved someone so much and to have had them as a special part of our lives,' (p 204).

▪ **Friendship**

Inge Maria and Klaus have a special friendship. They share the same passion for story-telling and adventure and later they learn that they are both orphans.

Discussion Point: What things do you have in common with your special friends? How can you look after your friends?

Key learning outcomes:

- Identify what makes us individuals and why individuality is important.
- Appreciate what it means to belong somewhere. Recognise that you can belong to several groups at once.

- Recognise the importance of sharing your feelings and thoughts with a trusted individual.
- Understand that some people have experienced great loss in their lives.
- Explore ways to nurture your friendships.

b) Curriculum areas and key learning outcomes

Literacy and language

- Katrina Nannestad does a wonderful job of creating **colourful characters**. By the end of Chapter One we have already learnt a lot about Inge Maria and Grandmother.

Activity: Look carefully at Chapter One. Use **Worksheet 1** to help you identify how Katrina Nannestad paints a vivid picture of these two characters.

- The novel is written in **first person narrative**. This is a literary device that allows us to see the world through the eyes of ten-year-old Inge Maria.

Activity: Re-read Chapter Nine and Inge Maria's version of the events that unfold in her music class. Consider the scene in the music room from a different point of view. If you were an old student of Fru Ostergaard what would you have made of that lesson? What would you think of Inge Maria's 'Bunny Dance'? Now write (retell) the same events from a different point of view. Remember to use the personal pronoun 'I' and focus on your own perception of things. It may help to imagine you are writing a diary of the events.

- The **first person narrative** also helps Katrina Nannestad create **humour**. Often the reader can see a gap between Inge Maria's **perspective** of situations and the **reality** of these situations. Sometimes this is called **dramatic irony**.

Activity: Read the excerpts on **Worksheet 2** and consider Inge Maria's version of things against what **you** think is **really** happening.

- Katrina Nannestad uses lots of fun **similes** in her writing. A simile is a figure of speech that compares one thing with another, usually beginning with *like* or *as*. Similes allow writers to really play with vocabulary and create strong images for the reader.

Activity: Worksheet 3 includes some familiar similes from the novel but they have been muddled up. Re-form the muddled similes and then try creating some similes of your own.

- In Chapter Eleven Inge Maria writes a letter of apology to Her Nielsen. In this letter she uses lots of ceremonious language appropriate to the text type.

E.g. 'It is with my **deepest apologies** that I write to say that I am sorry and **filled with remorse**, '(p 123).

Activity: Examine Inge Maria's letter and then write a formal apology letter of your own. The offence may be insignificant (eating the last chocolate biscuit) or it may be more serious (telling a fib) but the language and structure of the letter must be formal. Try using lots of your own ceremonious, perhaps over the top, formal language to draw out the humour.

- At the beginning of the novel Grandmother says Inge Maria is behaving like a barbarian. Inge decides if she is indeed a barbarian she had best find out what it means!

Activity: Worksheet 4 asks you to locate some interesting adjectives from the novel. Use your dictionary/thesaurus find **definitions** and **synonyms** for these words.

- Katrina Nannestad uses lots of interesting words as an alternative to 'said.'
E.g. Inge Maria 'calls' (p 7) and her Grandmother '**snaps**' (p 8). This gives the reader a greater sense of the drama.

Activity: Conduct a word search for words that Katrina Nannestad uses as an alternative to 'said'. Record these and then share with the class. Create a word bank for the class wall.

- Katrina Nannestad includes pieces of dialogue in her novel. This helps her to reveal character traits and advance the plot.

Activity: In pairs, select a piece of dialogue from the novel and use this as the basis for a short dramatic performance. Write some of your own conversational dialogue to extend the scene. Perform your scene for the class.

- The first task Grandmother sets Inge Maria is to write a short story containing a bowl of oatmeal, a fox and a black kitten (p 121). This tells Inge Maria that Grandma does have an appreciation for imagination!

Activity: Set up a **round robin** storytelling circle with the class. Fill a pillowcase with random objects and allow the first student to randomly select an object as stimulus and begin the story using three sentences. The next student takes another item and incorporates this into the story. Encourage students to accept and add to their classmates' ideas and guide the class towards a complication, climax and resolution. This technique proves lots of fun and should guarantee some creative results.

Key learning outcomes:

- Know how to select and use the personal pronoun when writing in first person.
- Appreciate the effect of using first person narrative to create humour and dramatic irony.
- Identify how the author selects figurative language to create vivid characters and settings.
- Appreciate vocabulary.
- Value creative thinking. Understand that authors use different types of stimulus to help them create stories.

SOSE

- **Beautiful Bornholm.** The story is set in the tiny island of Bornholm, Denmark in 1911.

Activity: Research the island of Bornholm and prepare a short report for your teacher. Remember to include a map clearly showing where exactly Bornholm is. You might like to include the flag for Denmark too.

- **City Versus Island Life.** In 'A Note to Readers' (p 213) Katrina Nannestad gives us some information about the difference between Bornholm and the city of Copenhagen. Bornholm is a small island and quite isolated whereas Copenhagen is the capital of Denmark, a global city with many attractions. **Activity:** Find examples in the novel where Inge Maria compares Copenhagen with Bornholm. Use **Worksheet 5** to help you identify some similarities and differences between both places. In Copenhagen they don't wear clogs that's for sure!
- **Hans Christian Andersen was a Great Dane!** Inge Maria loved *fairy tales* by the great Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. Even though Inge Maria was reading his fairy tales in 1911 the author was born over one hundred years earlier. His stories have been around for a long time and you will be amazed at how many he wrote!

Activity: Research and write a biography of the life and achievements of the author Hans Christian Andersen. The below websites provide some useful resources for teachers with lots of interesting facts. Depending on the reading levels of your cohort, you may wish to organise some prints first and make these available to your levelled reading groups.

<http://holidays-family-time.knoji.com/10-facts-about-fairy-tale-writer-hans-christian-andersen-for-international-childrens-book-day/>

<http://www.andersenfairytale.com/>

http://kids.denmark.dk/denmarkKidsHCA_eng.htm

<http://childrensbooks.about.com/cs/authorsillustrato/a/hcandersen.htm>

Key learning outcomes:

- Identify the geographical, cultural, social and historical context of the novel.
- Evaluate the relevancy of information.
- Organise information.

Visual Arts

- **Living Characters.** Katrina Nannestad is so good at describing characters that sometimes you feel like they might just jump off the page. What if they did? What would Grandmother ‘short and round like a barrel,’ (p 5) look like in the flesh? Would her raisin eyes twinkle? Or how about wiry Angelina Nordstrup for that matter? Who is so ‘tall and so incredibly thin that any hopes of a generous morning tea are dashed the moment she opens the door,’ (p 35).

Activity: Choose a character from the novel and create a 3D clay sculpture of them to display in the classroom. Try to exaggerate the clay features so the viewer gets a good sense of their physical characteristics. These should be fired in a kiln if possible before painting. Create a small information board to go with your sculpture and include the character’s name, an explanation of how they fit into the book and your favourite quote about them.

- **Grandmother’s House.** Grandmother’s house, its roof covered in ‘a white icing of snow,’ (p 8) is bursting with farm animals and smells like oatmeal and creamy hot chocolate. It’s almost like something out of a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale.

Activity: What does Grandmother’s house look like in your mind? Create a collage of the house paying lots of attention to the details. You can include people and animals too.

- **Horrible Herrings.** When Inge Maria first hides in the herring smokehouse she never would have guessed the trouble it would cause. Cats have become a constant fixture at her side!

Activity: Listen to Chapter 11 with your eyes closed. Then use **Worksheet 6** to create a storyboard for Inge Maria’s walk home from the herring smokehouse to her Grandmothers. Think about how many cats are there to begin with and when they start to pop up into frame. Are any hiding? Where’s the little stray Flea-bag? Think of each frame as a section of film. Remember you can have long shots and close ups to help you tell the story. Describe what’s happening under each frame.

This website provides a good example of a simple storyboard:

<https://myfolio.com/art/wm73hucw2u>

Key learning outcomes:

- Visually express characters and places described in the novel.

- Locate visual information within the text. Select relevant images to create a storyboard and retell a section of the story visually.

Questions for reading and discussion

- 1) List all the animals that live at Grandmother's house.
- 2) Retell the story (orally) in thirty seconds to the class.
- 3) Explain five things that Inge Maria doesn't like about her new school in Bornholm. Give reasons why she feels this way.
- 4) Map out the major plot points in the story from beginning to end.
- 5) Read the following passage and identify the verbs Katrina Nannestad has used.

'I jump off the fence and find myself running across the hilltops, screaming, giggling, ribbons flapping-snipping-snapping above my head, a skinny boy grinning by my side and a big grey dog lolling and leaping around the folds of my skirt,' (p 198).

Write a paragraph that discusses the effect these verbs have on the reader. Consider the significance of this passage in the context of the whole story (think about when it takes place).

- 6) Think about how well you know the following characters: Inge Maria, Grandmother, Klaus, Angelina Nordstrup, Her Nielsen and the Pedersen twins. You have to choose a birthday present for each of them. Explain why you chose each gift.
- 7) Discuss the similarities and differences between two characters in the novel.
- 8) Give a sales talk, pretending the students in the class are clerks in a bookstore and you want them to push this book. Give five reasons for your recommendation. Each reason must be backed up by an example from the text.
- 9) Generate key questions to test other students' comprehension of the text.
- 10) Compose a song, jingle or rap to promote Bornholm as a tourist destination.

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About the author of the notes

Simone Chapman attended Newtown High School of the Performing Arts before completing a Bachelor of Media and Communications at Charles Sturt University in 2004. She worked for almost a decade producing theatre for young people in Australia and England and is now a primary school teacher in rural NSW.

Worksheet 1

Colourful Characters: Be a Character Detective!

Katrina Nannestad does a wonderful job of creating colourful characters for her readers. By the end of Chapter One we have already learnt a lot about Inge Maria and Grandmother.

Armed with a copy of your novel you are about to do some character detective work.

Examine the different ways we learn about these two characters. Record all the clues you find in Chapter One below.

	Inge Maria	Grandmother
What does the character say that is revealing?		
What does the character do that is revealing?		
What physical descriptions are we given of the character?		
What belongings does the character possess ?		

Worksheet 2

Inge Maria's Point of View: What's *Really* Happening?

The story is told through the eyes of ten-year-old Inge Maria. But Katrina Nannestad is a very clever writer who helps the audience see what's really happening or what another character is thinking even though we are seeing things from Inge Maria's point of view.

Carefully examine the three passages below from your text (you might like to go back and re-read the whole chapter). Think about what might *really* be happening.

1) Inge Maria's perspective:

I sit up straight and yell, 'Amen!'

Everyone, even the organist, turns to stare at me. I smile. Grandmother must be so proud to have me here with all my best manners for everyone to see.

(Chapter Six, p 71)

What is Grandmother *really* thinking and why?

2) Inge Maria's perspective:

When we get to the end, Her Nielsen is as red as a beetroot and shaking all over. Fru Ostergaard is sitting at the piano, opening and closing her mouth. I think she wants to sing, but is too overwhelmed with excitement at how fun her lesson has become. I smile at her and return to my seat, but not before I have done a little curtsy and said, 'You're welcome.'

(Chapter Nine, p 101)

Why is Fru Ostergaard *really* speechless?

3) Inge Maria's perspective:

I am grateful that Grandmother has believed my story about the flying pie dish. I am thankful that she still does not know that Klaus is a thief.

(Chapter Fourteen, p 155)

Does Grandmother *really* believe the story? Why does she *really* play along with Inge Maria?

Worksheet 3

Appreciating Similes

Katrina Nannestad uses lots of similes in her writing. A simile is a figure of speech that compares one thing with another and usually begins with *like* or *as*. Similes allow writers to play with vocabulary and they help create vivid pictures in the mind of the reader.

Here are six similes from *The Girl Who Brought Mischief* but they have been muddled up. Reform the similes by colouring 'like with like' in the same coloured pencil.

Her eyes are black	in a pod.
More miserable than	walrus with fish tangled in its teeth.
I keep my head down and work like a	like an ogre.
Like two peas	a goose on Christmas Eve.
She is frowning	like two raisins pressed into her wrinkly, grey face.
Snores like a	donkey

Similes are lots of fun to play with. Have a go at finishing these ones off. Share your favourites with a friend.

She was as thin as	
The room was as neat as	
He was as angry as	
She was as hot as	
The class was as clever as	

Now write your own from scratch.

Worksheet 4

Vocabulary Search: Adjectives

Adjectives describe the world of the novel. There are a range of interesting adjectives in *The Girl Who Brought Mischief*. Choose another nine from your novel. Use your dictionary and thesaurus to record their meanings and three synonyms for each.

Adjective	Dictionary Meaning	Synonyms
Mischievous		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.
		1. 2. 3.

Worksheet 3: Answers

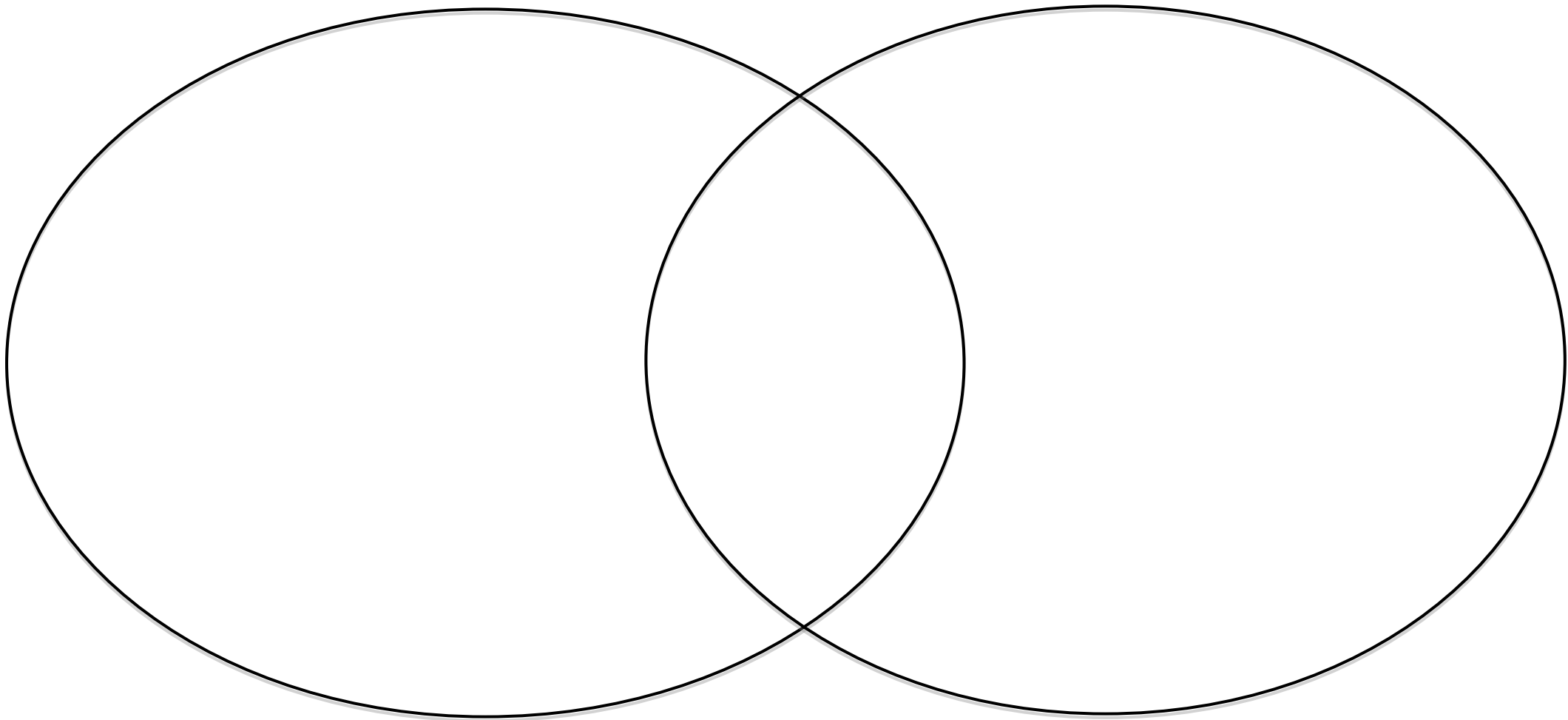
1. Her eyes are black like two raisins pressed into her wrinkly, grey face.
2. She is frowning like an ogre.
3. More miserable than a goose on Christmas Eve.
4. Snores like a walrus with fish tangled in its teeth.
5. Like two peas in a pod.
6. I keep my head down and work like a donkey.

Worksheet 5: City Versus Island Life!

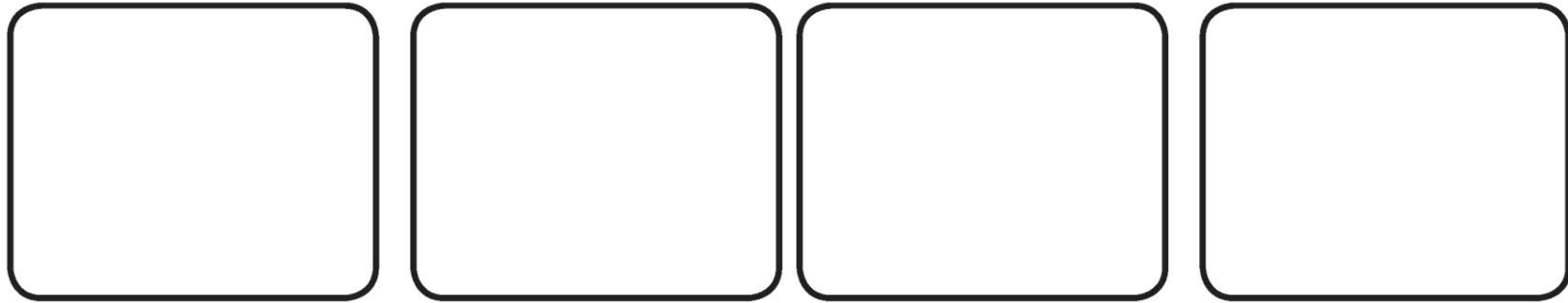
In 'A Note to Readers' (p 123) Katrina Nannestad gives us some information about the difference between Bornholm and the city of Copenhagen and many clues also lie in the text. Use a copy of your novel to search for some information that Inge Maria shares about both places. Despite their differences there are also some similarities between the two places! Use the diagram below to organise your notes.

Copenhagen

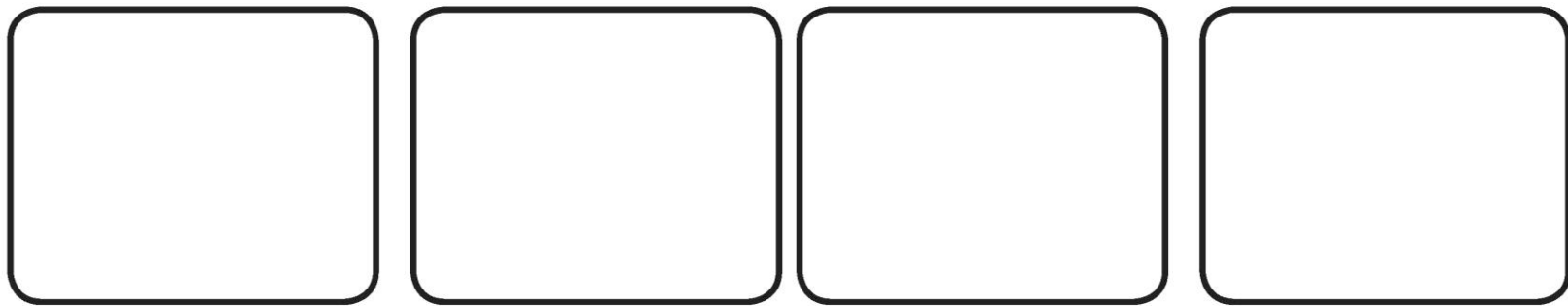
Bornholm



Worksheet 6: Horrible Herrings Storyboard.



Three horizontal lines of writing space for each of the four storyboard panels.



Three horizontal lines of writing space for each of the four storyboard panels.

Name: