

The Girl, the Dog and the Writer in Rome

By Katrina Nannestad

Illustrations by Cheryl Orsini

Book Summary:

He's the world's vaguest novelist. She's a shy and unusual child. Together, they're travelling the world, one book a time. For the first ten years of Freja's life, she and her mother Clementine have roamed the Arctic in search of zoological wonders. Happy, content, together. Freja and Clem. Clem and Freja. But now, everything is changing, and Clementine must send Freja away to live with her old friend Tobias, a bestselling crime writer and, quite possibly, the most absent-minded man on earth. Tobias isn't used to life with a child, and Freja isn't used to people at all, but together they'll stumble into an Italian adventure so big that it will change things forever ... Award-winning Australian author Katrina Nannestad returns with a delicious new series about family, friendship and finding yourself.

Key Learning Outcomes

ENGLISH ACELA1490, ACELA1493, ACELA1495, ACELA1496, ACELT1603, ACELT1605, ACELT1606, ACELY1688, ACELY1690, ACELY1692

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION ACPPS033, ACPPS034, ACPPS035

Themes

Being Brave, Developing a sense of Self, Rome

Recommended Ages: 8+

ISBN: 9780733338175

EBook: 9781460708125

Notes by: Nadia McCallum

Before reading

Themes

Chapter Study

About Author

About the Illustrator

Links to the Australian Curriculum

Before reading

Cover Illustration

Look at the cover of the book. What can you tell about the story from the book?

When you finish reading the book – take another look at the cover. What do you notice now, that you didn't notice before? What links are there from the different elements in the picture, to what you have read in the book?

Themes

Being Brave

There are many times in the book where Freja has to be brave - leaving her mum to live with Tobias, going to the market with Vivi, dancing with the Russians, avoiding the fake priests... just to name a few! Different things are scary and intimidating for different people. Think about what it is, that makes a situation scary. What scares you? Have you ever been faced with a situation that made you nervous or afraid? How did you overcome your fears and be brave?

Developing a sense of Self

'Just my luck,' muttered Mrs Thompson. 'The child is not normal.' While this was a rude and hurtful thing to say, it was, in fact, absolutely true. Freja Peachtree was not normal. She was an exceptional child. Although only ten years old, she had perched on clifftops with puffins, swum with seals, rubbed noses with reindeer and wrestled with Arctic fox cubs. She had lived in seventeen different homes, including a log cabin, a cave, a boat, a yurt, an abandoned church and an igloo.... (cont.)

Q. Mrs Thompson probably intended it as an insult when she said Freja wasn't normal. Was Freya insulted? Explain your answer.

Re-read page 9-10

Freja loved animals. They were, she thought, ever so polite. Unless ill or frightened or wanting to eat you for dinner, they usually approached one slowly, cautiously and with respect. They made time to watch, listen, smell.... With people, it was different. Forced. Rushed. There was no good-mannered staring, sniffing or circling during which Freja could gather her wits. No time to watch, listen or prepare an appropriate response. People ran straight at her, talking, telling her things she didn't understand, asking her questions she didn't know how to answer. It was overwhelming and Freja, so very often, longed to do what any frightened animal might do — run away and hide. And sometimes, she did.

Q. Why doesn't Freja like people? What is it about animals that she prefers to people?

Rome

Rome was a strange but pleasing mix of ancient and new, rough and slick. Everywhere was fascinating.
(Chapter 15)

Much of this book is set in Rome. At the back of the book is a glossary of all the Italian words contained in the book. While Tobias and Freja spend much of their time in Rome, and while we read about a lot of the cultural aspects of Rome, we don't read a lot about the tourist attractions in Rome, or the history. Write a three-day itinerary that you would do, if you visited Rome. Explain why you should choose to visit those attractions. Explain their historical significance where necessary.

Chapter Study

Seeds

On page 3, Freya describes the leverets;

'A whispered promise,' said Freja, 'of lolling legs and powder-puff tails.'

Q. Think of other animals you know. How would you describe them?

After being patient for so long, Freya finally gains the trust of the leverets and they crawl onto her lap.

Then, finally, one by one, the fluffy grey babes hopped, crawled and tumbled into her lap. Freja's eyes widened. Her breath caught. The babies wriggled and squirmed in the small bowl of her lap until they were squished and moulded together, like pairs of socks squeezed into a too-small drawer. They nudged noses, wriggled bottoms, licked one another's faces and, exhausted by their first great outing, yawned and fell asleep. Freja's neck and shoulders tingled and her face almost split with the width of her smile. 'Fur fairies. Fluffy seeds,' she whispered into the wind. 'Heaven.'

Q. This makes Freya so happy that she thinks she is in heaven. Has there ever been a moment in your life where you have never been happier?

Chapter 1: Perplexing People

In this Chapter Freja likens her mother to the fruit of the same name.

Freja had insisted on calling her mother Clementine since she was three years old and discovered a fruit by the same name. Both fruit and mother were deliciously sweet and zesty. 'Mummy' suddenly seemed a dull and inadequate word.

Q. How would you describe different members of your family? Would you liken them to fruit?

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Chapter 2: An unsettling change of plans

Because new beginnings are a wonderful thing. An adventure!

Feja's mum told her the news that Feja would not be accompanying her to Switzerland, couched in the hope that it would be a new beginning, an adventure in the hopes that Feja would not be upset, instead focusing on the possibilities.

Q. Have you ever had to do something that made you afraid or nervous, but it ended up being a good thing? Perhaps you changed school, or started a new sport... Explain what it was that made you afraid or nervous, and how you overcame that.

... show me how bold and clever you have grown in my absence.

Chapter 3: Who is Tobias Appleby?

'You know that we should always decide for ourselves – watch, listen, learn. Like we do with the animals we study. I don't want you to look at Tobias Appleby through my eyes when you first meet him. I want you to use your own eyes, your own heart. My hope is that you will make him your friend for the reasons you choose.'

Q. Feja's mother is very keen for Freja to make up her own mind about Tobias. Often we judge someone bias on bias or stereotypes. Find a definition for 'bias' and 'stereotype' in the dictionary. Write an example of each, perhaps it is a bias or stereotype that you have, or one that is common in society. Is it correct? If it isn't factually correct, why do you think people believe it?

Challenge Question

Our first instinct is to think that stereotyping is a bad thing, but could using a stereotype help us? Can you think of situations where stereotypes could be useful? Or even helpful?

Chapter 4: A surprising arrival

Freja searched her mind for something sensible to say, but the best she could come up with was, 'I'm ten.'

'Marvellous!' cried Tobias. 'I used to be ten!'

Q. Is this a normal reaction to a child telling an adult how old they are? List all the other things from this chapter that tell us Tobias isn't like most people.

Chapter 5: A face full of dog and tears

'So she's ... she's just like us,' said Tobias in hushed tones.

There was a long pause before Clementine said, 'Yes.'

'Does she know?' asked Tobias. 'No,' said Clementine. 'Please don't tell her ... Not yet. We'll know when the time is right.'

Freja's head spun. Her thoughts ran wild. Like us? Does she know? Don't tell? 'What does it mean?'

Q. What do you think Tobias and Clementine mean? What doesn't Freja know?

Chapter 6: Carrots and crime

Q. In this chapter Feja learns that Tobias is a writer, specialising in crime fiction. What genre do you like to read? Why? Do you have a favourite author?

Question 7: Bickies and licks

Tobias typed on, oblivious to her presence. A different child might have been upset, felt neglected or lonesome. But Freja, who loved to be left alone, was delighted.

Q. Freja comments that Tobias ignoring her, not realising she was even there, might be something that would annoy most people but it didn't upset her. Can you think of traits that other people have, which do not bother you, but annoy someone else? Can you think of traits that you have which some people might even find amusing or endearing, but annoy others?

Chapter 8: Marmalade and tears

'It would seem the Pooh stick I chose is as bad at floating as me. I swim like a stone.'

Freja said, 'I swim like a fish...'

Q. Can you think of something you can do? Make a simile to describe how you can do it.

Chapter 9: Conversation and clouds

'Whoopsy-daisy!'

Q. Tobias uses this expression when the clock falls off the wall. What does it mean? Research its origin.

'If you stare at the clouds for long enough,' explained Tobias, 'they turn into animals ... and if you linger amidst the bracken for a further half-hour, a story about the animals will weave itself in your mind.'

Q. Lie outside on the grass watching the clouds. What animals in the clouds can you see?

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Challenge: We also 'draw' pictures from the stars in the night sky. Research some famous animals 'found' in the stars.

Chapter 10: Tobias mingles in his own special way

In this chapter we observe how Tobias interacts with the local people in his village. Do they like him? What evidence do you have to support this belief? Why do you think they feel like this about him?

Chapter 11: The too-big lie

Freja dived into his lap, wrapped her little arms around his body and buried her tear-drenched face in his vest. The vest was soft and woolly and smelt like comfort, love and old books.

Q. Our sense of smell is closely linked with memory, which is why smells can often bring us comfort. Feja thinks that Tobias' vest smells like 'comfort, love and old books.' As a class, brainstorm all the different smells which bring you comfort. Do you have any in common with anybody else?

Chapter 12: Pesky pigeons

'Yes, gossiping,' said Tobias. 'Pigeons love to gossip. Why do you think they gather in such fussy clusters all the time?'

Q. What does the word 'gossip' mean? Do pigeons really gossip? What would pigeons in your area/school gossip about?

Chapter 13: Kindness and crowds

Q. Etymology is the study of word origins. In this passage, there are quite a few words which have interesting origins. Look them up and write down all you can find out about the word.

Gelato, cobblestone, café, polar, arctic, chef, angel, theatre

Chapter 14: Café Vivi

Q. In this chapter we learn that Tobias researches using various hair accessories to pick locks, in order to write the book 'A Moustrap in Moscow.' Why do you think authors spend so much time researching how to do things, to write into their books?

Q. In this chapter Tobias and Freja eat lunch at Café Vivi. They eat some delicious food but not everybody might be familiar with them. Find a recipe for one of the following and try making it – with an adult's help!

Veal Scaloppini, Tiramisu, or Macarons

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Chapter 15: The peevish priest

Q. In this chapter, they all eat gelato. How is gelato different from ice-cream? Have you eaten gelato? Which is your favourite flavour?

Chapter 16: Nonna Rosa and Enzo

Q. Nonna Rosa and Freja stuff figs with mascarpone. Mascarpone is a type of cheese. What other types of cheese are there? Which cheese is your favourite? Challenge – how are different cheeses made?

Chapter 17: Books and dreams and nightmares

'They love him,' whispered Freja. 'They love his craziness, his boldness, his energy, his silliness. But most of all, I think they love his kindness. He tries to please, even when he knows he'll get it wrong.'
Freja thought about this for a moment. 'He's brave-kind,'

Q. Freja lists all the things that she can see that the people love about Tobias. Make a list of all the things people might love about you. Now turn to a friend, write five things you admire about them. Get them to do the same about you. Can you write something you like about every person in your class?

Chapter 18: To market, to market

Q. Freja accompanies Vivi to the market, but it wasn't what Freja was expecting. Write down what Freja thought it would be like, and what it was.

While Freja was nervous in the beginning, she stuck it out and ended up enjoying the market.

'This really is rather fun,' said Freja. 'Market time at Campo de' Fiori is almost as entertaining as seeing bear cubs learning to catch salmon ... or Tobias acting out the next scene for his novel when he thinks nobody is watching. I'll describe it all in my next letter to Clementine.'

Q. What changed Freja's mind?

Chapter 19: Jam ravioli

'I'm not normal,' she whispered.

'Good heavens!' cried Tobias, throwing his hands in the air. His face was filled with horror. 'Of course you're not normal! What a ghastly thing to contemplate. No, no, no, no, no! You, old chap, are a wonderfully unique child of great intelligence, astonishing creativity and marvellous

appearance. I mean, just look at your hair today. It's like a haystack in a hurricane. Magnificent! Nobody else has anything quite like it.'

Q. Again, Freja is concerned that not being normal is a bad thing, but Tobias turns it around and shows her how wonderful it is to be unique. What things are about yourself that make you different and 'wonderfully unique'?

Chapter 20: A prayer for Clementine

Q. Fettuccini is a type of pasta. How is pasta different from noodles? Research the origins of pasta and noodles. Write a short report about what you find.

Q. Nonna Rosa tells Freja that she lights a candle for her sister. Why do people light a candle when they pray? Nonna Rosa would probably be Catholic, but do other religions light candles too?

Chapter 21: Lemon tart with extra first aid

Q. What about Tobias' story was real? What was imaginary? What made it seem real?

Chapter 22: Flitting feet and dizzy heads

But the most important thing is to share it with good friends.

Q. Giuseppe tells Feja that things are best shared with friends. What things do you share with your friends, that are better when shared?

Chapter 23: Little ears

Q. We learn that Orecchiette means little ears. But other names of pasta also have meanings beyond their names. Research what the following names mean; fettucine, penne, bucatini, cavatappi, farfalle.

Q. Who does Freja think Tobias is? Why does she come to this conclusion?

Chapter 24: A busy night

Q. Freja has terrible dreams. What bad dreams have you had?

Challenge: Why do people have dreams? What function do they have?

Chapter 25: Cheese wheels and little sacks of chocolate

'This one looks good!' cried Tobias. He dashed down an alleyway towards a tiny but crowded café. 'It smells delicious and it's busy. Full of fascinating people. People begging to be written into a novel. Just look at that man standing by the window. His fingers are so fat he can't even hold his coffee cup by the handle.'

Q. Why does Tobias like going to cafés? Where can you find inspiration from? What characters are in your class that you could take inspiration from?

Chapter 26: Two uses for glue

'Yes,' sighed Tobias. 'It's delightful! Pink with white polka dots. I find it strangely appealing. I simply must have it ... although I don't know why ...'

Q. Why do you think Tobias wants that particular teapot?

'Greetings from Rome,' muttered Freja. 'I've sent so many greetings from Rome and haven't had a word in reply. Oh, Clementine! What's happening?'

Q. Why do you think Clementine isn't responding to Freja?

Chapter 27: What nobody knew about the Trevi Fountain

Q. Why do you think the priests don't like Tobias?

Q. Tobias tells a tall tale about the Trevi Fountain. Can you think of a fantastic tale you can create about a landmark where you live?

Chapter 28: Chocolate gelato at last!

Q. What idea does Freja have about the fake priests? How might this help explain why the priests don't like Tobias?

Q. Why does Tobias check that the door is locked?

Chapter 29: A tingling neck and jelly knees

Q. Why do you think the fake priests think that Freja is spying on them?

Chapter 30: Lies, lies, despicable lies

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Q. Why doesn't Freja want to tell Tobias about the priest in the church? Do you think she is making the right decision? What would you do in if you were in her place?

Chapter 31: Tumbling down Gianicolo

His gaze was directed at Vivi. Today she was dressed all in white — crisp white shirt, white jeans, white sandshoes and white headband. The only touch of colour was a pale yellow scarf around her waist and the yellow-and white striped box of macarons she held in her hands.

'Beautiful,' repeated Tobias. 'Like a meadow full of daisies on a warm summer's day.'

Q. Tobias gave a lovely description of Vivi. What simile can you write to describe how someone you know looks?

'Can't have a proper picnic without a pot of tea,' he murmured. 'My word, no. A picnic without tea would be a disaster ... as bad as trifle without jelly ... a book without words ...'

'The Trevi Fountain without water!' shouted Freja.

'Rome without ruins!' cried Vivi.

Tobias nodded.

Q. What other ways can you think to describe a disaster?

Chapter 32: A thrilling game of Cheese Wheels

'We're gladiators!' shouted Tobias, thrusting an ink-stained fist in the air. 'My motorcycle is our chariot! We are victorious! Our enemy is conquered! Hear the ancient crowd roar.'

Q. Why do you think Tobias chose this metaphor? What is a gladiator? Write a short paragraph explaining who they were, when and where they lived, and what they did.

Chapter 33: Maps and stories and musings

Q. What important pieces of the mystery does Vivi reveal in this chapter? How might it be related to Tobias' novel?

Chapter 34: Secrets revealed

Q. What does Freja realise?

Chapter 35: Mystery solved!

Q. Why does Tobias think the fake priests dislike him? What parallels are drawn between his story and what is happening in reality?

Chapter 36: Friends and foes

Q. Tobias has a great sense of humour. How is his humour shown in this rather scary, situation?

Chapter 37: Plenty

All she truly knew was that Tobias Appleby was a kind and caring man who had led her into a new life filled with many more kind and caring people. Friends. Lots of big-hearted friends. Like a large, happy family.

She had always thought that love was quiet and small, something she and Clementine shared alone.

But love was not just Freja and Clementine.

It was not Freja and Clementine with Tobias and Finnegan thrown in for good measure.

Love was a crowd.

Love hung around where there was plenty.

Plenty of laughter.

Plenty of kindness.

Plenty of cuddles, even when a mother was not there to offer her own arms.

Q. When the novel began, Freja was firmly of the view that she liked animals better than people. Do you think she still holds this view? Why do you think her view might have changed? What about the people in Rome make them different from other people she knows, such as her next-door neighbour, Mrs Thompson?

Q. Why didn't anybody suspect the fake priests?

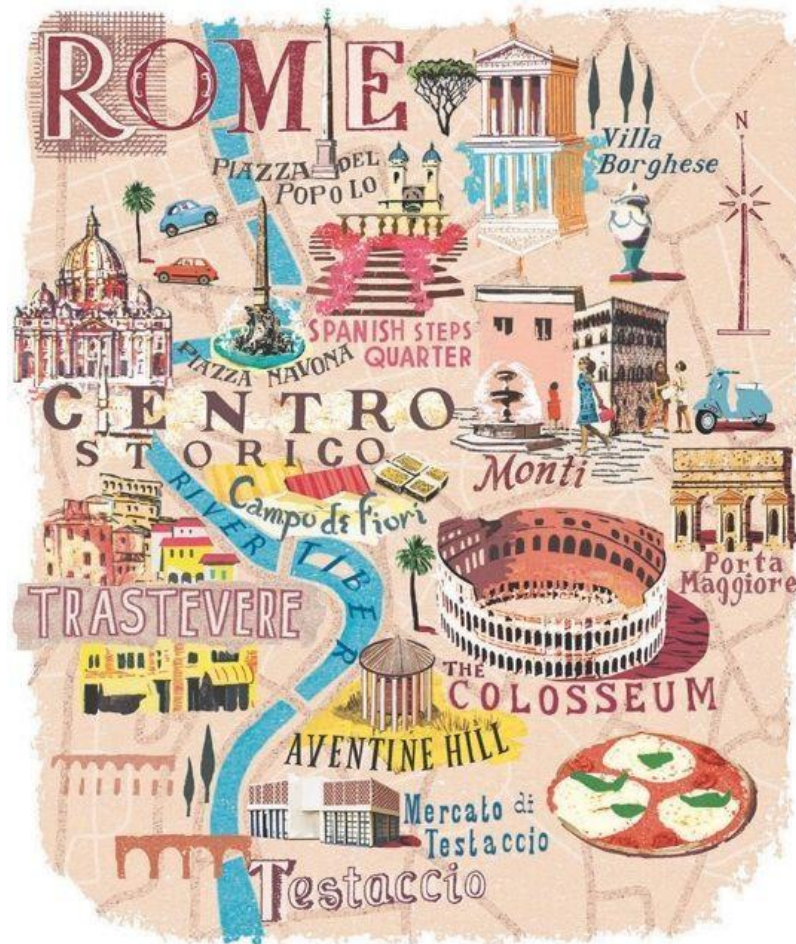
Chapter 38: New beginnings

Q. Were Freja and Tobias really going to Provence? What, do you think, prompted their sudden desire to go to Provence?

The Girl the Dog and the Writer in Rome

C H A J C P I G E O N S U G K
L C O B B L E S T O N E I O F
E I M X X A R J J P R I L S Y
M F C A F E F Z S P R C E S G
E O C R M G G K G O A E J I Y
N U O R E C C H I E T T E P K
T N K J A A F F S Y L K D I M
I T I T P R E A G S I A T N A
N A N V U D A O T A K U T G R
E I N L O Y L T R E V I M O M
U N U P H O V L X X I L G W A
X F M E M F E T T U C I N E L
Q A S Y D U W A D M G Y Y V A
C A T S W R L E V E R E T S D
L E Y P C A V A T A P P I A E

CLEMENTINE
TREVI
FOUNTAIN
LEVERETS
MARMALADE
GOSSIPING
PIGEONS
ETYMOLOGY
COBBLESTONE
GELATO
CAMPODEFIORI
ORECCHIETTE
FETTUCINE
CAVATAPPI
CAFE



Create your own Map

Get creative and design your own map of Freja's travels

About Author

Katrina Nannestad is an Australian author. She grew up in country NSW in a neighborhood stuffed full of happy children. Her adult years have been spent raising boys, teaching, daydreaming and pursuing her love of stories.

Katrina celebrates family, friendship and belonging in her writing. She also loves writing stories that bring joy to other people's lives

Katrina now lives near Bendigo in Victoria with her family and an exuberant black whippet called Olive. She dreams of one day living in Rome where she will spend her days sitting on the edge of a fountain, gossiping with the pigeons and eating chocolate gelato. www.katrinanannestad.com

About the Illustrator

Cheryl Orsini has illustrated more than twenty children's books, including the much-loved ABC BOOK OF CARS, TRAINS, BOATS AND PLANES. Her work also regularly appears in magazines and exhibitions. For more visit www.cherylorsini.com

Links to the Australian Curriculum

ENGLISH

Purpose audience and structures of different types of texts: Understand how texts vary in complexity and technicality depending on the approach to the topic, the purpose and the intended audience (ACELA1490)

Sentences and clause-level grammar: Understand that the meaning of sentences can be enriched through the use of noun groups/ phrases and verb groups/ phrases and prepositional phrases (ACELA1493)

Word-level grammar: Understand how adverb groups/ phrases and prepositional phrases work in different ways to provide circumstantial details about an activity (ACELA1495)

Visual language: Explore the effect of choices when framing an image, placement of elements in the image, and salience on composition of still and moving images in a range of types of texts (ACELA1496)

Personal responses to the ideas, characters and viewpoints in texts: Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view (ACELT1603)

Features of literary texts: Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension (ACELT1605)

Language devices in literary texts, including figurative language: Understand, interpret and experiment with a range of devices and deliberate word play in poetry and other literary texts, for example nonsense words, spoonerisms, neologisms and puns (ACELT1606)

Listening and speaking interactions: Use interaction skills such as acknowledging another's point of view and linking students' response to the topic, using familiar and new vocabulary and a range of vocal effects such as tone, pace, pitch and volume to speak clearly and coherently (ACELY1688)

Purpose and audience: Identify characteristic features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text (ACELY1690)

Comprehension strategies: Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning to expand content knowledge, integrating and linking ideas and analysing and evaluating texts (ACELY1692)

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION Being healthy, safe and active sub-strand

Explore how success, challenge and failure strengthen identities (ACPPS033)

Explore strategies to manage physical, social and emotional change (ACPPS034)

Describe and apply strategies that can be used in situations that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe (ACPPS035)

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.