

# Classroom Resources



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## Waiting for the Storks

Katrina Nannestad

### BOOK SUMMARY

*I don't want to remember the truck, or the night I was taken, or the family I left behind. I am not a sad Polish girl. I am a good and happy German girl.*

*I am. I am. I am.*

It's the Second World War and Himmler's Lebensborn Program is in full flight when eight-year-old Zofia Ulinski is kidnapped by the Germans. She has blonde hair and blue eyes, just like the other Polish children taken from their families and robbed of their names, their language, their heritage.

But when Zofia is adopted into a wealthy and loving German family, it is easier, it is *safer* to bury her past, deep down, so everything is forgotten. Until the Polish boy arrives.

And the past comes back to haunt her.

From Katrina Nannestad, multi-award-winning author of *We Are Wolves* and *Rabbit, Soldier, Angel, Thief*, comes a story about family lost and found, and the choices we make when we don't have a choice at all.

### KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ACELT1619
- ACELT1621
- ACELY1721

### THEMES

- Families
- WWII
- Belonging
- Identity

**Recommended Reading Ages:** 12+

**Resources Created For:** Upper Primary/Lower Secondary

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# Classroom Resources

## Before Reading

1. As a class, research Heinrich Himmler, the Nazis, and Poland in 1941. Ask the class to consider why the author has set the story in this time period.
  - a. What issues about nationality, identity and freedom could arise as a consequence of Germany invading Poland?
  - b. How could the setting and time of the story, and the potential moral conflicts that arose as a consequence, shape the lives of the characters in the novel?

## During Reading

### Literary techniques

1. Think about storks as a motif and allusion in this story. What meanings and associations do storks typically evoke?
  - a. What values do storks represent in the text?
  - b. What obvious message does the motif of storks communicate to the reader?
  - c. What lesson is the author asking the reader to learn?
  - d. How important does the motif of storks become by the end of the book?

### Characterisation

1. Good authors work hard to create a complex main character who has a range of attributes. An empathetic protagonist is a feature of most great novels. How does an author create a protagonist who is interesting, and readers champion and like?
  - a. Make notes on Zofia's attributes across the course of the novel by recording one or two quotes for each chapter. You might like to do this in a table like the example below:

Chapter & page #	What is happening?	Quote	What do we learn?
Chapter 1, p. 2	We meet Zofia's family, and they are playing her favourite game.	'My whole life I have been making choices. Silly choices. Fun choices. Rushed choices. Mostly I'm happy with my decision, like with the socks. But sometimes I have regrets, like now with the poppyseed cake.'	Zofia enjoys the game she plays and spending time with her family. She is generally a happy person who makes the most of what she has. Even though she's living through a war, she hasn't had to face any really serious choices.

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- b. How does Zofia change across the events of the novel? Use the evidence you have collected to write an essay explaining how the events of the novel have, and have not, changed Zofia.
2. Tomasz plays an important part in the novel before we even meet him. When are we first 'introduced' to Tomasz?
  - a. Zofia is excited to meet Tomasz when Mr Wojcik tells Zofia about him. Why is she so happy at the idea of meeting Tomasz and what does she hope to get from it?
  - b. When Zofia does get to meet Tomasz, it is not at all how she expected the meeting to go when she first hears about him. How is their first meeting different from what Zofia expected?
    - i. In some ways Tomasz does fulfil some of the role that Zofia originally hoped for. How does he do this?
  - c. Even before they return to Poland, Tomasz becomes like family to Zofia. Find three examples of this and write a paragraph explaining how Tomasz has become a surrogate brother to Zofia.
  - d. Complete a table making notes on Tomasz as you've done for Zofia.

## After Reading

### Themes

1. The importance and consequences of choices are examined from the very start of the novel. While some choices have little or no consequence, like the game Zofia plays with her family, others have life-altering consequences.
  - a. What are some of the most important choices that Zofia makes?
  - b. Is Zofia always able to make the choices she would wish to?
  - c. Are there any occasions in the novel when Zofia makes a choice that is not really a choice?
2. Family can be very important in giving us a sense of belonging and security. Throughout *Waiting for the Storks* Zofia changes 'family' several times. What are the different families she has?
  - a. How do these different families affect the way that Zofia feels about herself? You might like to go back to the evidence you have gathered on Zofia and Tomasz to help you answer this question.
3. The idea of identity, and how our sense of self can be shaped by where we are from, our family, friends and beliefs, is an extremely important theme in *Waiting for the Storks*. Using the textual evidence you have gathered on Zofia, explain how her identity is shaped by the events of the novel.

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## Written responses to the text

1. Drawing evidence from the text, in particular the beginning and ending of the novel, write a 400-word response on the ideas and values storks represent in the novel.
2. When Zofia is sent back to Poland at the end of the war, she is punished for the choice she made to 'become German'. Do you think this was fair?

Think about:

- Was this really a choice that she was able to freely make?
  - What were the consequences for her making a different choice?
  - Zofia is a child for all of the events of the novel. Do you think this should be taken into account?
3. Essay question:  
"‘We’re just *children*,’ whispers Tomasz. ‘We shouldn’t have *had* to choose.’" p. 276  
How does this quote from *Waiting for the Storks* reflect the central message of the novel?

## About the Author

Katrina Nannestad is an award-winning Australian author. Her books include the CBCA-shortlisted *We Are Wolves*, *The Girl Who Brought Mischief*, the Travelling Bookshop series, the Girl, the Dog and the Writer series, the Olive of Groves series, the Red Dirt Diaries series, the Lottie Perkins series, and the historical novel *Rabbit, Soldier, Angel, Thief*. Katrina grew up in country New South Wales, in a neighbourhood 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 creating stories that bring joy or hope to other people’s lives. Katrina now lives on a hillside in central Victoria with her husband, a silly whippet called Olive and a mob of kangaroos.  
[www.katrinanannestad.com](http://www.katrinanannestad.com).

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