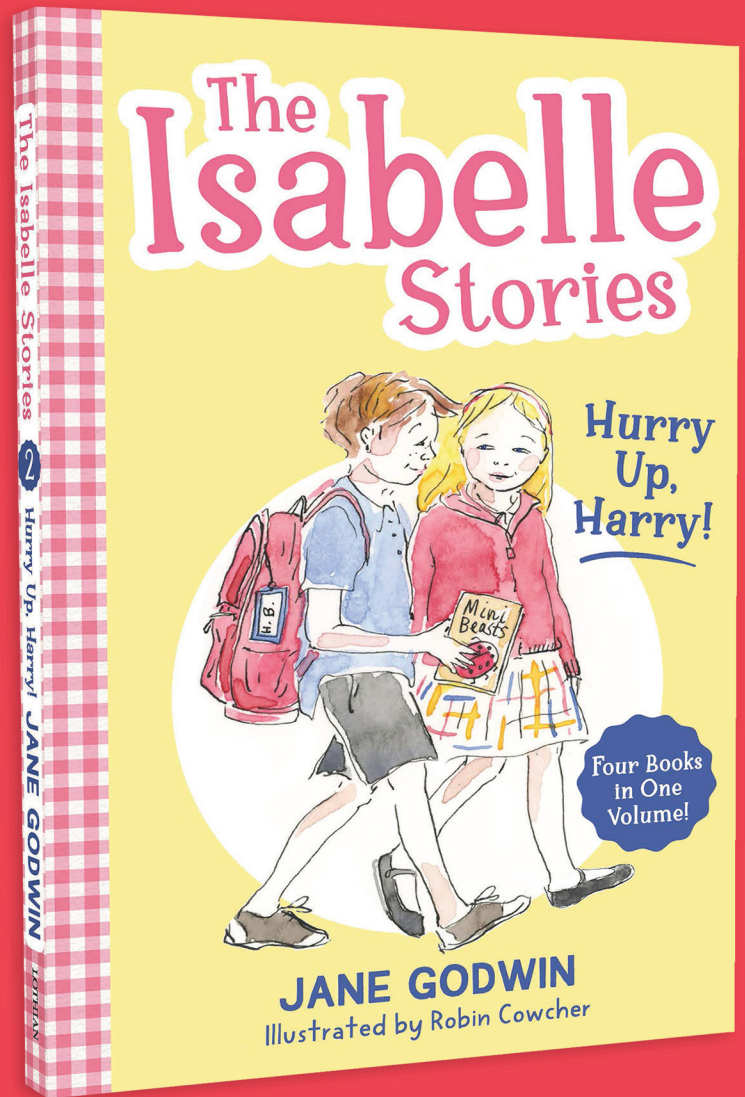
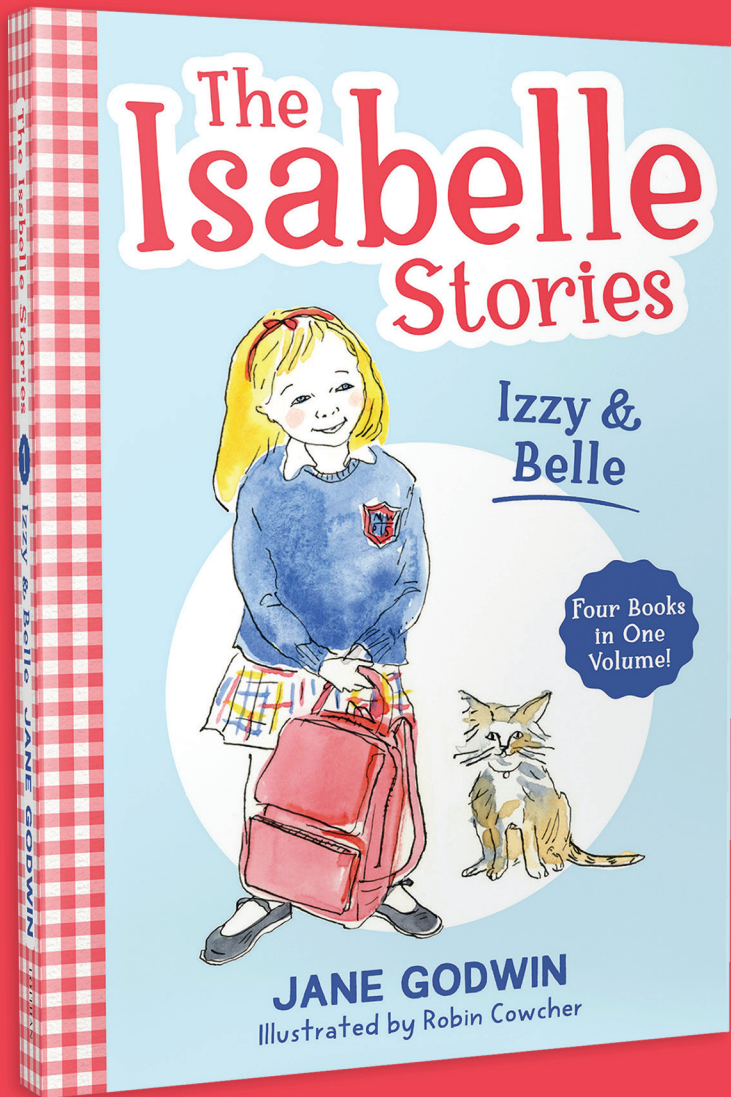


The Isabelle Stories



TEACHERS RESOURCES

The Isabelle Stories

JANE GODWIN

Illustrated by Robin Cowcher

Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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INTRODUCTION

This is a heartwarming new junior fiction series about an observant, thoughtful six-year-old girl named Isabelle, and about all the big and little things that matter when you're growing up and finding your place in the wide new world.

VOLUME 1 IZZY AND BELLE

Six-year-old Isabelle Reddy doesn't have any brothers or sisters. But she does have her dad, her cat Steve, her friend Harry B, and her baby cousin, Bibi, who she's very good at looking after. And then along comes Isobel, a new girl in her Year One class at school. They have the same name, but will they be friends?

There are four gentle stories in one volume, all about Isabelle and her world, its trials and triumphs, its small moments and big dramas: friends, family, school life and growing up, from Jane Godwin, one of Australia's respected writers for children, and with delightful illustrations by Robin Cowcher.

VOLUME 2 HURRY UP, HARRY!

Isabelle and her best friends Harry B and Izzy are in Year Two and there are lots of adventures to be had: getting to know their new teacher, going to a school disco and sleepover, bridge-building in the forest, and even a baby to show the whole class! Isabelle is loving Year Two, until . . . Harry has some news that shocks them all. How will Isabelle manage the rest of the year without Harry B?

Once again, there are four stories in this second volume, by Jane Godwin, illustrated by Robin Cowcher.

BEFORE & AFTER READING THE BOOK

- Examine the covers of these two books in the series. What do they suggest about the series' themes?
- After you have read the four stories in Volume 1, and in Volume 2, examine the covers again: what do they suggest to you now?
- After you have read Volume 1 and Volume 2, read about the series in reviews and articles and use the notes below to examine the text more closely.

THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

SPECIFIC TOPICS IN EACH STORY

VOLUME 1 IZZY AND BELLE

BOOK ONE: THE WRONG ISABELLE

Topics: Trying hard at school; awards for achievement; friendship; naming.

Discussion Point: Isabelle desperately wants to win a Star of the Week certificate but it never seems to happen. Do you struggle with similar problems?

Discussion Point: Isabelle feels that some people are awarded Star of the Week when they don't necessarily deserve the prize. Do you think that sometimes people receive awards or prizes when they may not deserve them? And other people miss out? Is the awarding of prizes always fair?

Discussion Point: Isabelle wonders if she needs a middle name like Isobel has. Are middle names important? Do you have one? What would your middle name be, if you were asked to choose it?

Discussion Point: Isabelle and Isobel are two students in a class which contains several people with the same name. (For example, the Olivias are called Ollie, Liv and Olivia.) How many repeated names are in your class? How do you distinguish between them?

BOOK TWO: TEENAGERS

Topics: Relationship between teenagers and children; getting lost; looking after a baby.

Discussion Point: Do you have teenagers in your family or amongst your friends? How are teenagers different from children?

Discussion Point: What would you have done if you'd accidentally boarded a train without your dad, mum or another adult? Would you have gotten off the train as Isabelle does? What might have happened if Sophie and Stella weren't on that station?

Discussion Point: Do you ever have to look after a baby? What special things do babies like to do with you?

BOOK THREE: THE SPECIAL PEN

Topics: Favourite things; suspicion of others; forgiveness; family traditions.

Discussion Point: Invite students to name their favourite thing. Why do they like it so much?

Discussion Point: Have you ever suspected someone else of taking something, and then found that you were wrong? How did that make you feel? Did you apologise?

Discussion Point: Have you ever said something to a friend and then wished you hadn't said it? Have you ever had a misunderstanding or argument with a friend? How did you resolve it?

Discussion Point: Do you have a family tradition? What is it?

BOOK FOUR: NOT RUBBISH

Topics: Rubbish can be useful, imagining and building a world, creating a community, art installations.

Discussion Point: Discuss with students the practice of throwing out rubbish and how sometimes things can be re-purposed or recycled. Encourage students to consider the rubbish collected in their own homes. Invite each student to bring small items from home for a session on recycling or repurposing something to make it useful or decorative again. Examples might be items of clothing which have been discarded, accessories such as a hat or a handbag, domestic items such as a cushion or a small lamp.

Discussion Point: Have you ever created a special place outside, like Harry B does? It might be a treehouse or a cubbyhouse, or a whole outdoor room like this one.

Discussion Point: What is an art installation? Have you ever seen one?

Discussion Point: The outdoor house brings all the children's families together for a barbecue, so it has created a community. Neighborhoods are often brought together by outdoor celebrations such as street parties. What brings your community together?

VOLUME 2 HURRY UP, HARRY!

BOOK ONE: SLEEPING OVER

Topics: New teacher; school sleepover; getting over-excited; special toys.

Discussion Point: In Year Two, Isabelle, Izzy and Harry B have a new teacher: Ms Aphrodite Paxinos (and Mr Smeaton is the other Year Two teacher). Have you ever had a new teacher? Did you have to make any changes in class as a result?

Discussion Point: Isabelle's class has a school sleepover. Have you ever slept overnight at your school? Or had a disco? Did anyone get over-excited like Izzy does?

Discussion Point: They are asked to bring a special toy as an optional item. Do you have a special toy?

BOOK TWO: FOREST SCHOOL

Topics: Curiosity; inventiveness; freedom.

Discussion Point: The children are allowed to explore and to decide on their own special project – they build a bridge and Ms Paxinos helps with her Girl Guide knowledge. Have you ever built something like this together?

Discussion Point: Impulsive Izzy throws a ladder into a tree and encourages the others to climb it. Harry B falls and has to go to hospital. What do you think about what Izzy does?

Discussion Point: Harry B and Isabelle draw with their left hands (pp 55–6) and quite like the results. If you are right handed, try using your left; or if you are left handed, try the reverse. What is different about the drawings?

BOOK THREE: NEWS AND VIEWS

Topics: Sharing news; moving places; losing friends; changes.

Discussion Point: Isabelle asks Aunty Saf to bring baby Bibi in as her 'News and Views' item. What is the most unusual thing you've ever taken to school to show your class?

Discussion Point: Then Harry announces that his family is moving to Alice Springs (p 66) and Isabelle is devastated. Have you ever had a friend move away?

Discussion Point: Harry B asks Isabelle to look after his pet stick insect, Rowena, so Isabelle has to research stick insects. Have you ever looked after an unusual pet?

Discussion Point: Ms Paxinos is a different sort of teacher to Miss Amira in Year One: 'After recess, they do some sheets. They hardly ever did sheets with Miss Amira, but Ms P likes sheets. Isabelle does a maths sheet, a spelling sheet and a reading sheet.' (p 69) Discuss the theme of change in these stories.

BOOKS FOUR: HARRY AND THE ISOBELS

Topics: Performing in school concerts; Harry's surprise; dead pet.

Discussion Point: Izzy is selected to sing at the school concert and chooses Isabelle as her partner. But it is a team effort, with other members of the family helping with costumes and Ms Paxinos playing the piano for them. Do you like performing?

Discussion Point: Rowena, Harry B's pet stick insect, dies and Isabelle feels responsible but no one blames her. They have a funeral for Rowena. Have you ever lost a pet? How did you feel when that happened?

Discussion Point: What do you think might happen to Isabelle, Harry B and Izzy in Year Three?

GENERAL STORY TOPICS (VOLUMES 1 AND 2) IN RELATION TO CURRICULUM AREAS

Several themes relevant to curriculum topics (Studies of Society and Environment, and English Language and Literacy) are common to all stories in the series.

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/hass/>

FINDING ONE'S IDENTITY/GROWING UP

Discussion Point: Isabelle is an only child in a single-parent household. She is somewhat shy and anxious to please people. Does she change in the course of these two volumes of stories? In what way?

Discussion Point: Izzy is very outgoing but meeting Isabelle changes that in what way?

Discussion Point: Naming is a part of one's identity. Do you think your name suits you? If not, what other name would you choose for yourself? [See also **Worksheet 4.**]

FRIENDSHIP

Discussion Point: Isabelle befriends 'New Isobel' and also has her old best friend Harry B. How important are friends? How can friends help you?

Discussion Point: Isabelle is happy she has such a good friend in Izzy: 'A friend who forgives you if you make a mistake. A friend who smiles when you say sorry. A friend who doesn't sulk. A friend who doesn't go off and play with other people and leave you out.' (Volume 1, p 94) How important are these qualities in a friend?

FAMILIES

Discussion Point: Isabelle and her dad live together. It seems that her mother has died although this isn't mentioned. Izzy has two teenage stepsisters, Sophie and Stella who live in two separate houses at various times. Discuss the fact that families come in different sizes and are made up differently.

Discussion Point: What makes a family? Look around you and you will discover different types of families.

SCHOOL

Discussion Point: School is a large part of these children's lives. Their teachers are each described very creatively. Miss Amira is Isabelle's Year One teacher. Why does she like her so much? Ms Paxinos is her Year Two teacher. What are her initial thoughts about her?

Discussion Point: Rules are a big part of schooling. What rules are mentioned in these stories?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>>

Study the writing style employed in all the stories, and examine the following sub-topics:

NARRATIVE PERSON, NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE & TENSE

Discussion Point: The stories are told in third person, present tense. How different might the narrative have been, if it had been written in first person?

LITERARY DEVICES

Activity: Find examples of the use of literary devices in this series, to describe characters or setting, using the table below to identify examples.

Simile	
Metaphors	
Personification	
Other	

Discussion Point: Language can be confusing when adults use words that are unfamiliar, for example, Isobel is upset and confused when Mr Riled says: 'Take your bags off your pegs because I'll dismiss you from the oval.' (Volume 1, p 30) She's not sure what 'dismiss' means in this context. When Ms Paxinos writes a list of things to pack for the sleepover she writes that a special toy is 'optional'. (Volume 2, p 9)

What other words are unfamiliar or confusing for the characters in this series?

HUMOUR

Activity: Identify any section in the series which you found humorous.

STRUCTURE

The structure of each story can be analysed in terms of key narrative features used to engage the reader's attention and to shape the work:

a) *Strong beginnings and endings to chapters* are one way of structuring a narrative, for example:

Volume 1

Beginning: 'How many stops did Dad say? Was it three?' (Teenagers, Ch 4, p 48)

Ending: 'Has Izzy taken it?' (The Special Pen, Ch 5, p 84)

Volume 2

Beginning: 'Isabelle doesn't understand about Alice Springs.' (Harry and the Isobels, Ch 2, p 67)

Ending: 'Isabelle has a feeling that Year Two will be even better than Year One.' (Sleeping Over, Ch 1, p 4)

Which other opening or closing sentence was particularly gripping, in your opinion?

b) *Suspense* is the key to any narrative's structure. Read each story and discuss the suspenseful aspects of each story, for example:

VOLUME 1 **IZZY AND BELLE**

Book One: *The Wrong Isabelle*: Will Isabelle ever win the Star of the Week award?

Book Two: *Teenagers*: Will Isabelle's dad find her and Bibi again?

Book Three: *The Special Pen*: Did Izzy steal Isabelle's special pen?

Book Four: *Not Rubbish*: Will Harry B make a success of his outdoor room?

VOLUME 2 **HURRY UP, HARRY!**

Book One: *Sleeping Over*: Will sleeping over at school be fun or a little bit scary?

Book Two: *Forest School*: How will Harry B recover from his accident?

Book Three: *News and Views*: How will Isabelle cope without Harry B?

Book Four: *Harry and the Isobels*: How will Izzy and Isabelle's performance go at the school concert?

CHARACTERS

Isabelle is the central character but there are many other characters in this book.

Activity: How are Isabelle (Belle) and Isobel (Izzy) different? How are they alike?

Discussion Point: Which character was most intriguing and why? Which character would you like to have heard more about?

Discussion Point: Mr Riled, the assistant to the principal, Ms Free, is a little alarming. He 'shouts quite a lot' (Volume 1, p 29) and in concert rehearsals he shouts at Izzy (Volume 2, p 96). Why do you think he might be so bossy?

Discussion Point: From your reading of the stories, how would you describe Isabelle's dad?

WRITING TASKS

Activity: Write a note to your friend, using 'picture writing', as Isabelle does, for example when she writes her name and then Isobel's, and when she writes to Harry B. (See Volume 1, p 14 and Volume 2, p 53.)

Activity: Use picture writing to tell a short story. [See also **Worksheet 3.**]

Activity: Write a diary entry by Izzy about meeting Isabelle for the first time.

Activity: Write a letter from Miss Amira or Ms Paxinos to Isobel's parents describing her behaviour in class.

Activity: Volumes 1 and 2 are two in a series. Write an outline for a possible new story about Isabelle and her friends.

Activity: Test your students' comprehension by asking questions about these texts. [See also **Worksheet 2.**]

VISUAL LITERACY

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/visual-arts/>>_

Activity: Examine the images of Isabelle and her dad and her friends. Depicting body language is one of the skills of an illustrator. Invite students to create a picture of Isabelle, Izzy and Harry B which gives you some idea of their personalities from the way their body language is depicted. [See also **Worksheet 1.**]

Activity: Series like this one are enhanced by the illustrations. What is distinctive about Robin Cowcher's work?

Activity: Design a new cover for either book in the series.

Activity: Draw a picture of Harry B falling from the tree in Volume 2. [See **Worksheet 5.**]



FURTHER QUOTES FOR DISCUSSION

VOLUME 1

1. 'There are many things you need to get right at school, and Isabelle likes to get things right.' (p 4)
2. 'Sometimes she gets too excited, but Isabelle has met excited people before, so she knows what to do.' (p 22)
3. 'Some people get Star of the Week when they haven't done anything good at all.' (p 35)
4. 'Isabelle is a tiny bit scared of them. They are teenagers.' (p 41)
5. "What's a family tradition?' Isabelle asks her dad that night. 'It's something that a family likes doing, and does over and over again.'" (p 77)
6. "Sometimes,' says Dad, 'what you think is a mistake turns out to be even better than what you were trying to do. It makes you look at your drawing in a different way.'" (p 100)
7. "Is that street art?' asks a man walking his dog. 'Did an artist do that?'" (p 120)
8. "Sometimes rubbish is not rubbish at all,' says Isabelle. 'Sometimes it's art.'" (p 124)

VOLUME 2

1. "Teachers are all different,' says Dad.' (p 3)
2. 'Isabelle loves Forest School. Year Two goes every Wednesday morning, even if it's raining. They get to play outside, and build forts, and make cubbies and dams.' (p 34)
3. 'Isabelle likes certificates.' (p 40)
4. 'Isabelle can't think of anything she's done because her mind is so full of Harry B.' (p 69)
5. 'Sometimes people say they will come back and then they don't.' (p 83)
6. "Life is full of ups and downs, Belle,' he says.' (p 104)

7. 'Everyone has different talents.' (p 104)

8. "But was I responsible enough?" asks Isabelle. 'You were responsible,' says Harry B's mum.' (p 112)

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Compare the books in this series to other junior fiction series. [See **Bibliography**.]

2. Design a poster to advertise one of these books.

3. The **title of this series** refers to the central character. What other title might the series have had?

4. What '**gemstone**' or '**flower**' names (Volume 1, p 22) can you think of? [See also **Worksheet 4**.]

5. **Make a Diorama** of either the 'installation' which Harry B creates out of rubbish (See Volume 1, p 123); or of the activities in the Forest School. (See Volume 2, pp 33–57).

CONCLUSION

Isabelle is a charming young heroine and these delightful stories not only entertain but also explore common childhood experiences and issues such as finding one's identity, friendship, family and school.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jane Godwin is the highly acclaimed and internationally published author of many books for children and young people, across all styles and ages. Children's Publisher at Penguin Books Australia for many years, Jane was the co-creator with Davina Bell of the Our Australian Girl series of quality historical fiction for middle readers. Jane's books include her novels *A Walk in the Dark*, *Falling From Grace*, *As Happy as Here* (a CBCA Notable Book) and *When Rain Turns to Snow* (shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year for Older Readers and for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards) and picture books *Tilly*, illustrated by Anna Walker (shortlisted for the CBCA Picture Book of the Year Award), *Sing Me the Summer*, illustrated by Alison Lester, and *All the Words I Need to Know*, illustrated by Andrew Joyner. Jane is dedicated to pursuing quality and enriching reading and writing experiences for young people, and spends as much time as she can working with them in schools and communities and running literature and writing programs.

janegodwin.com.au

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Robin Cowcher has worked at *The Age* newspaper as a designer and Illustrations Editor. Now freelancing, she illustrates for Spectrum in *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, and has illustrated wine and food books and several children's books, including *Digger* by Mike Dumbleton (2018) and *Little Dog and the Summer Holiday* by Corinne Fenton (2019). *Little Dog and the Christmas Wish* by Corinne Fenton and illustrated by Robin was shortlisted for the 2015 CBCA Crichton Award, and became the theme of the 60th anniversary Myer Christmas Windows display that year. Robin tutors part time in editorial illustration at RMIT.

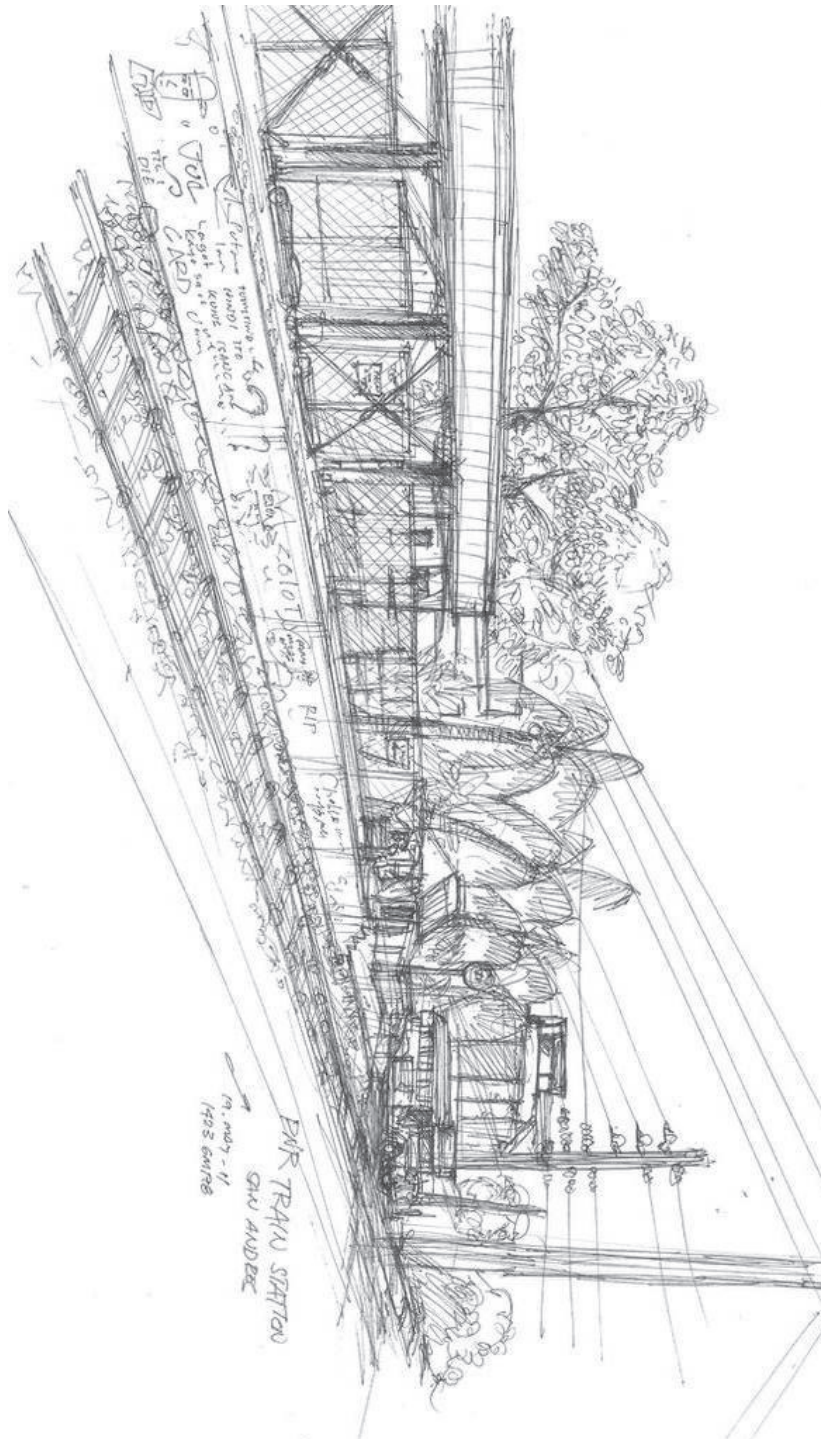
<https://www.robincowcher.com.au/>



WORKSHEETS

WORKSHEET 1 DRAWING ACTIVITY

Add images of Isabelle and Bibi meeting Stella and Sophie on this railway platform (Volume 1) and then colour or paint your picture. [You might wish to enlarge to A3 to give you more space.]



WORKSHEET 2 QUIZ

VOLUME 1

1. Who is Steve?
2. How many Olivias are there in Isabelle's class?
3. Who was Isabelle's best friend before Isobel arrived at her school?
4. What does Isabelle receive Star of the Week for?
5. What are Izzy's stepsisters' names?
6. What does Isabelle give to Izzy to say sorry for accusing her of stealing her special pen?
7. What was the first thing Harry B rescued from the hard garbage?
8. What does Mr Riled call the older kids in the school?
9. What names does Mr Riled give kids in Years One and Two?
10. What do Anna and Dom next door give to Isabelle and her dad?
11. What is the name of Isabelle's baby cousin?
12. What is so special about Isabelle's special pen?



Answers: 1. Isabelle's cat. 2. Three. 'They are called Ollie, Liv and Olivia. And there is an Olive too!' (p 3) 3. Harry B. 4. 'For always being kind considerate and looking after others' (p 33). 5. Sophie and Stella. 6. A horse drawing and a picture letter. (p 92) 7. A big chair. (p 100) 8. You. (p 4). 9. He calls all the Year Ones 'Grade One', and all the Year Twos 'Sonny' or 'Miss'. (p 4) 10. Tomatoes and chillies. (p 17) 11. Bibi. (p 39) 12. It has six colours and a rubber on the end that can rub out pen. (p 72)

VOLUME 2

1. Who is Rowena?
2. What is Ms Paxinos's Christian name?
3. What was optional on the list of things to bring to the school sleepover?
4. What bird does Harry B spot in the yard at the school sleepover?
5. What do the children build at the Forest School?
6. What injury does Harry B have after he falls from the tree?
7. What group was Ms Paxinos a member of when she was a girl?
8. What sort of writing do Harry B and Isabelle do when he is recovering from his injury?
9. What or who does Isabelle take to News and Views?
10. Where is Harry B going to live?
11. What favour does Harry B ask of Isabelle when he tells her he is going away?
12. What song do Isabelle and Izzy sing at the school concert?



Answer: 1. Harry B's pet stick insect. 2. Aphrodite. 3. A special toy. 4. A tawny frogmouth. 5. A wooden bridge. 6. A greenstick fracture. 7. A Queen's Guide. 8. Left-handed writing. 9. Her baby cousin Bibi. 10. Alice Springs. 11. To look after his pet, Rowena. 12. 'Morning Has Broken'.

WORKSHEET 3 PICTURE WRITING

Isabelle does picture writing in Volume 1, p 14 and Volume 2, p 53, p 81, p 91, p 106.

- Read the following sentences based on Volume 1. Then write them out again but replace some words with images:

Isabelle wanted to win Star of the Week.

Isabelle loved her special pencil.

Isabelle likes travelling on trains.

Isabelle's dad is really good at drawing horses.

Miss Amira read Isabelle's class a book.

- Make up your own sentences and add pictures to them!
- Use your full name to make picture writing as Isabelle does in Volume 1, p 14.



WORKSHEET 4 NAMES

Find a middle name for Isabelle. Some of the unusual names discussed were: Stormy, Calypso, Wednesday and Bluey (Volume 1, p 25). Write a name for each letter of the alphabet and then explain why you chose it.

Name	Why I chose this name
A e.g. Anastacia	
B	
C	
D	
E	
F	
G	
H	
I	
J	
K	
L	
M	
N	
O	
P	
Q	
R	
S	
T	
U	
V	
W	
X	
Y	
Z	

WORKSHEET 5 DRAWING ACTIVITY

In Volume 2, Izzy throws a rope into a tree and the children climb it but Harry B falls and is injured. (p 46) Use the image below to create a drawing of the incident. Draw a tree, the rope, Harry B in the tree about to fall, and the other children on the branches watching. [You could enlarge the image to A3 on a copier to give yourself more space.]



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'100 Ways to Repurpose and Reuse Broken Household Items by Vanessa Beaty *DIY & Crafts*
May 3, 2014

<<https://www.diyncrafts.com/6081/repurpose/100-ways-repurpose-reuse-broken-household-items>>

'How to Make a Diorama' *WikiHow*

<<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Diorama>>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates *justified text* writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. Her publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005* (co-edited with Craig Munro) (UQP, 2006). In 2011 she was recipient of the CBCA (Qld) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award, in 2012, of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a member of the Order of Australia.

