



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary to lower secondary  
(Years 5-8)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English; Science; Humanities & Social Sciences; the Arts; Health & Physical Education.
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical & Creative Thinking; Personal & Social Capability; Intercultural Understanding.

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Study of context: era, place, social norms etc.
- Language –characterisation, tone, setting, voice, figurative language and symbolism (suitable for the early high school English classroom curriculum)
- Links to characters and communities, coming of age, belonging, bildungsroman study, identity. Potential for cross-curricular study with social-emotional learning and wellbeing/mental health studies.
- Brain Note images - examples of textual hybridity/multimodal (now in the syllabus) and good for visual learners.

## THEMES

- Depression, grief, bullying, racism, learning difficulties, loneliness, the power of friendship, resilience, hope, perseverance, gratitude, being true to who you are, coming of age.

## PREPARED BY

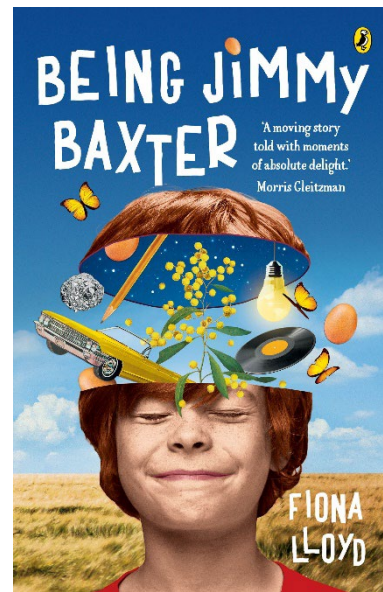
Jacinta Froud, Fiona Lloyd and  
Penguin Random House Australia

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## Being Jimmy Baxter

Fiona Lloyd

A gently funny yet powerful coming-of-age story about a boy who finds a way to survive despite overwhelming odds through his special bond with a loyal friend, a beautiful teacher, an old recluse, and the music of Elvis.

## PLOT SUMMARY

It's not eggsactly easy being Jimmy Baxter because:

- The real Jimmy's hiding inside
- Ned Kelly's giving him the evil eye
- Mum's stopped going to work and stays in bed
- There's no eggs in the fridge — or anything else.

AND there's new jobs, bad-at-school brains and a whole lot of trouble called Duke.

But then . . . there's Mac.

*This is one of the most beautiful, uplifting stories I've read in a long time. Everyone who reads it will fall in love with Jimmy Baxter.*

**Katrina Nannestad**, author of *We Are Wolves* and *Rabbit, Soldier, Angel, Thief*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fiona was born in the beautiful North-East of England near picturesque countryside, windswept beaches and the vibrant cultural city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. She dreamed of writing in a cosy country cottage and of life as a theatre actress but, as it often does, life got in the way.

Working and travelling instead, Fiona floated in the Dead Sea, climbed the Sydney Harbour bridge, gave guided tours in the Netherlands, and fell in love with all things Greek during her two years in Athens and Skiathos. Her most special travel experience was in Myanmar where she visited the place where her Granny was born.

Amongst her myriad of interesting jobs, Fiona worked as a television colourist on *Home & Away*, *This is Greece* and *Secrets of Britain's Great Cathedrals*. She has works in several anthologies for children, is a role model for Books in Homes, coach with the Harding Miller Education Foundation and Schools Program Coordinator for the Words on the Waves Writers Festival.

Fiona loves storytelling in all forms, especially theatre, television and books. Now settled near Sydney with her husband and three children, she mostly travels in her head to marvellous, magical places.

*Being Jimmy Baxter* is her debut middle-grade novel.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Fiona says:

The inspiration for this book comes from a combination of discovering rural Australian landscapes on a road trip, Morris Gleitzman's 'Felix' from his *Once* series, realising my daughter had never heard of Elvis, my own mental health journey, my family as new Eurasian settlers, being teased at school and being a vicar's daughter.

Not having grown up in Australia, I wondered if I could pull off such a particularly Aussie story. It was fun researching social and cultural references and playing with creating Jimmy's quirky sayings.

Jimmy's friend and mentor, Mac was inspired by the men and women pushing trolleys and pulling bags of 'treasure' through every major city. My Dad, a vicar, sometimes let homeless men sleep in our house. Encountering these people when you are a child can be confronting. I hope through getting to know Mac, children will begin to understand that everybody has a name, everybody has a story.

The music of Elvis forms the backdrop to important moments of Jimmy's story. Both Mac and his late wife Lizzy loved Elvis, and it is through Mac's passion and nostalgia, that Jimmy learns valuable coping strategies. Helping Jimmy along are his new school friend Debby - in her 'call a shovel, a shovel,' way - plus there are caring adults, teacher Ms Anna Smith and shop keeper Mr Ransom. Together, they have Jimmy's back - even if he doesn't know it.

In creating this story, I drew on my personal experience around both a parent suffering depression when I was twelve, and my own journey with mental health as an adult. I also reflected on how families are affected when someone is struggling, not only from mental health but also grief, loneliness, exhaustion, inadequacy, racism, regret and so much more.

At the time of writing, around 8.6 million Australians have experienced a mental health disorder during their lifetime. I hope that this book opens up conversation or helps a reader of any age to recognise that for themselves, or for others it is a good thing to reach out for help.

Overall, Jimmy and Mac's story is about hope, perseverance, resilience, and the power of friendship. I hope you enjoy it; the ups, the downs, the muddy bits and the shiny bits.

## CHARACTERS

### Jimmy Branthwaite (AKA Jimmy Baxter)

Jimmy Branthwaite (Baxter) is a gentle boy who feels emotions deeply and usually puts other's needs before his. Jimmy is initially excited to be going on holiday, but soon realises that they've left Dad for a safe new life. He struggles to adjust but values the new friendships he makes on the way. Jimmy's sense of humour stems from the innocent way he views the world. He knows he's not the best at schoolwork but prides himself on his 'everyday' brains which know just the right practical things to do.

### Mum

Jimmy's mum (Kate Branthwaite) loves Jimmy very much, so much so that she braves her own safety when she risks leaving her abusive partner. She is a quiet woman who tries her best to make their new life work for Jimmy. She loves the Beatles and enjoys her new job in a shop. When depression sets in, she's unable to maintain the role of parent until near the end of the story, when the people Jimmy has encountered become part of her journey to wellbeing too.

### Mrs Jessop

Mrs Jessop is Kate's friend who drives them to their safe house. She is a busy, outgoing, stalwart woman



who is active in the Country Women's Association. She takes charge of Kate, reassuring her that she is doing the right thing. She returns home to her husband, and to keep an eye on what is happening with Jimmy's dad.

### Mac

Mac Robinson is a widower in his mid-sixties who blames himself for the death of his late wife Lizzy. He lives in a broken-down barn and doesn't take very good care of himself but loves collecting 'treasures' such as old wheels and broken chairs so he can tinker around fixing things. Jimmy becomes the son he never had and gives him a new spark of life. His ability to understand without saying much, and his love of Elvis Presley, help Jimmy stay strong through adversity.

### Lizzy

Lizzy Robinson was an immigrant of unspecified origin who came to Australia in the 1950's. Mac and Lizzy were shunned as a couple due to their mixed-race relationship, and sought work and accommodation with Anna's grandparents, also a mixed-race couple. Lizzy was patient and understanding, and shared Mac's love of Elvis. She died in a bushfire after falling sick and waiting for Mac to return with medicine.

### Ms Anna Smith

Anna is Jimmy's Year 6 teacher of Italian heritage. When Anna realises something is amiss with Jimmy's Mum, she asks Bill (her fiancé and local doctor) to check in. Anna tries to encourage Jimmy back to school when he's forced to drop out, and coaches him to catch up before starting Year 7. Unbeknownst to Jimmy, Anna and her fiancé Bill also keep an eye on Mac, a friend of Anna's grandparents.

### Dr Bill Chapman

Dr Bill Chapman is the local doctor and Anna Smith's fiancé who treats Jimmy's mum for depression. He looks after Mac as well, knowing Anna loves Mac as an honorary grandparent figure.

### Debby

Debby Johnson is Jimmy's quirky new school friend. She's secretly pleased that Jimmy is her new best friend but makes sure he knows where he stands at all times. Her blunt communication is often a source of humour. Debby is a loyal friend who sticks up for Jimmy against school bully, Duke.

### Duke

Duke is the class wise-guy, a slick handsome bully who heads up a 'gang' at school. He steals Jimmy's lunch and taunts him about his schoolwork and his friendship with Debby. Duke appears to have it all going for him, but we discover his dad is a 'deadbeat' too.

### Mr Ransom

Mr Ransom is a kind gentleman in his sixties, who owns the local grocery store where Jimmy's mum gets a job. Like Anna, he figures out that something's amiss at the Baxter home and allows Jimmy to do his mum's shifts when she's unable to. Mr. Ransom gives Jimmy a food parcel at Christmas, allowing Jimmy and Mum to have a special Christmas day after all their troubles.

### Elvis

The music of Elvis Presley is present from the point of Jimmy meeting Mac. Whilst not an actual character, his influence hovers in the background of the story, creating a soundtrack to some of the most important moments in Jimmy's story.

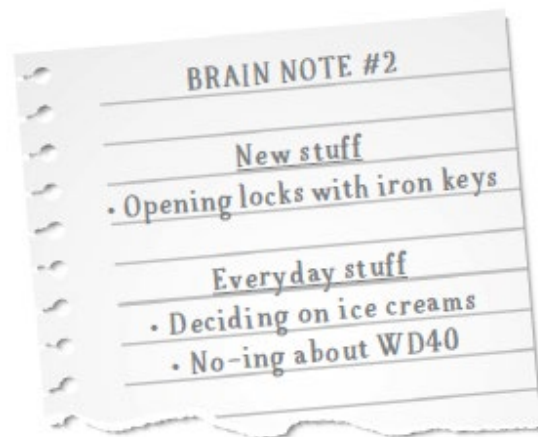
## THEMES AND ACTIVITIES

### Hope, Perseverance and Resilience

#### Question 1

*Jimmy creates a series of Brain Notes throughout the course of the story with the titles, New Stuff and Everyday Stuff. Why do you think he does this?*

**Activity:** Create a class set of Brain Notes using post-it notes. List some New Stuff and some Everyday Stuff that applies to you at this moment in time, place the notes in an accessible area. Compare your Brain Notes with others from the class and to the ones in the story. Are there any similarities or differences? How do Jimmy's Brain Notes explore the themes of hope, perseverance and resilience?



#### Question 2

*Which of the characters in the story have to overcome struggles of any kind?*

**Activity:** Choose one of the characters and create a poster. Draw a picture of the character and list some



strengths, weaknesses and how they overcame a struggle in the story.

### Being the New Kid and the Power of Friendship

#### Question 3

Jimmy moves a number of times in the story and ends up in a small rural town. What would be some positives and negatives associated with this move for Jimmy?

**Activity:** Complete a PMI chart outlining the positive, negative and interesting factors associated with having to move house, and living in a small rural town. \*

#### Question 4

Jimmy forms a friendship with Mac outside of school and Debbie at school. How do these friendships help shape and support Jimmy?

**Activity:** Create a venn diagram with Mac and Debbie. What are some of the features of their friendship with Jimmy that overlap and how do they differ?

#### Question 5

Debbie supports Jimmy at school when Duke and his sidekicks cause trouble for Jimmy. How does she do this?

**Activity:** Write about a time that a friend helped you out of a problematic situation or a time that you helped a friend. Did your situation have a positive end? Write a sentence about why and when friendship can be powerful.

### Belonging and Identity

#### Question 6

Looking at the front cover illustration. What does it tell you the story might be about? If that was a picture of you, what are the things that might be in your head?

**Activity:** Think about what might be in your head/thoughts that say something about who you are. Draw an open-headed self-portrait, like Jimmy's, and draw or glue in some of those elements that you feel define you or are occupying your thoughts at the moment. \*



\*See activity sheets at end of notes

#### Question 7

Jimmy celebrates a simple Christmas with his Mum. Do you think Jimmy and his Mum are happy in this scene?

**Activity:** Write about some simple traditions that you and your family or friends celebrate at Christmas time or another holiday event.

#### Question 8

In January, Jimmy invites his new family to a 'Fancy Pants' lunch, where there are some surprises. What are they?

**Activity:** Create a seating plan showing which characters from the story attend and write up a menu of the food and drink offerings.

### Rural Life, Community and Characters

#### Question 9

Jimmy starts working for Mr Ransom when his Mum is unwell. What do you think about Mr Ransom as a character?

**Activity:** Make a list of attributes for Mr Ransom.

#### Question 10

On arriving in Mungo Creek, Jimmy has to attend Mungo Creek Public School, much to his dismay. Why do you think Jimmy doesn't want to go to school?

**Activity:** Create a uniform for Mungo Creek Public School or draw a picture of the school, based on the descriptions in the book.

### Depression/Domestic Violence

#### Question 11

For a time, Jimmy's Mum is unable to leave her bed to care for him and herself. This might be a symptom of depression. What do you know about depression?

**Activity:** Research and list some other symptoms of depression, make a table listing some support services in your local area that may help someone who is experiencing symptoms of depression. Table headings could include: Support Service; Logo; Services Offered; How to Access Services; Opening Hours.

#### Question 12

In the opening chapter, Jimmy and his mum receive help from Mrs Jessop to escape Jimmy's violent father. Mrs Jessop and his mum pretend they are 'Secret Camping'. Even though Jimmy knows they are pretending, he plays along, why do you think this is?



**Activity:** Write a paragraph about why you think Mrs Jessop, Mum and Jimmy pretend they are 'Secret Camping'. Do you think this makes the move easier or harder for Jimmy?

## Popular Culture

### Question 13

*Being Jimmy Baxter is set in the 1990s. Which parts of the story help the reader to know it is this time?*

**Activity:** Create an advertisement for a popular ice-cream product that was available at the time the story was set. Research online to find posters and prices from that period and/or interview someone from that era about their favourite ice cream product. The poster could be completed digitally or be hand drawn.



### Question 14

*Jimmy is introduced to Elvis Presley by Mac. What do you know about Elvis?*

**Activity:** Research some of the lyrics from the Elvis songs mentioned in the story, then create an artwork based on the lyrics from an Elvis song. Complete a written rationale exploring why you created the piece based on the chosen lyrics.

### Question 15

*What cars and vehicles are featured in Being Jimmy Baxter?*

**Activity:** Choose one model of car or vehicle to research further. Create an information poster including an image or drawing of the vehicle, some information on the make and model, the manufacturer and any further information you can find. How much would a vehicle like this cost to buy now? Are there any for sale in your area?

### Question 16

*Can you think of any mentions of Australian flora, fauna and food in the story?*

**Activity:** Create a table with the headings: Flora - Fauna - Food and list as many references as you can from the story that fit under each category. Research one of these in depth and create an information poster for a wall in the classroom.

### Question 17

*Who was Ned Kelly? What was the significance of this character throughout the story?*

**Activity:** Create a wanted poster which alludes to some of the themes of Ned Kelly in Being Jimmy Baxter.

## Food

### Question 18

*Jimmy loves eggs. Eggs are a food source, but also represent resurrection and new life in the Christian religion.*

**Activity:** Research which foods are used for celebration in different religions and cultures. Write out a recipe for your favourite one and explain why you have chosen it.

### Question 19

*Mac tells Jimmy about Elvis' Fools Gold Sandwich. What was in it?*

**Activity:** If you could have anything in a sandwich, what would it be? Make an artwork using different colours or materials for each ingredient.



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Being Jimmy Baxter	Fiona Lloyd	9781760148515	5-8	\$16.99		
What About Thao	Oliver Phommavanh	9781760897161	5-8	\$16.99		
We Run Tomorrow	Nat Amore	9781760897697	5-8	\$16.99		
We Were Wolves	Tristan Bancks	9781760892661	5-8	\$16.99		
Mr Romanov's Garden in the Sky	Robert Newton	9780143309307	5-8	\$17.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

PLEASE NOTE THAT PRICES ARE RECOMMENDED RETAIL ONLY AND MAY HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE TIME OF PRINTING. PRICES ARE GST INCLUSIVE.

<p>NAME: _____</p> <p>SCHOOL: _____</p> <p>ADDRESS: _____</p> <p>STATE: _____</p> <p>POSTCODE: _____</p> <p>TEL: _____</p> <p>EMAIL: _____</p> <p>ACCOUNT NO.: _____</p> <p>PURCHASE ORDER NO.: _____</p>	<p>PLEASE SEND ORDER FORMS TO YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION SUPPLIER.</p>
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# PW CHART

Write the issue:

## Plus (Positives)

What would be the good things about this situation? Arguments for this topic.

## Minus (Negatives)

What would be the negative things about this situation? Arguments for this topic.

## Interesting (Other consequences)

Other aspects and consequences of this topic.

# What's In *Your* Head?

BEING JIMMY  
BAXTER





## JIMMY BAXTER'S FIND-A-WORD

(with help from Ms Anna Smith)

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

CADILLAC DEBBY ELVIS FREDDO JESUS JIMMY MAC MILKY  
NED SUNNYBOY ALFOIL BRAIN BURGLARS DIORAMA DUNNY  
YELLOW

# JIMMY BAXTER'S FIND-A-WORD

## ANSWERS SHEET



CADILLAC DEBBY ELVIS FREDDO JESUS JIMMY MAC MILKY  
NED SUNNYBOY ALFOIL BRAIN BURGLARS DIORAMA DUNNY  
YELLOW