



TEACHERS NOTES

Stella the Unstoppable and the Talent Show Fiasco

From award-winning Aussie author Richard Newsome comes *Stella the Unstoppable*, the hilarious junior fiction series that is *Hating Alison Ashley* for a new generation.

STELLA

THE UNSTOPPABLE

and the Talent Show Fiasco

THEMES

- Problem solving
- Friends and foes
- Teamwork
- Ingenuity and imagination
- Fame and infamy

SUITABLE FOR

Ages 7–10: Grades 1–4



DESCRIPTION

Hi! I'm Stella and yes, I'll admit it. I sprayed the class guinea pig with fire extinguisher foam (who knew those things actually worked?). Now I've been forced to enter the school talent show as punishment. You know who usually wins? My arch rival, Ricky-Lee Ventura, who has the voice of an angel. But wait! If I can get help from my (sort-of crazy) dog and my (kind-of odd) friends, I have a brilliant idea...

P. S. Warning: this book is probably going to make you laugh till you cry.
Yes. No. Really.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Newsome lives in Brisbane and has worked as a journalist for daily newspapers, radio and TV; as a consultant with one of the world's foremost strategy consultancies; as a communications director of a multinational media company; and as director of the publishing program at The University of Queensland.

Richard's debut middle grade novel, *The Billionaire's Curse*, won the inaugural Text Prize for Children's and Young Adult writing, as well as the Esther Glen medal, New Zealand's oldest literary award. The series of six books went on to sell more than 36,000 copies in Australia and New Zealand alone, and has sold to publishers in the United States, Canada, Poland, Italy, Spain and Turkey.

Stella the Unstoppable and the Talent Show Fiasco is his first chapter book for younger readers and is the start of a new series.

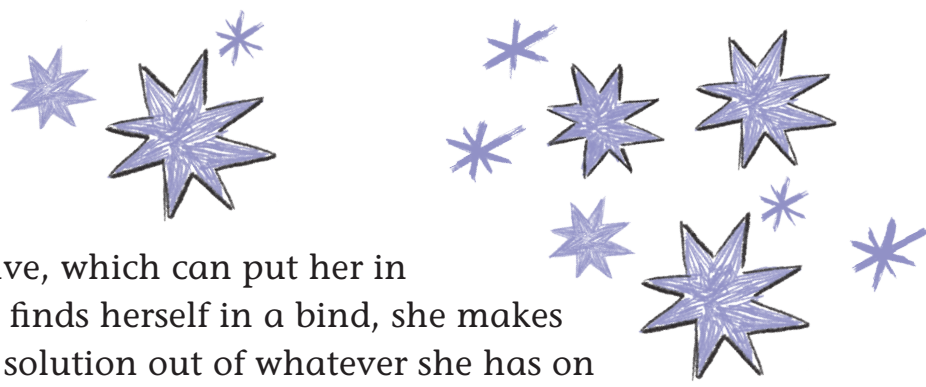
A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Stella started out as a self-assigned writing exercise. *See if you can write something interesting in the first person*, I told myself. *All right. I will.*

The initial problem was coming up with a 'person' to be 'first' about. And then for some reason I thought about a girl who had an insanely inflated vision of her place in her tribe. It wasn't arrogance. Or bossiness. Or even extreme confidence. It was just an assumed natural order of things. Stella saw how things should be, and that is how things would be. I loved her instantly. The stories flowed from there. And while her adventures highlight the benefits of working together as a team, and feature cautionary tales about, say, social media, those are just the consequences of existing in a complex world. Those are things every kid encounters every day. It's how they respond that counts. Maybe they can learn a thing or two from Stella. Yes. No. Really.



THEMES



Problem Solving

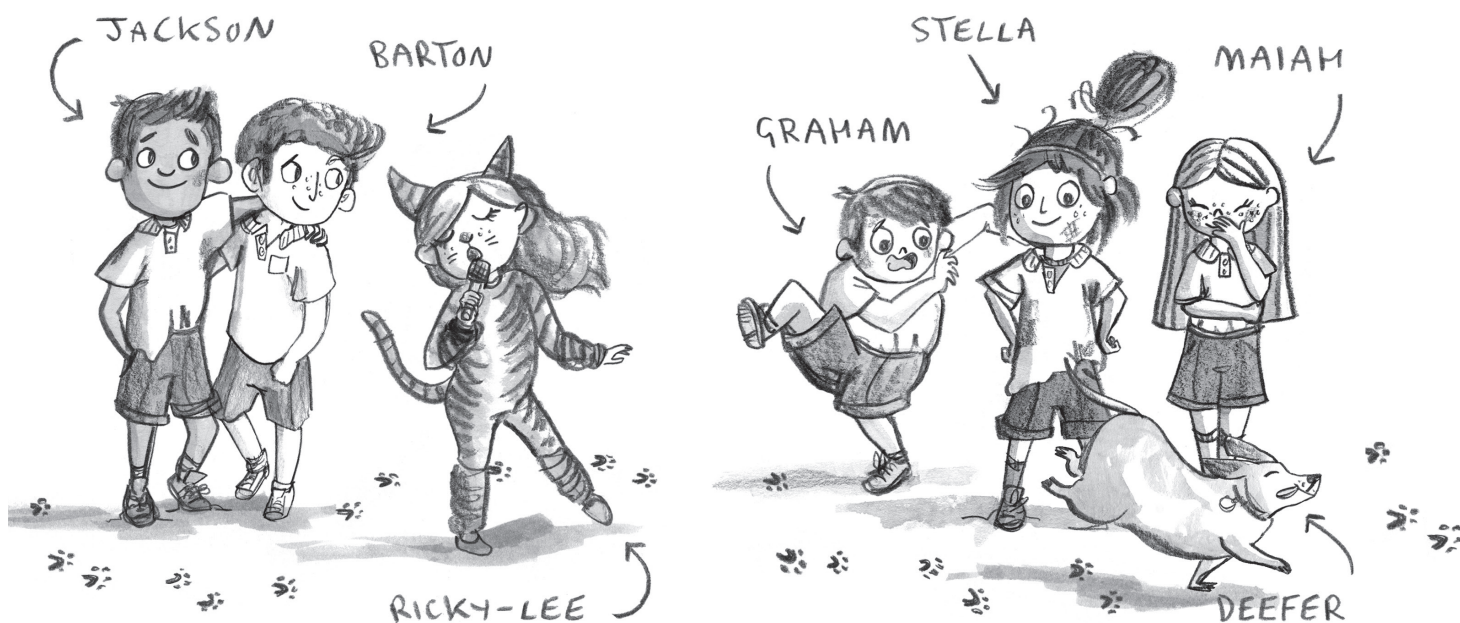
Stella is mischievous and impulsive, which can put her in some tricky situations. When she finds herself in a bind, she makes the best of things and fashions a solution out of whatever she has on hand. Is the dog with a starring role in your play a little distractible? If you've got a balaclava and a packet of treats nearby, the show will go on!

Stella is not the only character to demonstrate a flair for clever solutions. When Stella unleashes a fire extinguisher on an unsuspecting guinea pig (which was so not her fault), Mrs Hinchliffe decides not to punish Stella. Instead, she finds another channel for Stella's energy by having her compete in the school talent show.

The answer to a problem isn't obvious. Sometimes you need to put on your thinking cap, have a look at what tools you have to work with and think outside the box to find the best solution, even if you totally didn't mean to get yourself into a mess.

Friends and Foes

Stella learns that friendship is a two-way street. Although Stella can be a bit bossy and sometimes even rude, over the course of the book she discovers the importance of listening to those around her. She also navigates a tricky relationship with Ricky-Lee, the reigning talent show champion, who threatens to tell Mrs H the true plot of Stella's unusual play. Stella acknowledges that Ricky-Lee is a talented singer and despite their animosity, their rivalry never crosses into open hostility or cruelty.



Teamwork

When Stella decides that she is going to win the school talent show, she enlists the help of her friends Maiah, Barton and Jackson. She soon discovers that even though she is in charge, her friends can make their own valuable contributions to Farty Bob McPoo Pants and the Flatulent Five. She outsources tasks when she realises that her friends can do a better job, but also does her share of the work. While Farty Bob McPoo Pants is Stella's idea, its success (or lack thereof) is due in large part to the work of her friends.



Imagination and Risk-Taking

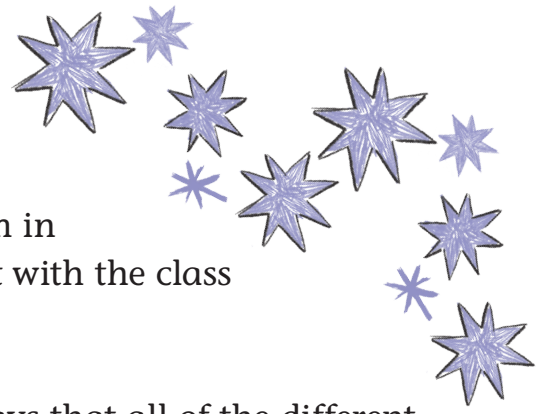
Stella may not be the most attentive or well-behaved student, but she is wildly creative. She is brave, outgoing and thinks outside the box. She shows that it's cool to like books, that wordplay can lead to extraordinary songs and rhymes and that hard work can reap huge rewards.




Fame and Infamy

Stella dreams of stardom and envisions a career surrounded by fans and paparazzi – sorry, paparazzles. A high-stakes fame war erupts between Stella and Ricky-Lee, ended only by intervention from the principal. Stella also wrangles with social media – she vies for trophies, thumbs and lightning bolts on Instagloat, but discovers that a trending Instagloat pic can lead to madness and mayhem when her dog brings down the school talent show. Most importantly, Stella learns not to underestimate her fans – her first selfie is with a boy named Graham, and while Stella is initially dazzled by the attention (I'm. A. Star!), she discovers that fame isn't everything when Graham wins the talent show for his admirable farm animal impressions.



DISCUSSION POINTS



- Why do you think Mrs Hinchliffe asked Stella to perform in the talent show instead of punishing her for the incident with the class guinea pig and a fire extinguisher?
- Stella spends a lot of time in the principal's office. She says that all of the different disasters that happen around her are so not her fault – do you think that's true? How could Stella have fun without going to the principal's office?
- Instagloat is fun and exciting, but it can also lead to disaster. Do you know any real life apps like Instagloat? Why do you think Stella and Ricky-Lee want to have the most lightning bolts and thumbs on their pictures? Do you think Instagloat should be so important in real life? 
- Barton is teased by his friends because he is singing in a school talent show. How do you think this makes Barton feel? How would you respond if your friend was in a talent show?
- Should Stella and her friends have been allowed to compete in the talent show? Who do you think should have won? 
- Stella wants to be famous – “thousands of people will want to know my every move. Scratch that. They won't just want to know. They'll *need* to know,” she says. Do you think it is important to be famous? How would you feel if everybody wanted to know what you were doing all the time? 

WRITING TASK

Take the challenge that led to the creation of Stella! To write in the first person means to tell a story as though you are inside your character's head and seeing the world through their eyes. When you write in the third person, you use words like 'he' or 'she' to describe your character. When you write in the first person, you say 'I' instead. Here's an example from the book.

I give Maiah a cheeky grin.

If this book was written in the third person instead, it would look like this:

Stella gives Maiah a cheeky grin.

Now it is your turn! See if you can write something interesting in the first person, coming up with your own character to do so. What are they like? What is their name? What do they do for fun? Write a short story about this character, and what got them sent to the principal's office.

ACTIVITIES

Lights, Camera, Action!

Congratulations! You are in charge of turning your favourite book into a play for your school's talent show. Being a famous writer and director is a tough job, but someone has to do it and you're perfect for the part.

Creating your own play is super easy! (Yes. No. Really.)



1. Choose your favourite book.
2. Write out the main events in the book. You'll need to include these in the play. You can't include everything, so just pick the important parts.
3. Make a list of characters and the costumes they will need.
4. Draw a picture of your set (that's all of the decorations and props on the stage while you are acting).
5. Pick your favourite part of the book and turn it into a short song. Is it a happy song, or a sad song? Does it rhyme? Will all of the characters sing it together, or does one character have a solo?

You're ready to perform – break a leg!

A String of Disasters

Stella is a magnet for trouble. Have a look at this list of items and see what sort of disasters she could create using just two of them. Come up with three disasters, then draw a picture of the silliest one.

- A pair of scissors
- A step ladder
- A chocolate birthday cake
- A bucket of paper mache glue
- Five tubes of poster paint
- A bottle of glitter
- A dozen eggs
- The entire contents of the class dress-up cupboard
- The principal's car



How many ideas did you come up with? Remember – don't try them at home!

Farts and Crafts

Imagine that you are a mega-famous celebrity. What are you famous for? Create a poster for yourself. If you're stuck for ideas, read chapter three again to see what Stella and Ricky-Lee made.

WORD SEARCH



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

Can you find all of these words in the grid above?

Backstage
Balaclava
Barton
Bottom
Costume
Deefer
Farty

Graham
Hinchliffe
Howl
Instagloat
Jackson
Maiah
Paparazzles

Phone
Ricky-Lee
Spotlight
Stella
Star
Talent Show
Trophies

