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Frances Bloom

Katrina Nannestad & Marina Zlatanova

Book Summary

Frances Bloom lives all alone in a cottage by the sea. She's having a marvellous time until her nasty teacher, Ms Thistle, learns there is no-one looking after her. Frances needs to find a family, quick smart, or she'll be sent away to Bleak Island Home for Unwanted Children and Dogs.

As hard as Frances looks, nobody meets her high standards... until she stumbles across a large, honey-coloured bear raiding the rubbish bins... and a garden gnome fishing in the flowerbed. Welcome, Grandma Maude and Grandpa Harold!

Together, this strange trio creates a new family, writing their own rules with each misadventure!

Delight in the cheeky antics of eight-year-old Frances Bloom with multi-award-winning Australian author Katrina Nannestad.

Key Learning Outcomes

- AC9E3LE02
- AC9E3LE03
- AC9E3LY03

Recommended Reading Age: 7+

Resources Created For: Lower-Middle Primary



Themes

- **Individuality:** Frances Bloom is a very individual character in her dress, her attitudes and her acceptance of others. She has her own unique standards of what is right and wrong. Frances also embraces the idea that we all see the world differently, and encourages Year 3 to express this in their schoolwork and play.
- **Resilience:** Frances faces challenges head on, with the confidence that she will be able to overcome them. She also encourages the other students in her class to have confidence in trying new things and doing things their own way.
- **Family:** Grandma Maude, Grandpa Harold and Frances are not related by blood, but together, they form a family. There are many ways to make a family, and Frances's may be unusual, but they care about each other.

Vocabulary

- **Bleak:** offers little hope; depressing and discouraging.
- **Tattered:** torn or ripped.
- **Barrelled:** moved so quickly as to be almost out of control.
- **Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed:** full of energy and enthusiasm.
- **Pottered:** moved slowly without clear direction.
- **Squelched:** made a wet, sucking sound.
- **Codswallop:** an old-fashioned way of saying something is nonsense.
- **Exotic:** unusual and interesting, usually from somewhere far away.
- **Frolic:** move in an energetic, happy way.
- **Suspicious:** something or someone that seems untrustworthy or dishonest.
- **Poppycock:** another old-fashioned way of saying something is nonsense.

Context

1. Share the cover and title with the class.
 - a) What do students think the story will be about?
 - b) Which character do they think is Frances?
 - c) What part might the bear and garden gnome play?
2. What do students think about the clothes Frances is wearing? Why might they be mismatched, patched and have holes?





Reading Discussion Questions

1. Have students ever read a book before where a child's parents were missing? For example, *The BFG*, *Cinderella*, *Pippi Longstocking*.
2. What would be the most important things on a list of what your grandparents should be like?
3. Living with Grandma Maude is very unpredictable! What problems do you think you would have if you lived with a bear?
4. Can you think of an exciting story about discovering a new dishwashing liquid?
5. Have you ever had a day that started very badly? What did you do to turn it around?
6. In what ways are Grandma Maude and Grandpa Harold perfect to look after Frances?
7. The illustrations help to make the narrative even more interesting. Examine some of them (for example, Grandma Maude juggling on the beach (p. 35) or Roger Rowboat describing his missing wooden leg (p. 38)) and discuss how the images add to the text.
8. Frances shows her class how to do some of the fun activities she's been trying, like swimming in her clothes and playing leapfrog. Are there any things you enjoy doing that your classmates might not know about?
9. "Charlie Berlinski sighed. 'I wish I was Frances Bloom.'" (p. 62)
 - a) Why do Charlie and many of the other children want to be like Frances?
 - b) Would you like to be like Frances?
10. 'Ms Thistle did not like Frances Bloom. Frances Bloom was wild and creative and smart. Frances Bloom made Ms Thistle look dull.' (p. 5)
 - a) Why do you think Ms Thistle dislikes Frances so much?
 - b) Do you think Ms Thistle is genuinely concerned about Frances living on her own, or do you think she just wants to get rid of Frances?

Key Technique

Descriptive language: a literary technique used to help the reader visualise a character or place; it can help the reader feel as if they are a part of the story.





1. Katrina Nannestad uses a lot of descriptive language that helps us to both visualise what is happening and understand the characters better. For example, when describing Frances and what she's doing, Nannestad uses words like *skipped*, *cheered* and *dashed*. Her use of these descriptive words helps the reader see Frances as a character who is generally happy and rarely still.
 - a) Collect language that describes Ms Thistle. What impression is the reader given of the kind of person Ms Thistle is?
 - b) You might also like to look at the descriptive language used for Grandma Maude.
2. As part of this descriptive language, Katrina Nannestad uses a lot of sound imagery (onomatopoeia). For example, 'Her gumboots squelched all the way.' (p. 40)
 - a) A less descriptive way to write this sentence could be 'Her gumboots were sucked into the mud the whole way'. Which version do you think paints a clearer picture in the reader's mind and why?
 - b) How does being able to hear what is happening make the story more interesting?
 - c) Find other examples of sound imagery in *Frances Bloom* and swap them for other descriptive words. How does this change how the reader visualises and understands what is happening?

Activities

1. Use the list of desirable traits for a grandparent to create an ad for your perfect grandparent.
2. Most of *Frances Bloom* is written from the perspective of Frances (third person limited), although there are many other characters in the story.
 - a) Select a scene in the novel shown from Frances's point of view. Suggestions include: Grandma Maude destroying the beach picnic (pp. 22–29); Frances taking Grandma Maude and Grandpa Harold to school (pp. 42–55); or Grandma Maude and Frances shopping for clothes (pp. 66–73). Rewrite the scene from the point of view of another character. For example, Grandma Maude eating all the picnic food, one of the other children in Year 3, or Madame Appleby who owns the clothing store.
 - b) Try to show how other characters see Frances and her grandparents, and perhaps suggest why they are so easily fooled into believing a bear and a garden gnome are humans.
3. Re-read pages 48–50. Ask students to write their own wildly exciting park adventure story, along with illustrations.
 - a) Try to include as much descriptive language as possible.



About the Author & Illustrator

Katrina Nannestad is a multi-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 Frances Bloom series, the Olive of Groves series, the Red Dirt Diaries series, the Lottie Perkins series, *The Story Writer's Handbook: Adventures in Creative Writing*, the historical novels *Rabbit*, *Soldier*, *Angel*, *Thief*, *Waiting for the Storks*, *Silver Linings* and *All the Beautiful Things*, and the picture book *A Song for the King*.

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.

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Marina Zlatanova is a Bulgarian-born designer, illustrator and printmaker living in Naarm/Melbourne, Australia. She has illustrated several picture books to date, including *Charlie's Shell*, her debut as an author, which won a Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year award. Her style is varied and eclectic, using a diverse range of media – from watercolour and inks to digital illustration and block printing – but her love for depicting the humorous and endearing always underpins her creations.

