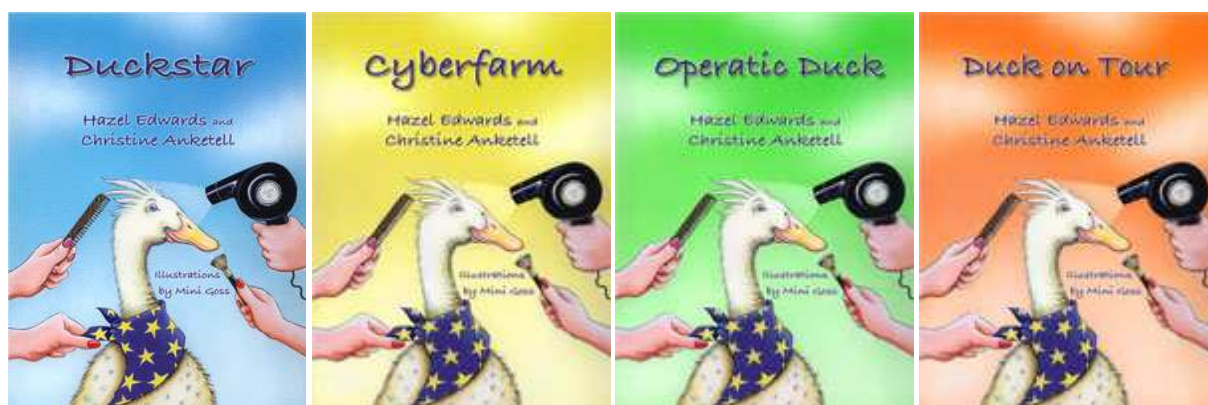


Duckstar Series

by Hazel Edwards & Christine Anketell
illustrated by Mini Goss

www.hazeledwards.com



Teachers' Resources:

- Follow-up activities
- Book Rap questions and activities
- Co-writing: an article on artistic collaboration

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

*Often it's fun to create thematic activities related to the books.
Some of these can be done by one child whereas others work better in a group.*

- **Quack Chorus:** making up a song for the duck to direct.
- **Duck shaped poems**
- **Tracking duckprint clues** which lead to the bookcase or pond.
- **Fluffy food for a Duckstar Lunch**
- **Dear Duckstar e-mails**
- **Flappers Dance**
- **Egg painting**
- **Quack farm rules**
- **Egg and spoon race**
- **Funny Duck News (TV, radio or print items)**
- **Perch gymnastics display**
- **Belly dancing with a scarf**
- **Goat drumming**
- **Star signs in the shape of a duck**

- **Audio tape of favourite parts of story**
- **Collecting Duck sayings like ‘out for a duck’ or ‘lame duck’**
- **Making a play from the story**
- **Suggesting what might happen next...or before...**

And you’re sure to think of others...

Enjoy the books!

BOOK RAP

A book rap can be an email discussion of the book, with students from other schools. Sometimes it’s centralised, but other times it can just be arranged between classes. Here are some suggested Rap Points for the ‘Duckstar’ books. Alternatively these can be used as activities within the class.

Suitability: Lower Primary 6-7 year olds, Middle Primary 8-10 year olds

Summary of Books

Duckstar

These are funny stories with the theme of working together, even with difficult people, like Pig. The duck with attitude joins the Children’s Farm and meets Goat, Sheep and the grumpy belly-dancing Pig. After the Safety Inspector visits, the farm must shut unless duckboards for wheelchairs and toilets that don’t stink are built. Thousands of dollars are needed in a hurry. Caretaker Cate tries to save money. Pig objects to having only six sultanas in his porridge.

To help Cate, the farm animals agree to do a TV Commercial on site and donate the fee. They worry about the Fake-Yo which ‘doesn’t even have a drop of real milk in it’. Concerned about fake or real, the animals perform, but everything goes wrong even though the duck has learnt ‘directing’. The Director walks off, deciding to use cartoons instead. A video of the farm ‘gig’, sent in by a camera-man, wins ‘Funniest Home Video Show’. Viewers donate to save the Children’s Farm.

Cyberfarm

Will the Cyber Farm take over the Children’s Farm? Everybody has to face their fears. A possible ‘Cyber Farm’ means the farm animals, including the duck, must face the unknown: the hi-tech and the feral. The threats are the ‘virtual farm’ where visitors don cyber-helmets to ‘experience’ farm life, and the Feral Peril. But with direction, they work together. Child visitors are not bored and the Scare-Feral triumphs. The duck in a cyber-helmet is a sight to behold!

Operatic Duck

When the neighbouring church is sold to make way for new apartment blocks, Duck and his friends are asked to take part in a community performance of the opera *Aida*. They all want the show to be a success, but rehearsals aren't going well and people are becoming short-tempered. How can the animals help? What roles will they be asked to play? And most importantly, will everything go smoothly on the night of the performance?

Duck on Tour

After the success of their community performance of *Aida*, Duck and his friends take the show on the road, heading to the outback. They travel on a brightly coloured train with a variety of other artists to perform for people in remote towns. Their first show goes well and they head off towards the next town, but then it starts to rain, and before long the train is cut off in the middle of nowhere by floodwaters. Is there anything the animals can do to save everyone?

Rap Point 1. Adoption. Adopt a character from either story. Draw it. Maybe the duck, the grumpy belly dancing Pig, Goat, Sheep, or Cate the caretaker? You may wish to choose another character like the Feral or Parrot. Decide what this character might do that hasn't been done already, to save the farm. Why will they need to work together?

Rap Point 2. Care-taking. A care-taker looks after things and people. To celebrate farm-life, create some duck shaped poems, egg paintings, a Quack Chorus, perch gymnastics, drumming or a dance as a gift for Cate, the farm care-taker.

Rap Point 3. Map the farm. Where might the duck leave duck print clues? Are there any farm rules or cyber-farm rules? If not, maybe make up some.

Rap Point 4. What sort of food might be at a farm party? Fluffy food? Duck-shaped food? Mud cake? You may wish to have a duck party and report it on the Funny Duck News (TV, radio or print items).

CO-WRITING THE DUCKSTAR BOOKS

by Hazel Edwards & Christine Anketell

We laugh together, when working on a script.

Sitting side by side at the computer, we know that if a moment works for us, there is a good chance that it will work for our audience. We take turns playing the characters and pace the room acting out the situations. The ability to be ridiculous together is a good sign that the relationship will continue. There are not many people you'd role play a belly dancing pig in front of! (That is not grammatical but it's accurate.) We also like each other which helps.

We were introduced by theatre-producer Phil A'Vard, at the Alexander Theatre in Clayton (Vic), who thought that our skills might complement each other.

Collaborating on writing fiction is a risky business. You have to share ideas and accept criticism even when feeling a bit vulnerable. It also requires acceptance that the process is as important as the final script.

We believe that the main ingredient for a successful collaboration is respect for each other's strengths. Christine admires Hazel's ability to plot and think in the abstract and verbal. Hazel likes Christine's ability to think visually, her ear for dialogue and sense of dramatically pacing a scene. Hazel can think of an absurd character like an egotistic, grumpy male belly dancing pig who loves sultana porridge, and Christine can orchestrate how the humour of the scene might develop, as he indulges his passion.

Co-writing the Duckstar books was immensely enjoyable. Years of exposure to the theatre industry had given us both an ability to laugh at the ridiculous antics. We incorporated certain well recognised personas and situations into the lives of our characters. The gentle satire was intentional and the laughter was cathartic as we shared our experiences, not all of which could be included.

Ducks appealed to both of us. Christine had a pet one as a child and Hazel had great success with an earlier duck character. Duck, however, was a new personality who resulted from our shared stories of larrikin rascals we had known. The belly dancing pig was the result of Hazel's belly-dancing research for other writing projects and the sheep and goat were Christine's versions of the determined and talented hopefuls she had auditioned as a director. Using a children's farm as the setting was due to our mutual love of the Collingwood Children's Farm where we would like to set a production, one day.

The process took a little longer than either of us anticipated. Originally we'd started with the idea of writing a theatre script, with an accompanying book. We both knew the great potential that exists to translate children's books into stage productions. Christine had directed over 35 children's productions and Hazel's 'Hippo' had trod the boards in a very successful theatre season. Rationalism prevailed and we aimed to get the book series published first.

We both live in Melbourne about fifteen minutes apart. Generally we work in Christine's home office with frequent tea-breaks and phone interruptions. Occasionally we've worked in coffee shops. We began with a synopsis and spent much time assembling the cast of characters as we wanted a gang of strong personalities. There were re-writes in between our other projects as we collected rejection slips because our book didn't fit publishers' lists in terms of topic, length or age level. It was frustrating because we knew we had a very funny story which worked with kids. We trialled the story to a variety of ages and always had excellent

responses, although some kids wanted to see the pictures. The manuscript was extended, reduced and then was shaped into four stories.

Hazel had met illustrator Mini Goss a few years ago and had been very impressed with the unusual perspectives of her art work and wanted to offer her something special that would intrigue her sufficiently for her to agree to illustrate the book. Mini created a memorable Duck but Hazel has a fondness for her belly-dancing pig while Christine is convinced that the entire cast will perform on stage soon.

We enjoyed plotting 'Duck on Tour' where the opera company can't afford an elephant or even large animals for 'The Grand March' from 'Aida', so the budget-priced duck has to fill in.

And he will, with flair, once his co-creators have time to orchestrate his progress.