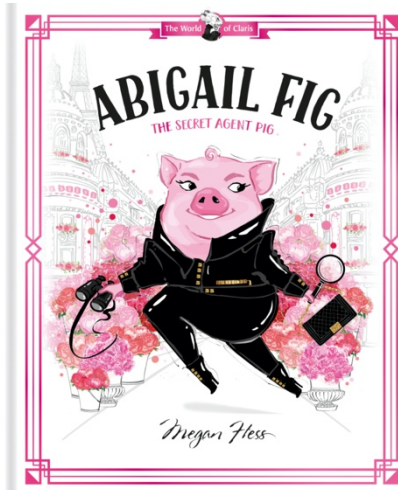


Teacher's Notes



Abigail Fig: The Secret Agent Pig

Written and Illustrated by Megan Hess

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

3+ aged readers (grades 1–2)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - ACELA1449
 - ACELT1581
 - ACELT1589

THEMES

- Bravery
- Understanding clues
- Snobbery
- Adventure
- Curiosity

SYNOPSIS

Abigail Fig is one curious pig! She works as a maid for two very judgemental, very rich pigs, who have no time for her questions about the world. In fact, the two snobby pigs get so frustrated with Abigail's questions about the world that they fire her!

But Abigail's eye for detail comes in handy when the two snobby pigs are pig-napped – stolen away in a mysterious van – leaving nothing but a trail of pink faux fur behind. Are they being taken for bacon? Or is something worse going on?

Using her curiosity and intelligence, Abigail Fig follows the clues to find her employers and save the day. And on the way, she discovers an exciting new career!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Megan Hess is an acclaimed art director and illustrator who works with some of the most prestigious designers and luxury brands around the world, such as Chanel, Dior, Cartier, Prada, Fendi, Louis Vuitton and Tiffany & Co. Her beloved *Claris* series for children has grown to include the *World of Claris* picture books.

THEMES

This larger-than-life story explores themes of snobbery and curiosity in a playful, exciting way. The characters are so over-the-top that it will be easy for readers to identify and discuss the personality traits being represented. Abigail Pig's story can be used as a starting point to talk about:

- Underestimating someone's capability because of their job
- Dreaming big
- Being fearlessly curious and intelligent
- Bravery

WRITING STYLE

Megan Hess writes complex stories made easier to understand through rhyme. There are some challenging words for early readers, so these are good stories to read aloud or as an extension for advanced students. Hess uses punctuation to add energy and excitement to the story, making this a good piece to discuss different types and uses of punctuation – such as ellipses (...) for suspense, exclamation marks (!) for energy and enthusiasm, and question marks (?) in dialogue (and of course, these are only some of the ways that these punctuation marks are used). Students could take turns reading sections of the dialogue, and practise changing their tone and inflection to indicate these punctuation marks in speech.

COMPREHENSION

- What are some of the things Abigail Fig is curious about?
- How do her bosses react to her questions? Why do they react this way?
- Does being rich make you better, or more important, than others? Why/why not? How do the rich pigs in the book behave towards Abigail?
- What clues does Abigail discover that help her to uncover the crime?
- What do you like about Abigail?
- How does Abigail show bravery in the book? When have you been brave?
- Do the two snobby pigs deserve to be rescued?



WRITING EXERCISE

Write about one of Abigail's adventures after she becomes a secret agent. For an extra challenge, see if you can write it in rhyme! Draw a picture of Abigail to accompany your story.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Megan Hess's illustrations are striking, using a simple colour palette. Abigail Pig stands out from the start – cleaning while reading and standing on a chair! In contrast to Abigail's smiling face, the snobby pigs are drawn with their snouts in the air and a haughty look on their faces. The contrast between Abigail and the snobby pigs shows the difference in their characterisations, demonstrating the use of facial expressions to show parts of a story's characters. Like the text, the illustrations are complex, with plenty of recurring details that act almost like a puzzle for readers to discover as they read. Many of the other characters from the *World of Claris* books make cameos in this story, so readers who are already familiar with the series will delight in their discovery. Readers might also like to look at the way that fashion is used throughout the book – to show snobbery, as clues, or to show Abigail's freedom when she finally puts on her secret agent outfit!

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Choose one of the pages in the story and underline the words that rhyme. Come up with a list of words that also rhyme with these underlined words.
- What punctuation marks are used in the story? How do they affect the way you read it? Do you use any of these punctuation marks in your writing? How else does Megan Hess change the text to add emphasis? Write a short story where every line is a question (you might like to do this in pairs). How would your story be different if every line ended in an exclamation mark?
- When the snobby pigs are mean to Abigail it makes her feel as if she has to change 'from within'. Has anyone ever said anything mean to you? Write a letter to them explaining how it made you feel.
- Megan Hess works with world-renowned fashion designers, and this is evident in her illustrations. Draw an outfit that Abigail Pig might wear on one of her undercover missions as a secret agent.

RELATED READING

Claris: The Chicest Mouse in Paris by Megan Hess
Oli and Basil: The Dashing Frogs of Travel by Megan Hess
The Princess in Black by Dean Hale and Shannon Hale

