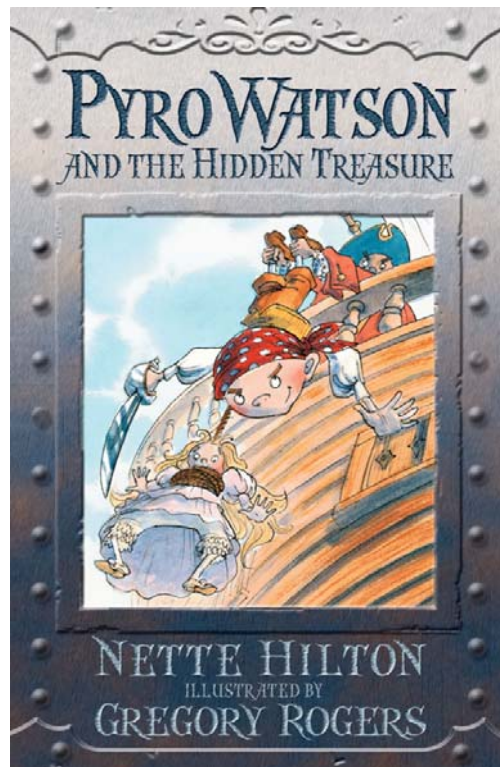


PYRO WATSON AND THE HIDDEN TREASURE

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TEACHING SUPPORT KIT

by
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PLOT

Pyro Watson is sent to stay with his Aunt Mor and her friend Mr Stig in their campervan while his mother goes to nurse his sick grandma in Western Australia.

Pyro dreads the days ahead as Aunt Mor seems intent on taking him snorkelling and swimming in unknown waters. Swimming is not his strength. But not only does he have to battle this fear, he has also managed to attract the attention of the town bullies, Plonker and Sausage Lips.

It all becomes a little more fun when he meets local boy Min and his dog, Becks. Their company pushes the bullies to the background.

At other times Pyro is forced to seek refuge in his daydreams about pirates and his own particular pirate fighter, San Simeon. San Simeon, caught up in his own adventures and battles with bullies, provides keys to help Pyro tackle his own problems and to find the courage to save Becks when he is placed in danger.

STRUCTURE

The novel is set out as a dual narrative with one story belonging to Pyro and his problems and the other to San Simeon, the brave pirate fighter. Each story has its own focus. Pyro has to face up to bullies while San Simeon and his crew are dedicated to protecting Calamity Belle and her secret treasure map from capture by Roaring Roy Bistro.

Each story is identified by a different font and is illustrated throughout.

It is a chapter book set over ten days. Each day is divided into four chapters, except for Day Three, which is a montage of illustrations.

CHARACTERS

PYRO WATSON

Pyro is a sensitive little boy who loves pirates. He makes friends easily and his best friend, Geezer, even comes down for a visit to the seaside. Pyro is hesitant about new activities and has to be encouraged to have a go – which he eventually does. He is perceptive and makes sound observations about bullies and friendship behaviours.

SAN SIMEON

Pyro's imaginary pirate fighter. San Simeon is the captain of the good ship *Olga* and the master of the bumbling, loyal men who sail her. They all love Calamity Belle but San Simeon loves her most. He tries hard to be masterful but is occasionally left confused by his crew's antics. He is a hero, however, and successful in all his attempts to fight off Roaring Roy.

ROARING ROY BISTRO

The pirate. Roy is a blustering bully who acts before he thinks, which is always his undoing.

CALAMITY BELLE

Calamity is quietly self-confident. She is calm and, while very feminine, is not to be pushed around. She is capable of taming the crew and is a great helper to San Simeon in some of their lessons.

AUNTIE MOR

Pyro's aunt is a very down-to-earth, self-sufficient woman. She is delightfully bossy but manages to provide great experiences as a result of her determination. She longs to be an artist and it is in this venture that we see her having to take risks to have a go herself.

PYRO'S FAMILY

Dad and Mum and Nan are a busy family. Dad is very manly and enjoys rugby and cricket and a little at odds with his softer son who prefers paddling and safe games. He is caring, however, and makes the trip down to the seaside bringing Geezer with him. He is seen trying to find a way to share time with his son. Pyro's mum is supportive and provides a balance to the tougher expectations of his dad. Gran appears in the final chapter as a woman very much accepting of her grandson and son-in-law.

MIN

Min is an adventurous boy. He lives with his Nan who is delightfully eccentric and seems to have been a very popular young woman in her heyday. Her little dog, Becks, is instrumental in developing the friendship between the boys and she is seen as caring and very down-to-earth. While the reasons why Min lives with his Gran are not explored, there is a hint that he doesn't have the home life that Pyro has.

THEMES AND ACTIVITIES

THEME 1: PIRATES

- Check out some stories of real pirates.
 - Find their names and see if you can put them on a time line.
 - Make a map of the world as it was when they were alive.
- Find out about women pirates. They were among the most feared on the high seas.
- Pirates lived dangerous lives in perilous seas. Do you think they were brave or foolish, or both?
- What is the difference between Pyro's pirates and the real thing? Make two lists and compare them.
- Check out Vikings and Persian Pirates. Check out Chinese Junks – they were especially feared pirate ships.
- Why do you think the author has made Pyro's pirates a motley crew of loyal but somewhat dopey buccaneers?
- Are there still pirates today? Go online and check through newspaper articles to see when, where and how they operate. How is this similar to olden-day pirates?

Activities

- Have a pirate hat competition. Look at the illustrations in the book and see if you can come up with some hats of your own.
- Roaring Roy's ship has sails.
 - What other vessels under sail were there?
 - Make a model of a galleon.
- Compare the size of a pirate ship with a Sydney ferry.
- Make a cut-away view of a galleon. How comfortable do you think it might be to spend your life on a ship this size? Why?
- Make a treasure map like Pyro drew. Use your school playground. You could even bury some treasure and give a prize to the person who found it! (This would mean you're a very good map-maker.)

THEME 2: BULLYING

- If you had to write a definition of a bully, what would it be?
- What is your school policy on bullying?
- Becks, Min's little dog, is put in danger. Why would bullies do this? Write a story about someone with a favourite toy – a really favourite, special thing. Add a problem – the school bully. I'll bet you know what the bully is going to do. How do you get to a happy ending in your story?
- What might happen if all the bullies were put in one part of the school to play together?
- Make a list of all the things bullies need to learn so they can stop being bullies.

Activities

- Make a 'bullied' doll by tracing an outline of one of your classmates. Dress it up in its best clothes ready to go to the school end-of-year party. Make sure you give it the very best clothes you can. Colour them in. Paste them on. Make some jewellery (a pirate leather strap for boys, a pirate chain for a girl). Display the 'doll'. Admire

her/him. Now, give the doll a 'bully' – tell her/him that they look dumb/stupid/fat/idiotic. When you do, have someone rip their arm off. Now, give them another 'bully' – rip their jewellery off and trample it. Again, have someone rip the other arm away. By doing this everyone gets to feel how bad it is when you bully someone – even just by saying an unkind word.

- Have some fun drawing bullies. Add scowls and frowns and all the things that bullies think look cool. (Sometimes it's the latest hairstyle, but hey, what's going on with their mouths? And their eyes?)
- List some of the world's worst bullies. Are they all losers?
- What do you think of a 'Punch a Bully' day? Good idea? Or not?
- Have a secret bully tell-tale box. Make it anonymous if you like but write down any bullying that happens to you – or any that you see.
- What's the best way to deal with bullying? Make a list.

THEME 3: FRIENDSHIP

- Flowers have meanings in friendships. Search out the meanings and draw a bunch of flowers for your friend.
- Write a poem. Start with the words 'A friend is . . .'
- Give your best friend a colour. Now write a poem about your friend using this colour, e.g. 'Red is Julie. Red is her loud laugh when we play tag . . .'
- What is the hardest thing about being a friend? Make a list. Look at Pyro and Geezer. What things are testing their friendship? Have you ever had your friendship tested when a new person comes along?
- What is the best thing about having a friend?
- How do you know when you have a new friend? Look at Pyro and Min. What things did they do that made their friendship work?
- How do you make a friendship of three people work? What things do you need to do?

Activities

- Make a friendship chain of dolls (paper folding).
- Make the bunch of flowers (see above) and leave them for someone who is your friend.
- Practise receiving compliments.
- Write four nice things about someone you like. Leave them on his/her desk. Don't tell them who wrote it.
- Have a buddy week. Pick a name from a hat on Monday and see if you can do one nice thing for that person each day. See if everyone can pick their secret buddy on Friday. Is it best if you are picked? Or not picked?

THEME 4: FAMILIES

- What is a family?
- What are three things your family does that match up with a television family?
- How does your family differ from a television family?
- Look at all the times Pyro mentions his dad. Does Pyro have a good time with his dad? Do you think his dad loves him? What things tell us this?
- How are Auntie Mor and Pyro's mum related? Talk about some of the ways Mor and Pyro's mum are different even though we don't see them together.
- Discuss the saying 'blood is thicker than water'.

Activities

- Make a family tree.
- Ask one family member to tell you a recount of something they did with a brother or sister when they were children. Write it down in a class 'family yarn' book.
- Make a family quilt. Give each family member a colour and 'weave' (colour, paste) the colour representing them around the other members.
- Make the family shoes – who wears the boots in your family? What does this mean? Does one family member have more importance than another? (Is Pyro's dad more important than his mum? How are their roles, or influence, in Pyro's life different?)
- Paint a family portrait.

THEME 5: COURAGE

- Pyro is very brave when he jumps in to rescue Becks. What does the author tell you that allows you to know this?
- What is bravery?
- Is courage different to bravery? People and animals are awarded for courage and bravery. Go online and find some stories. Print them out. Read them to each other.
- Who is Grace Darling? Illustrate her story.
- Make a radio play of Min's rescue. What could you use for sound effects?
- Find small acts of courage in Pyro's story. Now, find small acts of courage in your family's story. (Was someone saved from a snake or a bull?) Find small acts of courage in the playground. (Did someone dob on a bully?)
- What is the Victoria Cross? Who has won this? Why?

THEME 6: YOUR PLACE

- Write your address. Include all of the detail you can down to 'the Universe'. Which star sector are you in (this is your birth sign) – add it to your address. You could start to find out more about your star sign. It's a map of stars in the sky – find it and draw it.
- Where do you live? Write a map description of it.
- What does your house look like? Describe it to a friend . . . and then have them describe it to someone else. How well did they listen?
- Pyro is at the beach. See if you can draw a map of his location in his van. Check the location map in the book – add some more details. Label them.

Activities

- Maps can be of everything. Make a map of someone reading a book. Make sure you put in arrows and lines and labels.
- Maps tell us all about the shape of the world. Find an early Chinese map – is there any reference to a 'Southland'?
- Find an early map of Gondwanaland. Copy it and make another map of Australia as we know it on a transparency and place it on top. Talk about the way kangaroos are unique to Australia – why is that?
- Make a map of your dog's walk on the beach. Or your cat's journey to its litter box. Or Pyro's walk to rescue Becks.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

- Make a collage of a day's excursion like Pyro did for the visit to the Maritime Museum. Use labels and arrows and lots of pictures.
- Make a short digital movie of a ship under sail – add music. Make sure your music is suitable for a pirate ship/San Simeon.
- Find a section of Pyro's adventures that would make a good radio play. Choose ways to make sound effects (waves, motor bikes, etc). Re-write dialogue from the book to suit.
- Make a mind map from the novel about the themes. Which theme would you like to explore further? How has the author connected the themes in her book? Where do they overlap?
- What are the sounds of the ocean? Using musical instruments, see if you can build a story of the ocean – from calm to stormy and then back to calm, or the tide coming in and swelling to touch new levels and then receding.
- Use musical instruments to depict one of San Simeon's events. Choose an instrument for each member of the crew. Let them talk to each other. Have a listen to *Peer Gynt* to help you.