

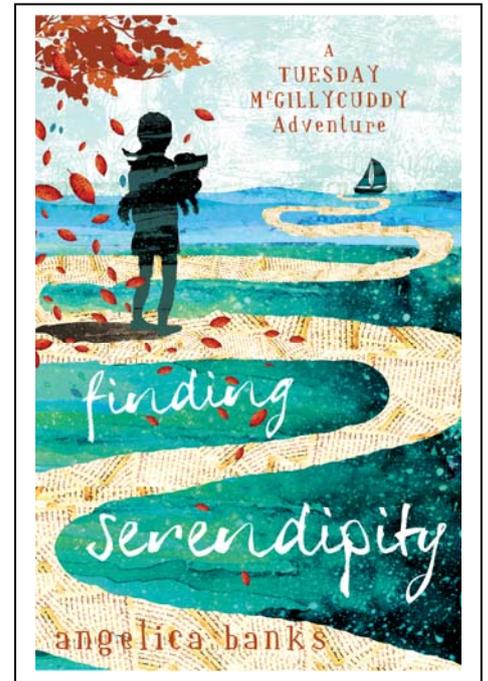
# Finding Serendipity

By Angelica Banks

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## Summary

Tuesday McGillycuddy's mother is the most famous author on earth, so it's fair to say that Tuesday has grown up surrounded by stories. However one day, Tuesday discovers her mother is missing; she has been drawn into the fantasy world that she writes about. So Tuesday and her beloved dog Baxterr set off to rescue Serendipity, but their journey will be fraught with danger and difficulty. Can Tuesday find the courage to write her way back to her mother and back to their everyday world?



*Finding Serendipity* is an enthralling tale of adventure and imagination. But it is also much more than that. It is a study of the magic and creativity of writing. It is suitable for students aged 8-12 and will promote discussions relating to the interactions between fantasy and 'real life', strong female characters, characterisation, creativity, the craft of writing, collaboration and the role of reading and writing in our lives.

## Use in the curriculum

*Finding Serendipity* may be studied in upper primary and also lower secondary English classrooms. It is particularly relevant to the study of the craft of writing and will support students in the following general curriculum capabilities:

- literacy,
- critical and creative thinking,
- ethical understanding and
- personal and social competence.

As an English text *Finding Serendipity* may be studied:

- as an example of the construction of a fantasy world within the 'real world' and how the two worlds relate and interact with each other
- as a sample of the construction of a world where time, space and place can be blurred
- as a case study of creativity and the craft of writing
- as an example of two authors creatively collaborating on one seamless piece of fiction
- by discovering how the use of language can affect character development and the resulting relationship the reader has with the characters
- as an illustration of how authors use innovative structures in a text to convey meaning
- as to how connections are made between our own lives and that of the characters in the text
- as an exemplar of how metaphor, simile, figurative and literal language can change a text
- as a sample of how text structures and language features work together to reveal the purpose of a text

Texts to support the teaching of *Finding Serendipity* include: *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman, *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie, *The Neverending Story* by Michael Ende, *Nim's Island* by Wendy Orr, *Triple Ripple* by Brigid Lowry, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling, *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula Le Guin, *Percy Jackson* series by Rick Riordan, *Once upon a time* (TV series), *The Neverending Story 1, 2 and 3* (DVD), *Nim's Island* (DVD) and *Midnight in Paris* (DVD).

## Sample discussion questions overleaf.

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Contact Carolyn Walsh Educational Marketing Department

Ph: +02 8425 0150 Fax: 02 9906 2218 Email: [CarolynW@allenandunwin.com](mailto:CarolynW@allenandunwin.com)

In the classroom...

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## Discussion Questions

1. '...Serendipity knew what all writers know: that once *The End* has been set down at the bottom of a page, that's it. It's over. The story is absolutely, quite definitely finished.' (p. 66). Do you agree with Serendipity? Does a story finish with *The End*, or can it continue in some other form? Explain your thoughts.
2. 'You can't get here because of a *typewriter*. You came because you have a story inside you wanting to get out. What happened might *appear* to be magical, but the magic comes from nowhere but within you.' (p. 82) Can the Librarian's statement about magic coming from within be applied to other tasks apart from writing? How? Which tasks?
3. ' "What does the thread *do*?" Tuesday asked. "It is what tells me...that you are a real writer." the Librarian said.' (p. 83). How do we tell if someone is a writer? Have these ways of identifying a writer changed in recent years?
4. ' "It's a big world out there," said Blake... "So you'd better start getting your head around the fact that there's only one person here who can help you. And that's you." ' (pp.93-94). Can Blake's assertion apply to other areas of our lives? Detail your ideas.
5. 'The power of the imagination is a magnificent thing. Here, whatever you can imagine, you can make real.' (p. 97). Is the Librarian's explanation to Tuesday true in the 'real world' too? How do imagination and creativity make the world a better place?
6. 'Serendipity realised it was the breadth and depth of her daughter's imagination that worried her most.' (pp. 128-129). Do you agree with Serendipity? How can imagination be a dangerous thing? Do we have to be courageous to be imaginative—or the other way around?
7. When Vivienne meets Tuesday, Vivienne does a number of things that show she trusts Tuesday. (pp.153-161). How do you show your trust in someone? How do you know if you can trust someone or not?
8. '...she was christened Sarah, and some people call her that, but out of the two names I'd say that Serendipity is who she truly is.' (pp. 163-164) *and* 'If the wrong person learned his name then you could lose him forever. It's a part of a Winged Dog's magic. Their name is like a key. You have to keep it safe.' (pp. 151 and 248). How can names have power in 'real life'? How can a name affect who we are?
9. Blake, Tuesday and the Librarian discuss the process of writing at length. (pp. 225-241). 'Imagine' is probably the most important word in the story. Why is that so? Describe how you feel when you're writing or creating something you enjoy. Do you find the process of creating something easy or difficult?
10. *Finding Serendipity* was actually written by two authors, Heather Rose and Danielle Wood. How do you think the two authors collaborated on the book? By writing alternate chapters, or another method? Explain how you would share the writing of a book with someone. How would you ensure the story was seamless?

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Curriculum recommendation and discussion questions prepared by Judith Way. Judith is a teacher librarian with a Graduate Diploma in Children's Literature and a Master of Arts. She was the recipient of the IASL/Softlink International Excellence Award for 2010, the School Library Association of Victoria's Innovators Grant in 2009, and the SLAV John Ward Award for outstanding contribution to teacher librarianship in 2007. She was awarded the CBCA's Eleanor E. Robertson prize in 2003. She has presented at conferences locally, nationally and internationally. Judith blogs at [<http://jway.global2.vic.edu.au>]