

LIGHTNING STRIKES

CLASSROOM IDEAS



Lightning Strikes: Barking Mad

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Themes:

- Pets
- Mystery
- School
- Competitions
- Informal text types

SYNOPSIS

When Alex finds a cute dog for the charity Pet Parade, he thinks he's set. But he finds himself dealing with a scrabble-playing, calculating pooch with a vicious competitive streak. Can Alex control his cunning canine before he sends everyone barking mad?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Renae Hayward was born during a cyclone in Western Australia's Pilbara region, but spent most of her formative years within walking distance of the pristine beaches of Perth's northern suburbs. In 2009, Renae entered a work-in-progress into the "CYA Later Alligator" Writing and Illustrating Competition, and won first place in the Young Adult category. In 2011, she was awarded the inaugural Ray Koppe Young Writer's Residency, administered by the Australian Society of Authors. When not writing, Renae works as Senior Health Promotion Officer for the WA Perinatal Mental Health Unit. She lives with her partner, author-illustrator James Foley, and a deaf bull terrier named Jasper. *Barking Mad* is her first book.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Before reading the book, look at the chapter titles and try to predict what the story might be about. Share your predictions with a classmate.
- Who are the main characters? Who are the secondary characters? Scan the text and try to find as much information as possible about each character. Create character profiles for Alex, Mitch, Pepper and Alex's parents. Which character do you like the best? Why?
- Identify the orientation, complication and resolution of *Barking Mad*.
- What is the significance of the title "Barking Mad"? Why has this been chosen for the title?

- Imagine you are a newsreader on television. Write and present a news report about the day of the cancelled Pet Parade. Report on what was meant to happen on the day and why it didn't happen. Include some interviews with contestants or audience members.
- Imagine your school is holding a Pet Parade. Write a description about your pet that you would be entering. This can be a real or made-up pet. Draw a picture of your pet and describe what makes it special.
- Write a story about Pepper before he meets Alex in Chapter 2. Where has he been? What has he done? How did he get so smart?
- **"That's your dog?" he spat. "That's YOUR dog?"** (p. 86) How does the formatting of this line affect the way you read it? How would it be different if there was no unusual formatting? Practise reading these lines aloud to gain an understanding of how formatting changes the way text should be read.
- Design a poster for the Pet Parade. Use persuasive language and techniques to make the parade sound as exciting as possible and encourage readers to attend. Draw some illustrations to go on the poster either by hand or on a desktop publishing program on computer.
- Have a class discussion on what you would do if you were in Alex's position when he discovered Pepper's strange behaviour (such as playing scrabble, tidying Alex's room and writing an assignment on canines in the ancient world). Would you keep it secret? Would you tell someone about it? How could you convince people that you were telling the truth?
- Write a book review of *Barking Mad*. Include information about the storyline, what you liked and the major themes/issues in the book.
- In class take a survey of the types of pets that students own. What is the most common type of pet? Also take a survey of student's favourite animals that could be a pet. Graph the results.
- Alex wants to raise the most money for the charity drive. Have you ever desperately wanted to come first in something? What steps did you take? What was the outcome?

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