



# Archie's Adventures

by Leonie Thorpe

A classroom English unit from

 HarperCollins Publishers

*Archie's Adventures* is the first book by Christchurch author Leonie Thorpe, and young readers will certainly hope that she writes many more in this style. These are simply very, very funny, laugh-out-loud stories full of wonderful and vividly drawn characters. So human are the foibles and eccentricities the main characters display, that they will be instantly recognizable by the students in their normal dealings with the adult world. *Archie's Adventures* takes the form of two short, easy-to-read stories, each based on one topic. The book provides many teaching and learning opportunities, and is ideal for shared class reading, inspiring reluctant readers, and as a very popular addition to class and school libraries for personal student reading.

## Story synopses

'Archie and the Fishing Competition' introduces us to Archie Roach, a new arrival at Collierden School. Archie suffers from the normal problems children changing schools encounter. Archie also has an inferiority complex based on his non-achievements in the sporting arena. In short, he regards himself as a loser. Archie's father does not help by believing that the Roaches are watchers — not doers. Archie's mother is the most wonderfully mean character who makes the word 'frugal' seem like a synonym for 'generosity'. She even barbers with bus drivers to get a better deal on a \$2.00 fare!

The big event in Collierden is the annual fishing contest. It is so competitive that all the townspeople, including luminaries such as the school principal, policeman, and local mayor, will try anything to get an edge on each other. This year the competitive edge is thought to be a secret new bait — maggots. Archie meets a mysterious, old, one-eyed seaman called Frank, who lives on a boat by the wharf and grows maggots. Archie agrees to secretly deliver maggot consignments to people whom Frank has convinced of the benefits of this bait. One-eyed Frank takes a shine to Archie and encourages him to try to succeed in one thing at least — fishing. After many lessons, Archie is indeed able to catch fish and asks what it would feel like if a big fish was hooked. Frank puts a huge frozen fish on the hook and has Archie pull it in. Some of his classmates see him land this huge fish and photograph it with their cellphone. Archie instantly becomes a fishing guru as word of his large catch spreads quickly around the town. No one believes Archie's protestations that he is not a great fisherman, and even the school principal tries to bribe Archie to learn his secrets. In a highly amusing climax, Archie wins the contest in spectacular form — more by luck than good management — and Archie is now regarded as a winner: at school, and around Collierden.

The second adventure sees Archie join a run-down sea scout troop used by parents as little more than a babysitting device on Bingo night. They must enter a rowing or sailing contest to remain as a troop. Otto, the co-sea scout leader, has bored generations of Collierden sea scouts with his rope-tying lessons. Theo, the other leader, cannot teach them to row as he knows nothing about rowing or sailing. One-eyed Frank comes to the rescue and teaches them to row. After leading the race, they hit a log and come in last. A surprise second contest is rope-tying. Collierden sea scouts take home the first trophy they have won in years.

## Pre-reading teaching and learning activities

- Introduce Archie as a boy who has just shifted to a new area. Have students identify problems they might face when changing schools and moving to a new area. Share any experiences. Can they suggest ways to overcome or minimize these problems?
- How much do the students know about fishing? Are there any secrets to catching fish? How important is the bait? Share class fishing stories. What is meant by a 'tall story'? Tell students that tall stories are very common in fishing circles. Have them each devise a fishing tall story to tell to the class.

## During and post-reading activities

- Have students identify and list the incidents that show how really mean Archie's mother is. What incident did they think was the meanest? Why? Would they have enjoyed the story so much if Archie's mother was really kind? Discuss the idea that, in spite of her meanness, she was very important to the story.
- Develop the idea that one of the most important aspects of this story is the way the author introduces and develops strong characters. Discuss the meaning of 'foibles' and 'eccentricities'. List the main characters and have students write a thumbnail sketch identifying the foibles and eccentricities of each character. How do these add to the humour of the stories?
- How was it possible for everyone to think that Archie was a great fisherman before the contest was even held? Talk about the idea that, when gossip is passed on from one person to another, facts get changed, exaggerated and added to. To illustrate this, play a game of Chinese Whispers. Write the following on a card and give to the first person in a circle to read and pass on verbally by whispering it to the next person: 'Wouldn't it be a surprise for our teacher if we all stood up and clapped at the end of the next maths lesson?' Compare the last person in the circle's version with that on the card!
- List the new skills that Archie acquired in each story, **eg** fishing, rowing. How do students think that learning new skills make us feel more confident and better about ourselves? Have each student make a personal list of new skills they would like to learn under the following headings:
  - skills needed for a new sport, hobby or school subject
  - what steps will I have to take to develop these skills?Each student sets personal skill goals for the year ahead.

Published by HarperCollins • Recommended retail price: \$16.99