



Wombat Books
Stories you'll want to share

Teachers' Notes



Pepper Masalah and the Giant Bird

Rosanne Hawke / Jasmine Berry

ISBN: 978176111204

Recommended retail: \$11.99

Reading level: 6 to 8

Book Summary

In the 3rd book in this series, *Pepper Masalah and the Giant Bird*, the ancient carpet flies over Afghanistan. A huge bird (the Simurgh from Persian folklore) whisks Pepper off the carpet and up to her nest of eggs high on a mountain. The carpet is disorientated without Pepper and disappears after Zamir falls off. Zam makes the long climb to save Pepper before she becomes food for the bird's huge chicks. But Pepper and Zam still need to find the carpet in order to get home to Australia.

Wombat Books, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413 www.wombatrhiza.com.au
admin@wombatrhiza.com.au

Light the Dark Pty Ltd, Trading as Wombat Books ABN: 30 137 345 941

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools and other educational institutions, but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Contents

Book Summary	1
Themes	2
About the Author	3
About the Illustrator	4
Teaching Curriculum	5
Teaching Points & Activities	6
Discussion Questions	7
Classroom Activities	11

Reasons For Studying This Book

Pepper Masalah is a series promoting friendship and kindness. But it uses its themes of fantasy and adventure to also explore culture, the environment and different real world issues. In this book it explores themes of child and bonded labour in an age appropriate way. Additionally, it teaches children about Afghan culture, folklore, and some of the geography of the region.

Themes

Afghan Culture Afghan Geography Friendship and kindness Honour and hospitality Folklore
Bombay/British shorthair cats Child labour Courage Fantasy/adventure

About the Author:



Author Rosanne Hawke has been a teacher, a creative writing lecturer and a volunteer/aid worker in Pakistan and the UAE from 1981 to 1991. She has not been to Afghanistan but has stared at it across the border from Pakistan. Rosanne made Afghan friends while living in Pakistan and also when she returned to Adelaide. She began writing in Pakistan and has over 35 books published. Many of her books are set in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Azad Kashmir or are about Afghans and Pakistanis in Australia. These include *Mustara*, *Soraya*, *the Storyteller*, *the Beyond Borders series* and *Taj and the Camel Trek*. She lives in rural South Australia; loves reading and cats, and has been kissed by a camel.

Author Response

When we were with a mission in Pakistan, we lived a few hours away from the Afghan border. My husband was helping with maintenance and building at a mission hospital where the Himalayan, Karakorum and Hindu Kush ranges meet. I worked part-time at a school set up for girls from poor backgrounds (usually Christian) so they could have an education.

We met Afghans who had fled to Pakistan because the Taliban had taken over in Afghanistan and stopped all girls' and women's rights. Boys were made to fight for the Taliban. Some lovely Afghan ladies made me an outfit of clothes like they wore: a colourful dress with embroidery on the front and baggy pants. Some ladies wore burqas when they went out but didn't wear them at home.

Slave labour or trafficking is alluded to gently because of the age of the readers. But in every country there are people like the khan in this book who will take children to work for them. I visited a carpet-making factory where young boys were making carpets. They were talented but very young. These boys were paid and they could go home to sleep. Not every factory is as generous.

My love of cats grew from childhood. I remember eating from the cat's bowl, pretending to be a cat. We always had a farm cat, usually an orange tabby tom. They were always called Tom. The cats I've had in the last 20 years have helped inspire the Pepper Masalah series. Q, a tuxedo cat, was clever and collected hairpins and could open some doors. Harry was an easy-going farm cat and went missing after a freak storm! That was when I first thought of Pepper's story. My daughter, Emma helped me think up a good name for a cat in the story. We came up with Pepper Masalah. Then I bought a black cat. I looked at Bombay cats first, then decided on a British Shorthair. I named the kitten Pepper Masalah. He was beautiful, intelligent and had a purr like a generator. And he loved carpets. You can see pictures of my cats on my new website. www.rosannehawke.com

About the Illustrator:



Jasmine Berry grew up in beautiful Albany, Western Australia. She has been drawing to impress the other kids, since she was old enough to hold a colouring pencil.

But lately, she crafts these exciting and magical worlds with her computer, iPad and many coffees.

She lives in Perth with her husband and with two adorable cats, and a rather large collection of succulents.

Instagram: @jasmineberryart or <https://www.instagram.com/jasmineberryart/>

Twitter: @jasmineberryart

Web: www.jasmineberryart.comtrampoline

Key Curriculum Areas:

Year One

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1444	ACELA1451	ACELT1582	ACELY1656
ACELA1787	ACELA1452	ACELT1584	ACELY1788
ACELA1447	ACELA1458	ACELT1586	ACELY1660
ACELA1449	ACELT1581	ACELT1832	ACELA1454
ACHASSIO22	ACHGK005	ACHGK005	ACHGK005
ACHGK005	ACHGK005		

Year Two

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1461	ACELA1463	ACELT1833	ACELA1454
ACELA1462	ACELT1591	ACELY1665	
ACHASSIO38	ACHGS013	ACHGK012	

Year Three

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELT1594	ACELY1676	ACELA1488	ACELY1675
ACELT1596	ACELY1680	ACHGK017	
ACHASSK093	ACHASSIO59	ACHASSK070	ACHASSIO80
ACHASSIO60	ACHASSIO56		

Teaching Points and Activities

This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

Knowledge and Literal Understanding

Pre-reading Questions

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask students if they can recognise the setting of this story from the cover image.

After-reading Questions

4. Ask students if Pepper or Zam remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, their pet, themselves perhaps.
5. After several stories now with Pepper Masalah and Zam how has your impression of them changed from their first story till now?
6. What do the challenges of the story do to change Pepper and Zam's characters? Do they become wiser? More resilient?
7. Ask students how they perceive Pepper and Zam's situation. Do they come through in the end?
8. Pepper's flying carpet has taken them somewhere new. Where (or when) have they landed this time?
9. What adventures would you like Pepper and Zam to have next? Where could they go and what might they do there?
10. Pepper and Zam are in Afghanistan. What does the class know about the country and culture of Afghanistan? What did they learn during the course of the story?
11. Ask students if they had their own flying carpet, where would they want it to take them.

Discussion Questions

Discover

- Geography: discover where Afghanistan is. What countries are neighbours to Afghanistan? What kind of climate does Afghanistan have?
- Find out what the land looks like. How do the people live? What do they wear, what jobs do they work at? What do they eat?
- The Simurgh, a creature from Persian folklore, is part of the story. Try looking up the story of The Three Brothers or The Greedy Merchant online. What are some of the messages and themes of these stories? (Here are some youtube links for [The Three Brothers](#) and [The Greedy Merchant](#).)
- Try eating a curry from Afghanistan. Afghan curries are usually milder than Pakistani or Indian ones. There are curries like lubya, which are made with kidney beans, chicken curries, lamb and spinach curries, lentil curries such as dahl, pumpkin curry called kadoo, a cauliflower curry called gulpi. Lubya isn't made with any lactose products, or meat products, so it's a good recipe for those with intolerances. You could also try making bolani, Afghan stuffed flatbread, to go with your curry or to have on its own or with Afghan chutneys.
- There are some cultural reasons as to why bread is used, where curries and spices come from, and how food is eaten in Afghanistan. Because of where it's located geographically, Afghanistan is not quite the Middle East, not quite Asia. India provided chilis, and some spices; Persia provided some herbs; Mongolia added dumplings and noodles. Recipes with fatty elements were important for freezing winters and a lack of oil. One of the cultural elements of eating is the "dastarkhan," a spread of dishes arranged on a tablecloth. This may be placed on the floor with guests sitting cross-legged on a cushion. Shoes are removed at the door. While each guests usually have their own bowl or plate, utensils may not be used. Instead people use bread as a scoop. ([Source](#)).
- There are several similar figures in Persian Mythology - the Simurgh, the Chamrosh, and the Huma Bird. Look up these creatures and the phoenix of Greek Mythology. How are they different and how are they the same? Could stories have travelled across the different countries and civilisations and inspired one another? Discuss.
- Choose a cat fact and find out more info to write a short report or presentation about it. If you write a short presentation, take turns to present it to the class. You can read some great cat facts [here](#).

Create

- There are many different kinds of rugs. Some well known kinds are the Persian and the Oriental rug. The Afghan rug has a long history, and there are many different designs used on them. Afghan rugs have a lot of cultural significance and are not just for decoration and warmth, they have a deep meaning and are passed down through generations of a family. Typically they are hand woven. You can find more information about Afghan rugs [here](#).



From left to right: Single medallion, multiple medallion, and tribal. All also show the border design edges or the overall pattern designs.

- After looking at these designs, design your own rug. Write a paragraph about the carpet design you chose and what elements you chose to use. Why did you choose them?
- Look up the Simurgh online in Google Images. There are lots of different interpretations about what this mythical creature looks like. Draw your own version of what you think the Simurgh might look like based on the description from the book and these pictures.
- What would it be like to fly on a carpet? Where would you go and what would you do? Write a story about your adventure.
- How do you think the carpet can fly? Write an imaginative report explaining how you think a carpet could fly.

- Time to write an animal story! Get into a small group. Think about a time and place - perhaps it's the playground last week or perhaps it's Athens in Ancient Greece. Then choose an animal to be the main character in the story. Where will the story be set? What will be the problem the character will have to solve? Will the animal character talk? Is the story in the present or the past? Did they travel back in time? After a discussion of who, what, when, where, and how write the events of your story together and tell it to the class. **Writing tip:** when writing animal characters they still need to be written about with the same care as you would write about a human character. The author thinks of Pepper in human terms, so she can have emotions and thoughts, but the author remembers that she has cat behaviours too.
- Has one of your pets ever gone missing? Write a story about the adventure it may be having. Draw your pet to go along with your story.

Discussion

- In the book, the carpet is flying over Afghanistan. Do you think the carpet meant to land here? Where do you think the carpet is going?
- Why did the carpet fall when the giant bird took Pepper from the carpet?
- Do you think the carpet will get even better at flying? What do you think will happen then?
- Where do you think Rosanne Hawke, the author, got the idea of the giant bird? Did she make it up?
- Do you think the khan (village leader) has a right to make Zam stay to make carpets? Why do some people do this to children? How should children stay safe?
- Why do you think the khan wants to keep the carpet and emeralds?
- What is the kindness that Pepper and Zam show for Dana's family?
- What kindness does Dana's father do for Pepper and Zam?
- Rosanne originally wrote Pepper Masalah's Cat Fact Files for herself while writing the story, then she thought readers might like to see this too. Do you think it's a good idea to include the cat file? Why? What sort of cat facts do you like best?
- What new information have you discovered in the news section? Why do you think the author included this?
- Pepper and Zam make lots of new friends on their journeys. How do each of the new people they meet help the pair? What new things do Pepper and Zam learn from those they meet?

- The magic carpet has the ability to let Zam and Pepper understand anything that tries to talk to them. What creature, real or magical, would you most like to talk to? What do you think they'd say to you? What languages would you like to understand? Perhaps you can start learning some.
- Going to new places can be strange, especially when they have different customs. Have you ever visited a place where the people do things differently from you? What do you think can be learned from the different ways people live?
- Being all alone in a strange place can be scary. How do Pepper and Zam overcome their fear and keep going?

Activities

Weave something yourself

- Using the instructions for a [cardboard loom](#) or [shoebox loom](#), weave your own craft.
- Think about how long it took you to complete your craft, how much work it was, and what it took to make your craft. Consider children having to make big rugs, like in the story, and share your reflections and discussions in class about how fair or unfair it is for children to weave rugs all day without being paid.

Instruction Manuals

- Create an instruction manual for the flying carpet and how to care for it.
- Alternatively, from a book you have just read, select either an important object or creature and create a user manual or a guide explaining how to care for it.
- Ensure you use any vital information learnt from the book and any other information you consider essential.
- If you are writing a user manual for an object, remember to focus on using it correctly and taking care of it.
- If you are writing a user guide for an animal or creature, focus on keeping it alive and healthy as well as information that explains how to keep it happy and under control if necessary.

Wordsearch

- On the following page is a wordsearch using some words from the third Pepper Masalah story.

Word Search

U P Q C A U S T R A L I A L K
R G E J E C X U Q A P W V P S
P Q A P A H B C P J O E B T O
F D A P P F I T R S W A W X M
O L X C G E G T L L Q V D S Q
K C Y S A E R H K K F I V W N
W C U I A T S M A K X N E X P
W O L U N U S I A N T G Z B S
T B M R C G R P M S I D B T W
R R H Z I B C C B U A S R U U
U A Q B F D V A M B R L T E K
G K K E Q I D N R C L G A A G
P J U G S Z B L J P S G H H N
P K O G B A Q T E R E M V N E
F A H S F M H M K G O T L A M

Pepper Masalah

flying carpet

Australia

eggs

Afghanistan

Simurgh

weaving

Zam

cobra

riddle

rug

cat



Wombat Books

Stories you'll want to share

Rosanne Hawke is available for author talks and workshops. Contact Wombat Books for more information.

All Pepper Masalah Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.

Teachers can find more information about Afghan culture on Rosanne's website under the Beyond Border series, especially under the novel, The War Within.

Connect with Wombat Books

Website: www.wombathiza.com.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/wombatbooks

