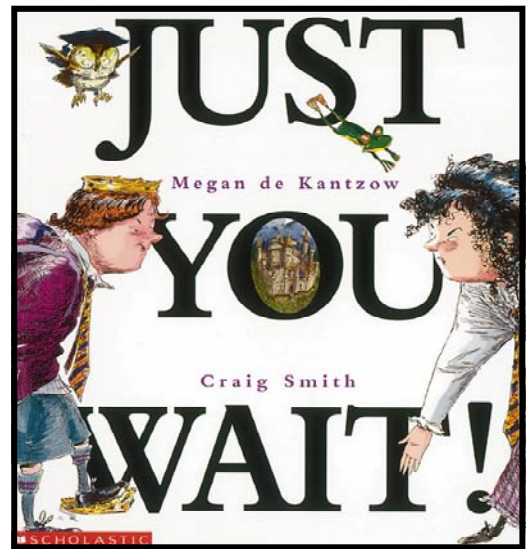


# TEACHER'S BOOK NOTES

## Just You Wait!

Written by Megan de Kantzow  
Illustrated by Craig Smith



### Synopsis

The setting for this picture book story is the sort of place you might come across in a dream - a dream that's just verging on a nightmare. A big old stone castle straight from a classic fairytale, it rears up on its hill, complete with turrets and drawbridge and perilous staircases, arrow slits for windows, even a dragon. It's the sort of castle where you'd expect to find Rapunzel letting down her long golden hair, or Sleeping Beauty trapped, asleep forever, behind a thicket of Hundred Year Thorns. But look more closely, and you'll see that Rapunzel is a phenomenally long-haired little girl wearing a checked school skirt; and the Hundred Year Thorns are simply part of the school grounds - probably out of bounds. Because this is Royal Highness College, a school for fairytale characters.

Royal Highness College has dungeons, and a library. It has a Dark Tower, and a playground. Princes and princesses are allowed to wear gold crowns with their school uniforms. But there's one thing this unusual school has that you'll find in almost any school anywhere in the world. A School Bully.

From the first day of school, Prince Roderick decides that Eleanor True is his own special victim. He pulls her ribbon from her hair. He throws away her precious golden ball. He stomps on her tiara. He squishes her sandwich between the pages of her library book.

Wherever Eleanor True goes, Prince Roderick finds her. ("Nobody hides from *me*," said Prince Roderick, and his friends all laughed.) He locks her in the Dark Tower and releases the dragon, leaving her to save herself from its fiery breath. Prince Roderick's mother, queenly in her golden gown and enormous ruff, merely laughs at her son's outrageous exploits. ('Such a spirited boy,' she chuckles when summoned by the principal to talk about her little darling.)

But Eleanor True is no wilting violet. She's just biding her time. '*Just you wait!*' she warns Prince Roderick after each bout of teasing leaves her muddied, scratched, burned, dishevelled and more and more furious. And when the time comes, her revenge, in a beautifully satisfying reversal of the story of the Frog Prince, is complete.

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This clever, funny story set in a most extraordinary school is the perfect vehicle for Craig Smith's witty illustrations: St Trinian's meets the Brothers Grimm!

## The author: Megan de Kantzow

'I was born in 1964 and lived near Manly Beach, Sydney, till the day of my ninth birthday, when we moved to a house near Chatswood. I lived in that house for another fourteen years, when I got married. Since then I've moved and moved - we've lived in the inner city (move 1), in an old orchard (2), in the country town of Orange, NSW (moves 3 and 4, now with three children), back in Sydney (5 and 6) and now we're in Belgium (7), where I have to eat chocolate every day. Some of these houses came with pets, once we got a dog, once we got a tortoise, and one house had frogs in the front yard—frogs that looked very like Prince Roderick.

'After getting through school, I studied English, Music and Italian at university, and became a teacher, which gave me lots of ideas for Royal Highness College. The worst thing that ever happened to me as a teacher was being given a music classroom right underneath the library ... mostly we managed not to be too noisy, but one class had a very keen heavy metal band. When they played, the library was evacuated.

'I've always loved stories and books. As a kid I loved dressing up and acting out all kinds of stories that I made up - now I still make up stories, but I just dress in normal clothes. Mostly. I can remember very distinctly the books I loved when I was a kid, so I hope my stories bring the some of the same pleasure to other people.'

## On writing *Just You Wait!*

Megan de Kantzow says that *Just You Wait!* was partly inspired by her own childhood memories, and partly by her experiences as a teacher.

'I started on the story of Eleanor True and mean Prince Roderick when my eldest daughter was three. She was making magic potions, with all kinds of strange things from the garden, and in her imagination a very naughty boy put a spell on her cauldron, and the cauldron got up on its legs and ran away. Somehow this reminded me of something that happened to me when I was a kid. A mean girl in my class ran off with my skipping rope, and was laughing and teasing me. I didn't know what to do. Finally I got so upset that I turned around and yelled, and told her what I really thought of her. Normally I was a quiet sort of person, so when I did that she was so surprised she gave the rope back and apologised ... she wasn't so bad after all, just pretty silly. I learned a bit about standing up for myself that day. Sometimes, however, you meet people who never seem to get the punishment they deserve for the mean, horrible things they've done - so I had lots of fun in this story imagining I was Eleanor giving Prince Roderick his just desserts.'

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## The illustrator: Craig Smith

Craig Smith is an award-winning illustrator with a keen eye for humorous detail and an instantly recognisable idiosyncratic style. In a career spanning twenty-five years he has illustrated about 300 books, including a number of readers and short chapter books. The first book he illustrated was Christobel Mattingley's short novel *Black Dog*, published in 1979. However, he came to real prominence in 1981 with Nan Hunt's *Whistle Up the Chimney*, which was a Children's Book Council of Australia Commended book, and he has been honoured many times since. His CBCA Honour Books include *Sister Madge's Book of Nuns* (Doug MacLeod), *Where's Mum?* (Libby Gleeson) and *Bob the Builder and the Elves* (Emily Rodda). As testament to his huge popularity with children, he has also been shortlisted and awarded in many children's choice awards - YABBA and KOALA, KROC and WAYRA, CROW and COOL.

Over the years Craig has illustrated the books of many of well-known Australian children's writers - people such as Gillian Rubinstein (*The Giant's Tooth*), Colin Thiele (*The Monster Fish*), Paul Jennings (*The Cabbage Patch Fib*), Nette Hilton (*Tough Lester*), Phil Cummings (*Goodness Gracious!*), Mem Fox (*Sophie*) and Richard Tulloch (*The Brown Felt Hat*). One of his most popular books, and one of his earliest, was *Dreadful David*, by Sally Farrell Odgers: published in 1984, it is still in print. In more recent years Craig has illustrated the very successful Toocool series published by Scholastic.

Craig was born in the town of Woodside, in the Adelaide Hills. When he was very young he wanted to be a cartoonist, and spent a lot of time copying Walt Disney characters. After leaving school he went on to study at the South Australian School of Art, completing a course in graphic design that included a children's book illustration component. It was here that Craig found his niche. He graduated in 1971 and became a freelance illustrator—although for the first eight years he had to support his career with other jobs, working as a nurse's aide and as a rust-scraper on the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

As a freelance artist, Craig has worked on a wide range of projects, including print advertising, stamps, letterheads (including the Omnibus Books letterhead with its little red bus), posters, and graphics for videos. However, he has always particularly enjoyed children's book illustration, which, he says, offers him the freedom 'to develop the character of the book, as well as the characters in the book'. A father of two grown-up children, he has a vivid and affectionate perspective on childhood, and his illustrations often feature closely observed domestic details and details of childhood behaviour that are instantly familiar - a crucial reason for his great popularity with child readers.

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## Notes for teachers

The main character in *Just You Wait!*, Eleanor True, provides a good role model for children in pre-school and junior primary, and teachers may find the book a useful starting point for talking about relationships in school:

- Standing up for yourself
- Getting on with classmates
- Treating with other people's belongings with respect
- Resolving differences.

## Reading the story

*Just You Wait!* may be described as a contemporary fairytale, or a fairytale with a twist. It incorporates elements common to traditional fairytales, translated into a school situation. The most important of these are:

*The testing of character by a series of misfortunes to be overcome.*

*The need for 'good' to triumph over 'bad'.* In traditional tales there is usually a moral lesson to be learned. Many tales incorporate a situation in which virtue is rewarded and bad or cruel behaviour is punished. Often the punishment fits the crime (for example, a wealthy person might be reduced to poverty; a beautiful person might become ugly).

- Find and read some traditional tales in which a bully or a selfish person is punished.
- Read a version of *The Frog Prince*, in which a bewitched frog is kissed and turns back into a prince. Talk about this story, which is about obedience and integrity. (In *The Frog Prince*, the princess promises to repay the frog for his kindness in retrieving her golden ball. By contrast, in *Just You Wait!* Prince Roderick hurls Eleanor's precious golden ball into the forest.)

## Looking at the illustrations

In the artwork for this book Craig Smith has used a classical 'hatched' style, influenced by a German artist he describes as 'possibly my no. 1 hero', Friedrich Karl Waechter. This delicate, intense technique allows for a great deal of detail and is perfect for the atmosphere Craig intended for the story. In his notes about the background, Craig writes: 'I see the setting as some hybrid between a fairytale/gothic palace and an outer suburbs private school.' He creates atmosphere with his choice of colours (moody, with subtle highlights of gold and maroon) and by his use of unusual perspectives. The castle wall endpapers in this book are especially worthy of note.

Craig's artwork always repays a closer look. He delights in including a range of detail that may not be apparent at first glance.

- Look at the illustrations to find as many fairytale/nursery rhyme characters as possible (Tinkerbell, Rapunzel, Little Bo-Peep, etc. - they are all there!).

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- Find the little owl in the mortarboard. It's in a number of the illustrations, and sometimes quite hard to spot.
- Smaller illustrations separate from the main illustrations show Eleanor True saying 'Just you wait!' Look at these in sequence to see how they reflect her mood and how she is coping with Prince Roderick.

## *Some other activities*

- Put together a little play based on the story and have the class act it out.
- Make up a story about Prince Roderick's life as a frog. (Will he ever be a boy again?)
- Have children dress up as fairytale characters from the book.
- Make golden crowns out of yellow paper and make them as fancy as possible. Have a crown parade.

