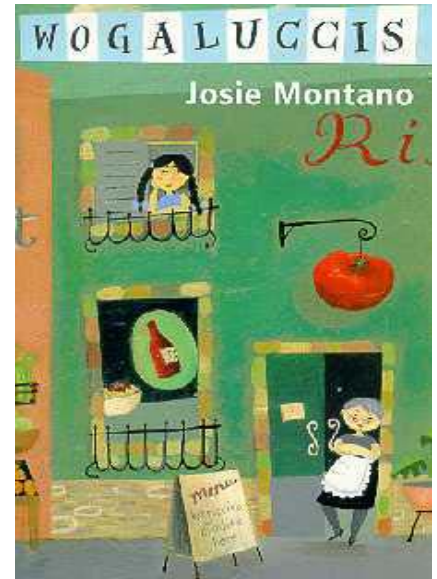


Wogaluccis

by Josie Montano

Teacher's Notes

by Nancy Mortimer



This story gives a picture of the life and interests of teenage girls from different cultures as they go through the process of maturing and struggle to find out who they are. We have the risk-taking, the interaction between friends and the extension of boundaries that young people undergo as they find their identity. The story is concerned with the life of Angela Fiorucci and her growing up, and the difficulties of being between two cultures.

Wogaluccis will be thoroughly enjoyed by teenage girls. Teenage boys who, in their early teens are often searching for answers to what makes girls tick, may also like reading **Wogaluccis** as the story gives many insights into how girls of this age operate and what interests them.

The novel is easy-to-read, light and fun, but as the story develops, many issues of substance emerge.

**These notes can be photocopied for class use.
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Plot

- Do a synopsis of the story.

Opening.

Authors know that they need to grab the attention of their readers right from the very beginning.

- How does Josie Montano do this?
- Look at the beginning of the novel and jot down what the author establishes in the first few pages – that is, what information is imparted to the reader.
- Say what impression the reader has of the narrator's life after the first chapter.

Background

- With whom does Josie live? Why? What problems does this present? How long has Josie been in this situation?

Setting

- Where is the story set?
- Give reasons to support your answer.
- How important is the setting to the novel?

Title

- How does the novel get its name?

Characters

- Write a detailed portrait of Angela Fiorucci, including as much as you can glean about her from the novel -saying how old she is, what she is like as a person, how she lives, her interests, preoccupations and her concerns. How does she operate? What are her ambitions? How do they differ from what her grandmother wants for her? Examine the difficulties of the situation she is in.
- Do a pen sketch of her friends: Sarina, Lidia and Tessa.
- Who is Rachael Blake?
- Write a paragraph about Angela's Nonna and Nonno, mentioning what each is like and what they do.
- Do a character study of her Zia Guilina touching on where she lives, what she does for a living, what she is like and her relationship with Angela.
- Who is Mr. Michaels? What part does he play in the story?
- List the minor characters in the story and briefly indicate what the role each of them is.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

- ❑ How does the reader learn what is happening in the story?
- ❑ From whose viewpoint is the story told?
- ❑ In what voice is the story told?
- ❑ What is the tone of the novel?
- ❑ Comment on the style in which **Wogaluccis** is written.
- ❑ How do Angela's Italian friends behave – there is one example on page 45. Find others from the novel.
- ❑ What are their main concerns?
- ❑ Why is it so important for Angela to go to the semi-formal? (See page 81)
- ❑ What is the ulterior motive for Angela being invited to the wedding? (See page 93)
- ❑ How is it that Angela is able to go to the semi-formal? (See page 127)

Words

In different contexts, words can have altogether different connotations.

- ❑ Find instances of words that are used to convey different meanings in different situations
- ❑ Examine how the author uses plays on words, for instance the word *Will* on page 71. Can you find other examples? Why do writers do this? What is the purpose?
- ❑ Look at the Anglicisation of names – give examples from the text. In the story there is the use of the vernacular, slang, imitation of the accents people have and their word usage.
- ❑ Find examples of each of these.
- ❑ Look at the way Josie Montano uses language in her novel and make some comments and observations.
- ❑ List the different names Angela is called in the story, and say who refers to her by each of these names.
- ❑ What different names do you go by?

The Craft of Writing

- ❑ Authors need to establish characters that hold their readers' interest. By looking at Josie Montano's style, try to ascertain what methods and devices she uses to develop her main character, Angela Fiorucci. Once you have looked at these you can use such strategies in your own writing.
- ❑ Look at the author's use of body language – find examples from the text. Consider using instances in your own writing.
- ❑ Go to the reference to Pinocchio on page 45. Why does the author bring this in? Try to make your own writing more interesting and meaningful by making associations such as this.
- ❑ Examine instances in the novel where people's behaviour alerts you to what they are up to. (There is one example on page 93). Such details can be used in your stories too.

- Look at the way in which Josie Montano writes: “Rachel puffed herself up *like a pigeon...*” (42); “*like synchronized swimmers* our heads turned together to look at Sarina.” When Angela relates the incident between her Zia Giulia and her Nonna, she describes it thus: “*It was like watching the finale of a TV series*” (page 125). The author to bring a picture to mind to make her writing more graphic uses such images. Emulate this use of similes to make your own prose interesting.
- On page 149, the author draws an analogy between the position of Angela and her friend Sarina and likens it to being in a maze. What is the effect of this?
- What does Angela mean, when she says, on page 161 “I stood back and looked at *the minestrone of people* who were there” at her Wogaluccis party?

- Examine the importance of dialogue in ***Wogaluccis***.

Towards the end of the story there are extracts from the diary of Angela’s mother Elena.

- Why is this introduced?

In the story we have the use of *italics*.

- What purpose does this serve?

Look at places in the text where you felt strongly about an incident or a character. Look at how Josie Montano achieved this reaction in you.

Humour

- Examine the place of humour in ***Wogaluccis***.

Discuss

- By referring to ***Wogaluccis***, talk about: change, relationships, concerns of teenagers, growing up, identity, how you find out who you are, authority, teenage behaviour, culture, background, revenge, stereotypes, values and attitudes, gender issues, confidence, having fun, families, friends, racism, moods, feelings, imagination, reality, emotions, fitting in, smoking, drinking, strategies for dealing with people you know, realisations, regrets, solutions to problems, blame, guilt, being wanted, being attracted to the opposite sex, having fun, being normal, obligations, perspectives and choice.
- Discuss: being happy, being strong, being scared.
- Talk about the importance of belonging.
- What are the different purposes of talk amongst people?
- Talk about the tension between different racial groups.
- What are stereotypes? Consider how they are established and the purpose of them.
- Look at strategies for standing up to insults – Nonna gives an example on page 48
- Discuss the way in which groups can be distinguished or distinguish themselves by the sort of language they use.

- ❑ Look at the customs of other countries, in the case of **Wogaluccis** the reader is told about the Italians ritual of coffee; what happens at an Italian wedding.
- ❑ What is the place of the mafia?
- ❑ Look at the practice of:
 - matchmaking, revenge, power, authority, control, and rituals.
- ❑ What is *being shy* about .Why are people shy? How can shyness be overcome?
- ❑ What brings about feelings of shame?

- ❑ As a class, talk about the customs of the various ethnic groups that you know about.

Writing

- ❑ Write about your own life – the interests you have, the things you really like, the difficulties you have.

- ❑ What does thinking and reflecting achieve?

- ❑ Give instances from the story where Josie has been embarrassed. Why are people embarrassed? Write about a time when you were embarrassed.

- ❑ Using **Wogaluccis**, make up a list of the differences between Italian and Australian families.

- ❑ Write a review of **Wogaluccis** mentioning what the tone of the novel is, the type of story it is and who you think would like to read it.

Three generations cannot live together because of their different attitudes, standards and values, so it is inevitable that Angela would find it difficult being brought up by her grandparents.

- ❑ Discuss this statement in relation to **Wogaluccis**.
- ❑ Describe, in your own words, the rosary meeting Angela came home to on page 56.
- ❑ Describe the ritual of making salami on pages 77ff.
- ❑ Describe an Italian wedding such as the one on pages 100ff.

It is inevitable that there will be conflict between old cultures and the new.

- ❑ Write about this
- ❑ Comment on what effect Zia Giulia's advice to Angela "*Be strong, be yourself*" (page 54) had on her.
- ❑ Jot down a list of things you do with your own group of friends.
- ❑ Describe the feeling Angela has going to her school semi-formal. (Refer to pages 128-9)
- ❑ Write about your own family

Ending

- Write about what important things have been achieved by the conclusion of the novel.

About the Author

Josie Montano, previously known as 'Josie Dago' and famous for her stinky cheese sandwiches in her primary years, now lives as a self-confessed wog with her family in Brisbane. She has worked as a teacher aide in primary schools and is currently a full-time writer. Her first novel was for younger readers: *The Ghost of the Bell* published by Greater Glider in 1999. She has won several short story competitions and writes monthly articles for *Kids in Brisbane* magazine. She has also self-published a series of booklets on children with Aspergers Syndrome and regularly speaks on the subject to parent and teacher groups.

Lothian will publish her junior novel, *Chicken Pox*, later in 2002.