



My Mum the Pirate

Written by Jackie French

Illustrated by Stephen Michael King

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Synopsis

Cecil's mum wears long black boots and an even longer sword, and she makes her enemies walk the plank. Putrid Percival serves sea monster sup for dinner, when Cecil would rather eat pizza. Filthy Frederick stinks – but hey, he's good at maths, and nobody's perfect! All Cecil wants is a normal life.

With parent–teacher night looming, Cecil is worried. Will his mum ruin Cecil's newly found street-cred as 'CJ'? But when flood waters strike and Bandicoot Flats Central School is in danger, who will save the students and teachers from the perils of the rising waters? And is Cecil's mum really a pirate?

Ages: 7–10 years

About the Author

Jackie French is a full-time writer who lives in rural NSW. She writes fiction and non-fiction for children and adults, and has columns in the print media. Jackie is regarded as one of Australia's most popular children's authors. In 2000, Jackie won the Children's Book Council's Younger Readers' Award for *Hitler's Daughter*. In 2002, she won the ACT Book of the Year Award for *In the Blood*. Her bestselling picture book *Diary of a Wombat* was named an Honour Book in the 2003 CBC Awards and won the ABA Book of the Year, as well as numerous other awards. Most recently, *To the Moon and Back*, co-written with her husband Bryan Sullivan, won the 2005 Eve Pownall Award for Information Books.

About the Illustrator

Stephen's first picture book, *The Man Who Loved Boxes*, was nominated for the Crichton Award for illustration, was the winner of the inaugural Family Award and was selected for Pick of the List (US). He has since illustrated over 20 books, and has been shortlisted five times for the Children's Book Council Awards. In 2002, he won both the YABBA and Koala children's choice awards for *Pocket Dogs*.

All About Wacky Families

Jackie thinks that all families are wacky ... in their own way.

- What do you think is special about your family?
- Is there any one who'd make a good pirate in your family? What about your teachers?

All About Pirates

- Who were the buccaneers? Were all pirates bad in the olden days?
- Are there pirates in the world today?
- Cecil's mum has a sailing ship. How do big ships get their power today?
- What sorts of animals have tentacles? Are there any foods we eat today that have tentacles?

Activities and Discussion

1. What did Cecil want for his birthday? (pp. 13–16, 22) Do you think he made a good choice? What would *you* have asked for?
2. How did the wizard send Cecil to 'the best school in the world'? (pp. 22–24) Make a list of all the things that you think a good school should have.
3. Why was Cecil embarrassed about his mum attending Parent–Teacher night? Tell the class about a time when you were embarrassed by your parents or another family member.
4. Cecil's mum called Mr Pootle, the football coach, a 'lily-livered, snot-nosed sea snake'. (p. 40) Why? Draw a picture of Mr Pootle. Does a person have to be reckless in order to be brave?
5. People at school reacted in different ways when they first learnt that Cecil's mum was a pirate. (pp. 52–56) Describe some characters' reactions. For example, consider Mrs Parsnip, Mrs Bumpus, Big Bernie, Shaun and Jason. How do you behave towards people who are 'different' in some way? Is it necessary to be like everyone else?
6. Where did Mr Farthingale order the older kids to go when the creek overflowed its banks? Why did Cecil think this was a bad choice of location? A flood is a natural disaster. What is a natural disaster? Name some other types of natural disasters. Choose one to research and present your report to the class. You can find information from books and the Internet.
7. In your own words, explain how Cecil and Snap were rescued from the floodwaters. (pp. 67–69) Snap is an unusual pet. What are some other unusual pets that people keep? Pets have been known to help their owners in dangerous or life-threatening situations. Write a newspaper report about a heroic pet.

8. What part did time travel play in the plan to capture the *Black Ship*? If you could travel through time, would you visit the future or the past? Why? Research a past society that you find interesting or write an imaginative account of a future world.
9. How did Cecil's mum divide the treasure from the *Black Ship*? (p. 94) Why do you think the pirates' share was smaller than the slaves'? Cecil's mum appeared to be tough, but can you find examples from the book that show her soft-heartedness? What would you do if you found a treasure?
10. Big Bernie was known as the school bully. (p. 51) How did he change after his experiences on the *Mermaid*? What are some ways that bullies torment their victims? Why might someone become a bully? Do victims tend to share certain characteristics? What would you do if you were being bullied, or if you saw someone else being bullied?