



Grandma Z

Daniel Gray-Barnett

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Author: Daniel Gray-Barnett
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THEMES

- * Family
- * Imagination
- * Play
- * Adventure
- * Birthdays

PLOT

On an ordinary day, in an even more ordinary town, it was Albert's birthday.

When Grandma Z roars into town on her motorcycle, Albert is swept up in a very extraordinary adventure.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Before you read the book, what do you think the story will be about? After reading it, were you surprised by the story? Why or why not? Why do you think the illustrations in the first few pages are mostly in black and white?

Albert feels like there are one hundred butterflies in his stomach. What emotion do you think he is feeling?

Turn to the page with the birthday cake. Try to spot all the characters from Albert and Grandma Z's adventures.

How does Albert change from the beginning of the book to the end?

ACTIVITIES

Choose some fruits and vegetables (potatoes, broccoli, mushrooms, lemons and apples work well). Get a grown up to help you cut the fruit and vegetables in half, or into interesting shapes. Dip your fruit into the paint, then press it on a piece of paper – it's like a stamp! See how you can make patterns. Use blue and orange paint to give your picture a real Grandma Z feel!

Write a story about the best birthday party you have ever had.

Draw a picture of your grandma (or another family member) and all the adventures you have had together. You could also make it a comic, or a picture book story like Grandma Z.

Teaching Notes



AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Daniel Gray-Barnett is a Sydney-based illustrator. Self-taught, he studied Medical Science at the University of Sydney before swapping his microscope for pencils when he realised illustration had a much lower patient-mortality rate. He has three grandmothers, and *Grandma Z* is his first book.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

What was your inspiration for writing *Grandma Z*?

Originally the story started as several illustrations done for fun. I wanted to create a pair of unusual characters that would go on the sort of adventures that I would love to go on. *Grandma Z* was inspired by strong, creative, almost eccentric women who don't care what other people think about them. Miriam, my publisher, encouraged me to discover the story behind these illustrations and characters and the rest is history.

How did you create the illustrations?

My illustrations are a mix of ink, pencil and digital techniques. My illustrations are put together from layers of shapes and lines drawn in ink and pencil, which I draw using a lightbox and then scan into the computer before I arrange and colour them on Photoshop. When you view the layers all together, they give the finished illustration. I use a print-making approach to my work as I like the way the colours combined create new colours and also the unpredictability of what the final result will be like.

Can you tell us about how you became a writer and illustrator?

I first started illustrating about 8 years ago. I always loved art at school but didn't know that there was such a thing as illustration back then. I had quit my job in medical research because I wanted to do something creative and ended up studying Music Business, thinking I was going to manage a band or start a record label. My favourite part of my course was where I got to make a poster for a gig. That led to me making more artwork and posters for actual, real gigs and bands and I realised that maybe making art was what I wanted to do. When I found out about illustration and that I could not only work for myself, but make illustrations for all sorts of things from books to billboards, I knew I'd found what I wanted to do.

As for writing, I loved writing at school and was actually quite good at it. I used to write stories and poems about things like aliens and elves – I once was a semi-finalist in the Dorothy Mackellar poetry awards! My childhood dream was to be a writer, so when the opportunity came up to do this book, I really wanted to write the story myself.

Who are some of your favourite picture book creators?

Chris Van Allsburg – I love *Jumanji*. Tomi Ungerer. Roger Duvoisin and Abner Graboff have been big influences on my work. Quentin Blake.



Scribble (an imprint of Scribe)
18–20 Edward Street,
Brunswick, VIC, Australia, 3056
+61 3 9388 8780

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