

The Ballad of Henry Hoplingsea

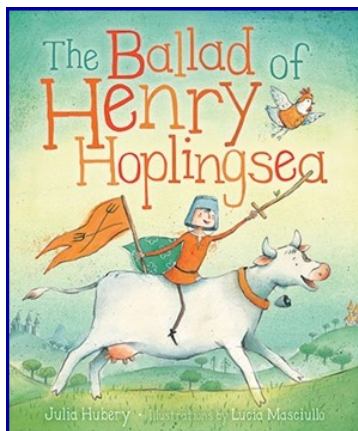
By Julia Hubery & Illustrated by Lucia Masciullo

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Henry will do anything to win the hand of his beloved Carmelita. He is inventive and determined, and nothing is going to stand in his way. Except maybe a niggling feeling that something is not quite right. This is a rollicking tale about wanting what you have, rather than having what you want, by international favourite Julia Hubery and award-winning Lucia Masciullo.



Teacher notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher, Little Hare Books. A full version is available on our website.

Theme:

The theme of this funny and touching story is a comedy of errors in which the characters must learn to recognise the difference between what they think they want, what they think others want, and what everyone actually wants. It is not so much a warning against healthy ambition as a warning about failing to recognise the worth of what one already has. This tale of a heroic knight who sets off on a quest to impress his lady-love is inspired by the chivalric tales of the middle ages, but although the author has included all the usual motifs of a damsel in distress, monsters, dragons, trusty steed and daring deeds, she has also subverted them.

Discussion Points:

- The theme of *The Ballad of Henry Hoplingsea* can be encapsulated by several traditional proverbs. One such proverb is 'the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence'. What other proverbs can you find that capture this same theme?
- The author has created verse that seems both traditional and modern. What devices does she use to give her verse its friendly feel? Which textual elements create the 'olden days' feel?
- Find examples of 'half-rhymes' and consider how Julia has stuck to the rules for half-rhyming in order for them to ring true to the ear.

Activities:

- Ask your students to rewrite the story directly from the point of view of Henry. Encourage them to use rhyme and ask them to explore how the character might be feeling throughout the story.
- Once your students have rewritten their story, ask them to illustrate their own pages. As the story is highly visual, how would they portray their words through illustration to convey the story?
- As a class discuss the importance of heroism. What makes you a hero? There is a large emphasis on being bold and strong, but in the end Henry displayed kindness. Did this still make him a hero to Carmelita? Can you display various emotions but still be classed as a hero?