

## These notes are for:

- Primary – years 2-4
- Ages 8+

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Art

## Example of:

- Illustrated fiction
- Narrative verse

## Experience of:

- Reading
- Writing
- Creating
- Discussion
- Groupwork

## Values addressed:

- Care and compassion\*
- Understanding, tolerance and inclusion\*
- Persistence
- Initiative
- Resourcefulness
- Teamwork

\*Values for Australian Schooling

## Themes:

- Spying
- Detection
- Codes and ciphers
- Friendship
- Bullying

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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## Ophelia Wild, Secret Spy

### Ophelia Wild, Secret Spy

Author: Elena de Roo  
 Illustrator: Tracy Duncan  
 ISBN: 9781921529672  
 ARRP: \$14.95  
 NZRRP: \$16.99  
 Feb 2012



## Outline:

Feisty Ophelia Wild decides to set up her own detective agency, with its headquarters in her tree house. Along with her assistant, Albert, she foils bullies, solves a meat-pie mystery, and cracks the case of the disappearing dentures.

This is a fun and engaging story told in verse, with vivid illustrations that bring Ophelia's beguiling personality to life.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

### Elena de Roo

Growing up, Elena went to seven different primary schools around New Zealand, before her family finally settled in Auckland. Although she has always enjoyed making up stories and poems, it was only after taking a writing course in 2004 that her dream of being a writer started to become a reality. In 2010 she was the recipient of the Todd New Writers Bursary. Her first published book with Walker Australia was *The Rain Train*, illustrated by Brian Lovelock. Elena lives in Auckland with her husband and children.

### Tracy Duncan

Tracy Duncan lives in Nelson, New Zealand. She has written and/or illustrated several picture books, and her fine art is regularly exhibited. Several of her books have been Storylines Notable Picture Books.

## How to use these notes:

These notes provide a variety of discussion questions and activities that can be used with *Ophelia Wild, Secret Spy*. Please select according to the level, learning style and targeted outcomes of your students.

## Elena de Roo on *Ophelia Wild, Secret Spy*

On the very first writing course I ever did, our tutor asked us to make up the name of a character. This turned out to be a very valuable exercise because the name that popped into my head was Ophelia Wild. I knew straight away she would like climbing trees, eating jelly and find it difficult to sit still in class. Ophelia's story has undergone many changes since she was first dreamed up, but she remains my favourite character.

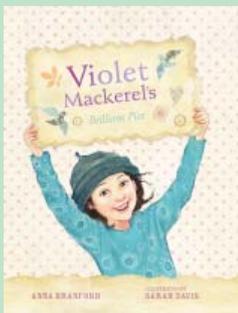
## Classroom Activities and Discussion Questions

- Come up with a list of synonyms for “secret spy”. For example, detective, sleuth, private eye, investigator. In your opinion, which of these best suits Ophelia?
- As a class, compile a list of detectives from movies you’ve seen or books you’ve read. Keeping this list in mind, brainstorm the characteristics of a detective. What sort of jobs do they usually do? How old are they? Where do they live? Are they generally male or female? What do they look like? Do they have any special skills or abilities? Are there special gadgets they use? Are they part of an organisation or do they work alone? Use this information to draw and label a picture of a typical detective.
- In what way is Ophelia Wild different to a typical detective? Do you think she is a good detective? Why or why not?
- Ophelia uses autumn leaves as business cards for her spy agency. Imagine that you had your own spy agency. What would you call it? Try to think of a catchy name, perhaps involving a pun (a humorous play on words) or alliteration (repetition of letters at the start of words). What would your logo be? (This should be a picture which represents your business.) What would you specialise in? Create a business card or advertisement for your agency. Use descriptive language which persuades customers that you are the best spy agency around.
- Why do you think the author decided to write her story using poetry? How would the story have been different if she had written it in prose (non-poetic language like what is used in novels or non-fiction)? Would you have enjoyed it as much?
- Choose a section of the book and read it aloud until the words seem to flow in a regular, rhythmical way. Can you work out how many beats are in each line? Copy some lines from the book and break these lines into beats or syllables. Are any of these beats stronger than others? Underline these beats. Once you have a sense of the rhythm, tap, clap or stamp it out. Write your own poem using this same rhythm.
- In small groups, create character charts for Ophelia and Albert. In the centre of the page, draw a picture of the character and a symbol which represents them. Around it write:
  - factual information about them such as their age, interests, special talents, likes and dislikes, etc.
  - adjectives to describe their personality
  - quotes which give insight into their character.
- In the first story, Ophelia encounters the Bullyboy gang who are waiting outside the tree house to waylay the new student, Albert. How does Ophelia use her intelligence to outwit the gang? Is her plan a good one, in your opinion? If her plan hadn’t worked, what are some other things she could have tried?
- In “Dots, Dashes and Disappearing Pies”, Ophelia grapples with learning morse code. Research morse code on the internet. When was it invented, and who by? What was it originally used for? Copy out the morse code alphabet into your workbook. What are some other codes, ciphers or secret languages people may have used to pass on secret messages? For instance, mirror writing, invisible ink, numerical codes and hieroglyphs.

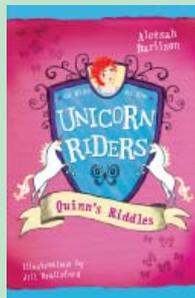
- Write a simple message and then use an online morse code translator to turn your message into morse code. (Reliable online translators can be found at <http://boyslife.org/games/online-games/575/morse-code-machine/> and <http://morsecode.scphillips.com/translator.html>) Play your message to a classmate and see if they are able to translate it. (Make sure that the playing speed is slow and your classmate has a copy of the morse code alphabet and paper to write notes on.) After doing this activity a few times, discuss the effectiveness of morse code as a form of communication. When might it be useful? Does it have any drawbacks or disadvantages?
- Crack some codes online on the CIA website: [www.cia.gov/kids-page/games/break-the-code/index.html](http://www.cia.gov/kids-page/games/break-the-code/index.html)
- Create your own code to communicate with. (You may like to get inspiration from [www.topspysecrets.com/secret-codes-for-kids.html](http://www.topspysecrets.com/secret-codes-for-kids.html) or [www.cerias.purdue.edu/education/k-12/teaching\\_resources/lessons\\_presentations/cryptology.html](http://www.cerias.purdue.edu/education/k-12/teaching_resources/lessons_presentations/cryptology.html)) Take turns demonstrating your code to the rest of the class, seeing who can “crack the code” first.
- In “Thick as Thieves”, Comet the cat creates chaos by stealing false teeth, boxers and glasses from the nursing home. How does Ophelia eventually persuade Comet to stop stealing? Rewrite this story from Comet’s point of view.
- Albert and Ophelia are particularly clever at bartering; exchanging spying work for pies from Olga and stories from Ollie. Discuss the meaning of the word “barter”. If money became obsolete and you were forced to barter for goods and services, what are some of the things you could trade? Would you enjoy this system? Why or why not?
- Would Ophelia be as good a spy without Albert’s assistance? What are some of the qualities that make Ophelia and Albert an unbeatable spying team?
- Have a class scavenger hunt where students have to solve a series of riddles or clues in order to find an object hidden in the school.
- In pairs, think of some other mysteries which Ophelia and Albert could solve. Choose one of these mysteries and present it as a comic strip or storyboard.

## Girl Power!

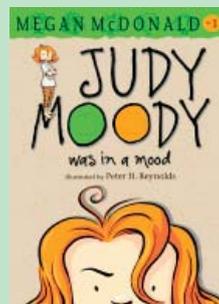
If you like Ophelia Wild, you’ll love the heroines in these enchanting reads.



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 (illustrator)  
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# Ophelia Wild

## Jelly Maze Activity

Help  
Ophelia  
escape  
from  
the jelly  
maze!

