

# MARLOW BROWN

## MAGICIAN IN THE MAKING

Written by Kesta Fleming

Illustrated by Marjory Gardner



## Teachers' Notes

written by  
Vanessa Ryan-Rendall

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# Table of Contents

<b>About the series.....</b>	<b>2</b>
About this book.....	2
About the author.....	2
About the illustrator .....	2
<b>Australian Curriculum Outcomes .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Teaching and Learning Activities by Chapter .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Big Thinking Activities .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Magic Tricks .....	9
The Sport of Pen Spinning.....	9
Study of People .....	9
Character Traits.....	9
<b>Additional Activities .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix One.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix Two .....</b>	<b>11</b>

## About the series

**The Marlow Brown books** are suitable for girls and boys in middle to upper primary and form a humorous series about a strong female character – Marlow Brown – exploring interests that don't fit the female stereotype and typically lead to professions with female under-representation. There's a focus on family relationships as well as STEM subjects in the school curriculum.

**What makes this series interesting?** Readers will find the humour and voice, plus Marlow's special relationship with her dog, Rockstar, particularly engaging. There is also a mix of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> person storytelling as we get sneak-peaks into Marlow's special notebooks and correspondence to people. The 'Try It Yourself' sections at the back of each book as well as the factual 'A Note About ...' pages encourage readers to engage with the story beyond the final page. The line art illustrations are fun and reflect the characters and their traits. The illustrations also make reference to the cultural make-up of Marlow's family, which, coupled with the fact that there is no overt reference to this in the text, allows cultural diversity to be shown as a simple fact of life needing no comment.

## About this book

*Marlow Brown: Magician in the Making* is a laugh-out-loud story about a girl with a special talent for creating chaos who is determined to become a top-class magician despite the odds. It's a tale about perseverance, teamwork and dreams and takes Marlow and her trusty dog, Rockstar, on a path to spectacularly epic performances (and fails), as they prove that anything is possible.

## About the author

[Kesta Fleming](#) is a children's writer and poet. She was born in England but grew up in the Adelaide Hills in a house full of books, bells and music. With a love of stories and a fascination for words she began writing when young. In addition to *Marlow Brown*, she has had numerous poems, plays, articles and short stories published in *The School Magazine* and in anthologies. Kesta is a former teacher and now divides her time between writing for children and her therapeutic work helping people manage stress and anxiety. She lives in Melbourne with her husband, two teenagers and a Brittany Spaniel.

## About the illustrator

[Marjory Gardner](#) is a freelance artist, illustrating mainly for children's books. She lives in Melbourne, Australia, with her partner and a Jack Russell terrier, who sometimes appears in her drawings. Marjory was born in Malaysia and came to Australia with her family to begin high school. Her favourite subject was Art. After studying Graphic Design at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology she worked at various design studios before deciding to go freelance, specialising in children's illustration. Marjory's work has appeared in trade and educational publications within Australia and internationally. She also illustrates for magazines, and has designed a range of greeting cards. She uses felt tipped pens, colour pencils, pen, brush and ink, and occasionally, collage.

## **Australian Curriculum Outcomes**

**This book is suited to:** Stage 1 (more able independent readers & class novel studies) & Stage 2 (shared reading & independent novel studies)

**Key Learning Outcomes covered in the following areas:**

English

Science

Critical and Creative thinking (General Capabilities)

**Themes:**

Teamwork, Dreams, Magic Tricks/Illusions, Humour, Perseverance

# Teaching and Learning Activities by Chapter

## Chapter One

1. What are the connections in this chapter to the first book in this series, *Marlow Brown: Scientist in the Making*?
2. What does illusion mean?
3. Draw your own illustration of Mervin the Magical - using the colour described by the author.
4. If Rockstar had not approved of Mervin, what do you think he may have done?
5. What sort of friend do you think Felix is?
6. As you read, create a flowchart to show how Dad feels about Marlow throughout each chapter.

## Chapter Two

1. Have you or would you volunteer in a magic show? Discuss how it would feel to be a volunteer in a magic show & which types of people would like to do this.
2. List the different emotions Marlow is feeling in this chapter. Show this in a flow chart from the time she volunteers to the end of the chapter.
3. What sort of trick has Mervin the magical performed? Look at the different categories in the Appendix 2 on page 11 and decide what has happened in this trick.
4. How does Mervin use humour & audience participation in his show? Why do you think this is important?
5. What does it mean by 'a mix of groans and laughter'?
6. What does simultaneously mean?

## Chapter Three

1. What is flash paper? Why do you think Uncle Q knows about it?
2. Do you think Marlow will make a good magician? Discuss reasons she might and might not.
3. What is a gimmick? Conglomeration?
4. How is being a scientist like a magician? Use a Venn diagram to find out how these two occupations are similar and different.

## Chapter Four

1. Have a look at the list Marlow has made about magic tricks. What do you think some of these tricks might look like?
2. What do you think about Marlow's letter to Mervin the Magical? Write your own letter to Mervin, imagining you are also a magician in the making.
3. Why do you think it is always important to have a notebook when you are trying new things out? Think about how Marlow uses her notebook. How might you use a notebook in your life?

## Chapter Five

1. Felix says to Marlow: 'Practice plus patience produces perfect performances!'. This is a sentence that uses alliteration. Create your own sentences that use alliteration. Challenge yourself and try to create one that one of the characters in the book would use.
2. Marlow tries to hypnotise Felix. What is hypnotism and what does it do to people?
3. Predict what might happen next if Marlow is going to try the 'Houdini Escape Artist' trick.

## Chapter Six

1. Why is Dad happy that Marlow wants to be a magician now instead of a scientist? Do you think he is right in thinking this way? Explain your thinking.

2. Who was Houdini? Look at the Big Thinking Activities on page 9 to find a project on this.
3. What does surreptitiously mean?
4. How do you think Marlow feels after her failed attempt at the straitjacket trick? Write up her trick outline and then reflection as you think she would in her notebook.

## **Chapter Seven**

1. Marlow finally hears from Mervin the Magical. How do you think this email made her feel about being a magician?
2. Think of a magic trick that you would like to create. Use the same format as Marlow does and make up your own trick to practise.
3. Marlow uses the word 'Zibbedee' in her notebook. What do you think this means? What sort of word would you use if you were a magician? Create one and try it out on your friends!

## **Chapter Eight**

1. Marlow tells Rockstar that 'Observation is part of the learning process.' Why is it important that we observe before we try, when we are learning new things? Think of examples of when you have observed and then tried. Consider what might have happened if you had not observed before you tried.
2. What is a 'fiasco'?
3. What does the phrase 'We're going to amaze Mum and Dad's socks off' mean?
4. Why do you think 'bowing practice was an important but oft forgotten art'?
5. Predict what you think is going to happen when Marlow conducts the experiment?

## **Chapter Nine**

1. What does 'flamboyant' mean?
2. Why is 'good patter' something that successful magicians need to use?

3. What does 'jubilant' mean?
4. What happened with the magic trick? Do you think this could have ended differently?
5. Why do you think spinning the pen gives Marlow clarity?

## **Chapter Ten**

1. What do you think Mrs Boyd looks like? Use the description in the chapter to draw her as well as write about the type of person she is.
2. What does 'thwarted' mean? Sagely? Stooge?
3. Does your school have a noticeboard? Compare your noticeboard at school or in your community to this one. How are they the same and/or different?
4. What do you think is written on the notes on the noticeboard where the scribbles are? Come up with some ideas as to what you think would be written there.
5. Why is it so important to Marlow that she impresses her dad?
6. How can you tell if someone is really hypnotised? Try to find out more about hypnotism before you make a prediction about what is going to happen when Marlow performs her trick.

## **Chapter Eleven**

1. What does 'they would smell a rat' mean? Where do you think this phrase came from?
2. What does 'conducive' mean?
3. How do you think the other students in the audience were feeling about Marlow's trick? Write a recount of Marlow's performance up until the 'hypnotism' to explain how another character is feeling. Are they excited? Confused? Sceptical? bored?

## **Chapter Twelve**

1. How would your class react to your teacher being hypnotised? Write a school newspaper article about the day a teacher in your class became hypnotised.



## **Chapter Thirteen**

1. How does the tension rise in this chapter? Use the diagram in Appendix 1 to structure the rising tension.

## **Chapter Fourteen**

1. Do you think the description of Mr Savage is true or made up by the students?
2. What is 'the call'?
3. What sort of punishment do you think Marlow will be given? Explain your idea with examples from the text.

## **Chapter Fifteen (Mr Savage's Office)**

1. What does 'Marlow braced herself' mean?
2. When the class 'clamoured in for debriefing', what do you think they said to Mr Savage? Imagine you were there, what would you mention? Is there anything you wouldn't want to say?
3. Do you think the school should have asked Marlow about the recording before they sent it to Mervin? What do you think the outcome will be?

## **Chapter Sixteen**

1. Why would sending the recording to Dad be the 'final nail in the coffin.'?
2. What is a 'delinquent daughter'? Do you think Marlow is one?
3. What is an apprentice? Where else can you be an apprentice?
4. What does having a 'natural aptitude' mean? What natural aptitude do you have?
5. Why might magicians need to be good at tricks that use 'sleight of hand'?
6. Write a diary entry of one or two sessions that Marlow has with Mervin the Magical. You can write it from Marlow or Mervin's perspective.

# Big Thinking Activities

## Magic Tricks

Go to <http://kestaflaming.com> to read more about magic tricks. Try to do one or more of the following:

- Practise one of the magic tricks and perform it in front of an audience
- Critique a magic trick performed by a well-known magician. Discuss whether you think they performed it well, how they did it and if you would recommend this magician to others.
- Research different types of magic tricks that Marlow performed as well as tricks that magicians perform. Place them into categories as seen in Appendix 2

## The Sport of Pen Spinning

Kesta Fleming tells us that pen spinning is a real sport. What other 'real sports' are there that do not seem like sports? Make a list and give reasons why.

## Study of People

Who was Harry Houdini? Research to find out more about who he was, why he became a magician and interesting facts about his life.

## Character Traits

We met Marlow in *Marlow Brown: Scientist in the Making* and used a character map. Now we want to delve deeper into her traits. Fill in this chart as the story continues to learn more about her traits.

Character trait	Evidence from the text (i.e something she says, something she does or how other people react to her)
E.g. Brave	She volunteers to go on stage  She performs her hypnotising trick in front of her class.

## Additional Activities

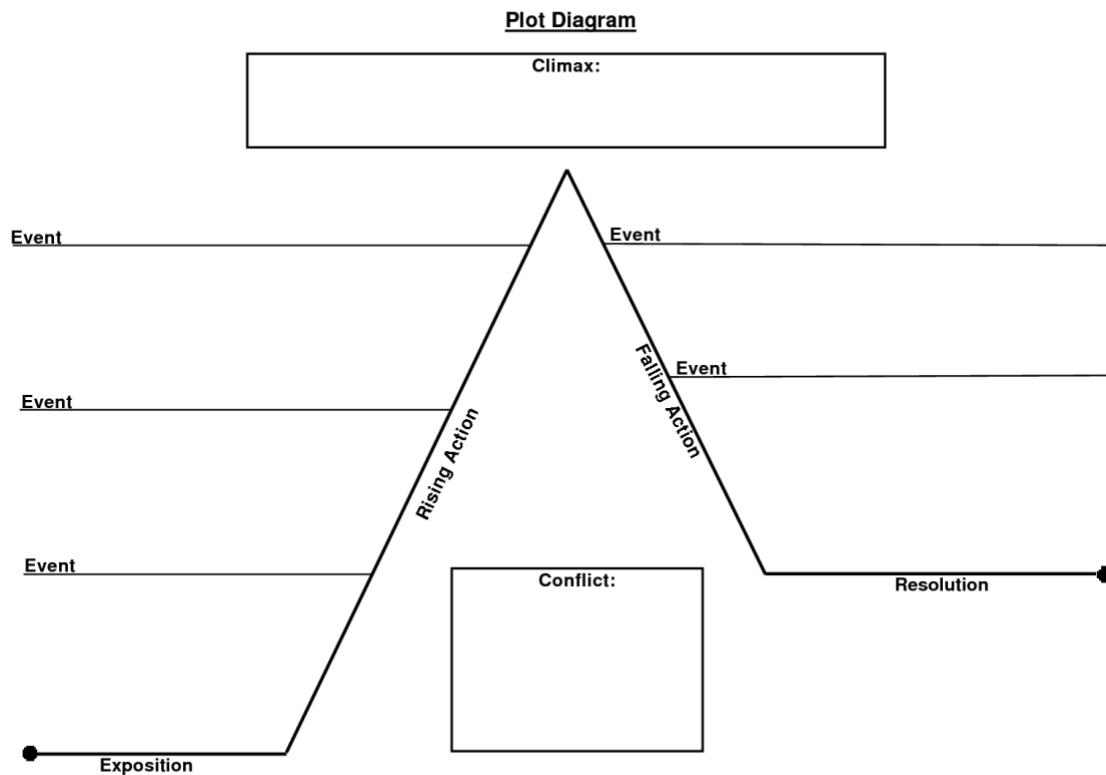
Further 'STEM Magic' Learning Tasks with links to the Australian Curriculum (Year 3/4 Science, Literacy and Mathematics) can be found at the [Hub for Just Kids' Lit](#) website by Romi Sharp.

These activities include:

1. Upside-Down Water Glass Trick (Yr 3/4 Science)
2. Six Thinking Magician Hats (Yr 3/4 Literacy)
3. Magical Maths Card Trick (Yr 3/4 Mathematics)

# Appendix One

Name:



# Appendix Two

## Top 10 categories of magic tricks

1. **Production:** The magician produces something from nothing
2. **Vanish:** The magician makes something disappear
3. **Levitation:** The magician defies gravity by making something float in the air freely.
4. **Suspension:** The magician makes an object float in the air with the aid of another object
5. **Transformation:** The magician transforms something from one state into another
6. **Transportation:** The magician causes something to move from one place to another
7. **Transposition:** The magician causes two objects exchange places.
8. **Restoration:** The magician destroys an object then restores it to its original state.
9. **Penetration:** The magician makes a solid object pass through another solid object.
10. **Escape:** The magician is placed in a restraining device like handcuffs and magician escapes to safety.