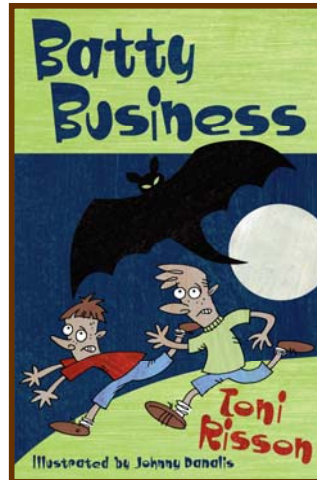


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BATTY BUSINESS

Toni Risson



Teachers' Notes

Written by Toni Risson

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Luke and Alex, who we first met in *Licking Lizards*, are back in another adventure. This time they are joined by Kevin Trimmer, an oversized, slightly unusual boy in Luke's class. Whilst initially Alex is unhappy about his inclusion, Kevin soon proves to be a great asset. Forced to become more resilient and resourceful because of his mother's illness, Kevin proves to be an excellent cook, and before long, Alex's stomach silences his concerns.

When their first hideout is discovered by the school bully, Jason and his gang, the boys are forced to find a new location. They set up a new base in an old mineshaft, but before long they realize that they are sharing it with another resident – a giant, smelly creature. In a town known for its fruit bats, the boys initially assume that the creature is a giant bat, until Kevin's mother and grandmother tell them tales about the ancient Harpies from Greek mythology. Before long, the boys are convinced that their 'creature' is far more important than the average bat.

But the boys have other problems on their hands. Jason and his gang are after the creature and, knowing what they do to turtles, the boys know the animal will not survive if the bullies find it. So begins a race against time to identify the creature and save it from potential disaster.

CHARACTERS

- What type of boys are Luke and Alex?
- Why do they enjoy having a hideout?
- Why is Alex initially unsure about including Kevin?
- What type of boy is Kevin?
- In what ways is he different from the other two boys, or indeed from most boys of his age?
- In what ways might his family situation have made him a different type of boy?

BULLYING

- What sort of boys are Jason and his gang?
- How does the writer manage to make them seem scary?
- Why do the other boys in the gang follow Jason's lead?
- Why are Jason and his gang determined to destroy Luke and Alex's hideout?
- Why do they want to find the creature?
- What do you think they would do with it if they found it?
- What sorts of bullying tactics do they use?

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- In what ways are they typical bullies?
- Discuss the types of bullies you have come across and some possible ways to deal with them.

GREEK MYTHOLOGY

- Students can read or watch Greek Myths and Legends
- Discuss the types of characters in mythology. (It would be beneficial for them to have a basic understanding of the Gods, ambrosia, harpies etc)

SOCIAL/MORAL DILEMMAS

- Why do Luke, Alex and Kevin want to find the giant creature?
- Why do they not want to notify the police, adults or other authorities about the creature?
- What does this tell u about the boys?
- How do you think people might react if they knew about the creature?

Role play – Hot Seat activity

- Students are to assume a character, either from the book, or from society e.g., Luke, Alex, Kevin, the Principal, the policewoman, a reporter, a scientist, a representative of Australia Zoo, a conservationist, David Attenborough, a Greek professor, Kevin's grandmother etc.
- In character, students are to discuss what they think should happen to the creature and why (e.g. should it be destroyed, protected, killed and an autopsy carried out, captured, left alone etc and WHY).

CULTURAL BELIEFS

- The boys become convinced that the creature is a Harpy because of the stories Kevin's mother and grandmother tell them.
- What sorts of mythologies exist in different cultures that may cause people from these countries to see things differently from others? (eg The Loch Ness Monster; Big Foot etc).
- Kevin teaches the boys to cook Greek food, as taught to him by his grandmother. Students could find some other Greek recipes or recipes from their own culture or traditional family recipes and either cook them or collate a class recipe book.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Toni Risson lives in an old Queenslander house on the river in Ipswich with her children, husband Glenn, and numerous animals. She draws inspiration for her children's novels from the surrounding wildlife and the escapades of the local children. *Batty Business* is her second novel for children.