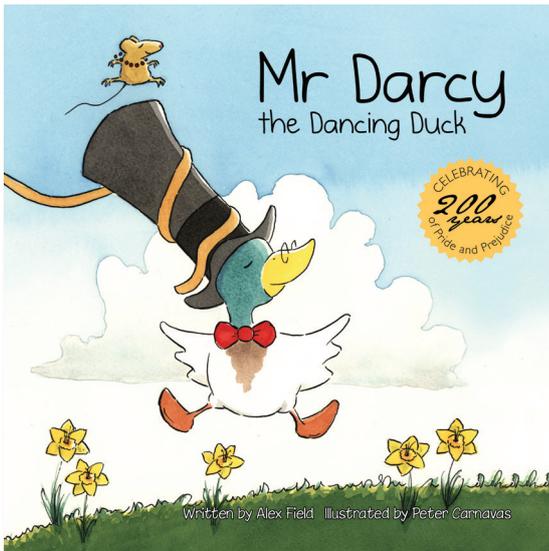


# TEACHERS' NOTES

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## Mr Darcy the Dancing Duck

Written by Alex Field

Illustrated by Peter Carnavas

### Synopsis

Mr Darcy dreads the first sign of Spring. Flowers blooming means only one thing – dancing season, and Mr Darcy simply cannot dance.

Can Lizzy convince Mr Darcy to take a turn around the maypole?

*Mr Darcy the Dancing Duck* celebrates the 200th anniversary of *Pride and Prejudice*.

### Author Motivation

The author is a great admirer of Jane Austen's novels particularly *Pride and Prejudice* which was written 200 years ago (1813). This delightful story came to Alex after one of her friends named their family duck Mr Darcy.

### Author Background Information

Alex grew up in London, but frequently visited Hampshire, Jane Austen's home, and also home to her grandparents. As a teenager she read all of Jane Austen's novels and still goes back to them. Alex now lives in Sydney with her husband and five children. She works in publishing and has written for numerous newspapers and magazines.

### Illustrator Background Information

Peter creates picture books for children and grown-ups to enjoy. He writes simple yet poignant tales, accompanied by whimsical illustrations, which combine to create layers of meaning for the reader. His books include *Jessica's Box*, *Last Tree in the City*, *The Great Expedition* and his latest picture book, *The Children Who Loved Books*, a warm and moving celebration of books and the ways in which they bring us together.



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Peter's work has been nominated for many awards, including the Queensland Premier's Literary Award, The Children's Book Council of Australia Crichton Award, Speech Pathology Australia's Book of the Year Award, and he has been a finalist in the SCBWI Crystal Kite Award for three years running. His books have been translated into many languages, including German, Italian, Portuguese and Dutch.

Peter was honoured to be a National Year of Reading Ambassador in 2012 and continues his role as a Love2Read National Ambassador in 2013.

Peter lives on the Sunshine Coast with his wife, two daughters and a scruffy dog that occasionally escapes.

### Educational Applicability

This book takes a couple of the themes from Austen's original novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Pride is a major theme, with Mr Darcy unwilling to accept help. Dancing is also paramount with the arrival of Spring. Alex used Mr Darcy's famous quote for inspiration:

*'Certainly, sir; and it has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world; every savage can dance.'*

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

### Before Reading the Book

1. Discuss why the Spring and dancing are such good companions. Have the children heard of May Day?
2. Do the children know what a maypole is? Show them a video of school children in the UK dancing around the maypole.
3. Discuss the social activities children do today. How do these differ from social activities 200 years ago?
4. What kind of music is played at a May Day celebration?
5. What clothes would have been worn 200 years ago at the May Day celebrations?

### After Reading the Book

1. Mr Darcy does not want to dance. Discuss things the children don't like doing because they don't think they are very good at them.
2. Discuss how Bingley and Caroline create the maypole and make music together. If the children didn't have access to an iPod or a stereo how might they create music?
3. Why do you think people 200 years were always going to balls and dances? How do you think dancing helped Mr Darcy and his friends?
4. Can you name some of the clothes worn by characters in the book?

## ACTIVITIES

### Design

Draw a picture of a maypole. Make up your own characters to dance around the maypole.

### Language

Mr Darcy uses polite language. Write down polite words, e.g. please and thank you.



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## Emotions

Mr Darcy goes through a range of emotions in the story. How can you tell when he is sad? See if you can find Mr Darcy when he is happy or perhaps when he is embarrassed (look at the colour used by the illustrator). Can you draw Mr Darcy with one of these emotions?

## Creative Writing

Have you been to a dance recently? Perhaps you have danced at a birthday party, a wedding or a school celebration. Write a story about a dance you have been to, but make the people animals and have some fun with your writing!



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