



WHO FED ZED?

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Recommended for 3 to 6 year olds

Summary

Zed the fish is white and red.
His poo hangs down in one long thread.
The main thing, though, is what Fred said,
'NEVER, EVER FEED ZED BREAD.'

A darkly comic story about a pet in peril that pays homage to classic picture books such as *Fish Out of Water*, from an exciting creative team working together for the first time.

Themes

Humour, pets, food labelling and friends.

Suggestions for Classroom Discussion and Application

Before reading

Before opening *Who Fed Zed?*, look at the title and cover design. Discuss what students think the story might be about and the clues in the picture that make them think that. Ask questions, such as:

- Who might the 'Zed' in the title refer to?
- Where does Zed live?
- Is this going to be a funny or sad story? What made you come to that conclusion?
- What is the word we use for pairs of words that end with the same sound, but have a different beginning, such as *Fred* and *Zed*? [Explain that you will be talking a lot more about rhymes after reading the book.]

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Text reflection

Read the story through once and ask students the following questions to help them explore the story in depth:

- What did the vet say Zed should never, ever eat?
- Did Zed really eat bread?
- What did Zed eat, if not bread?
- Why is Jed in the shed?
- How did Fred treat Jed's fleas at first?
- Why did Ted start scratching his head when he went to check on Zed?
- What was the name of the person telling the story?
- Did you find that name funny and surprising? Why?

Rhyme

Write the following words on your whiteboard: *Zed, Fred, Ted* and *Ned*

- Ask students if they can tell you what each word has in common.
- Underline the 'ed' in each word and point out that it makes the same sound at the end of each word. Now ask if anyone can tell you the name for words like these.
- Write the word **rhyme** on the whiteboard and ask if anyone can think of other examples of rhymes in the story that fit this pattern.
- Make a column for all the words that end in 'ed' and write down *Jed, fed, fled, shed* etc, as the students say them. Make another column for the words that have the same sound endings but are spelled differently, such as: *bread, said, thread*.
- Ask older students to find as many words as they can that rhyme with the word *test*. Ask younger students to come up with as many words as possible for an easier word, such as *cat*.

Words that don't rhyme

- Make a list of words that don't rhyme with any other word. [Hint: there are many words that don't rhyme with another word, *orange* being the most famous. Others include *silver, purple, ninth, month*.]

Pets and responsibility

Start a discussion in your class about the responsibilities involved in owning a pet.

- Ask students to list things people need to do to make sure pets in their care are well looked after.
- List the 'chores' they come up with on the whiteboard, including feeding/watering, walking, combing fur, cleaning. Ask them what might happen if these chores are ignored.

Health and safety

In a general discussion, point out to students that Zed falls ill because he has been fed flea powder and that most living creatures would react badly to this because flea powder is a poison.

- Ask students if they know what they should do if someone accidentally swallows poison. Make sure that everyone in the class is aware that they should tell an adult immediately and, if no adult is around, call the emergency 000 number.
- Now talk about how common foods can make some people feel very sick but have no effect on others. Ask if anyone knows what the word *allergy* means and if the class can suggest foods that some people might be allergic to.
- Turn to the page where Ted says, *'You need to be more careful, Fred. If only you had stopped and read the label. And look here, in red! "Poison. Do Not Eat!" it said.'* Ask students why reading labels might have avoided Zed getting sick. Gently steer the conversation to the importance of reading food labels closely if you have an allergy or you are cooking for someone with an allergy.

Visual literacy

- Explain that words have meaning but that the way words *look* can also have meaning. Return to the above page and ask students to tell you how use of a special colour – in this case red, all caps and font size – make the words 'POISON. DO NOT EAT!' extra strong as a warning.
- Turn to the page where the vet is telling Fred *'NO MORE BREAD!'* and explain that certain signs tell us a lot without using words at all. Now point to the image of the loaf of bread and ask what the cross over it means. Discuss other common signs that inform us without using words.
- Turn to earlier in the story when Zed is visiting the vet and ask students how these pages are different to the rest. How does that help us realise that this incident happened a long time ago?



About the author and illustrator

Author background

Amelia McInerney is a humorous picture book author. Her titles include *The Book Chook* illustrated by Connah Brecon (a CBCA Notable Book, also short-listed for the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year), *My Bird, Bertie*, illustrated by Shane McG and the internationally published *Bad Crab*, illustrated by Philip Bunting. Amelia lives in Canberra and has three kids, two hermit crabs and a husband.

Illustrator background

Adam Nickel's illustration style is very much influenced by mid-century-era design and illustration. He has a background in graphic design and animation with a client list that includes *The Wall Street Journal*, Penguin Random House, *GQ* and *New Scientist*. He lives in Brisbane, Australia.

In the author's own words

'When I started writing *Who Fed Zed?*, I felt like something came over me. I suddenly had some major writing jujitsu going on and I wrote all day and late into the night for four days, for fear of the magic leaving me before I was finished. I felt like a mere conduit for the story and I still marvel at the fact that I wrote 500 words of monorhyme and a story that hinges on a plot twist about what Zed had been fed. I think the explanation is that the story bubbled up from my subconscious because I have a child who has a nut allergy so I label-read everything to check if peanuts and tree nuts are present. I think most good stories come from a place of personal experience, so fear of my daughter eating the wrong thing probably provided the makings for this story.



'Perhaps another motivation was that I saw the effects that having a food allergy can have on a child – a general worry or anxiety over everything to do with eating. A food allergy changes a family's lifestyle so everyone needs to adapt, make good decisions and be careful, but the allergy must not be allowed to win. I didn't even realise that I was writing anything to do with food allergies or label-reading until I'd finished *Who Fed Zed?*, and I'm glad because I think the book works really well as a funny story about a mix-up without the reader even thinking about food allergies. I like that it offers an extra layer to anyone who might notice it and benefit from a discussion about it.'

– Amelia McInerney