



# HORRIBLE HARRIET

and the  
**TERRIBLE TANTRUM**

Leigh HOBBS

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**Format: Hardback**

**Recommended for 5 – 8 years old**

## Summary

*LEIGH HOBBS: AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN'S LAUREATE 2016–17*

What's green, has three eyes, and lives in a cage by Horrible Harriet's bed?

And what happens when it goes missing...?

Another extraordinary adventure for Horrible Harriet and you, the lucky reader!  
From the creator of Mr Chicken and Old Tom.

## Themes

Emotions, jealousy, bad behaviour, friendship, school and humour.

## About the Author

Leigh Hobbs works across a wide range of artistic mediums, but is best-known for his children's books featuring Old Tom, Horrible Harriet, Fiona the Pig, the Freaks of 4F, Mr Badger and Mr Chicken. Old Tom was also a popular TV series, and Leigh has won every major Australian children's choice award. *Mr Chicken Goes to Paris* was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, is a bestseller at Paris's Louvre Bookshop, was adapted for the stage by NIDA, and was shortlisted for the CBCA Awards – as were *Horrible Harriet* and *Old Tom's Holiday*. Horrible Harriet appeared at the Sydney Opera House in 2017. In 2019, Leigh was one of five Australian Legends of Children's Literature featured by Australia Post on a stamp, and in 2016–2017 he was the Australian Children's Laureate.

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## Suggestions for Classroom Discussion and Application

### Before reading

- If students are already familiar with Horrible Harriet – you may have read one of her previous stories in class – ask them to describe her character and why she might *seem* ‘horrible’ to other people.
  - Do they remember some of the things she did in earlier stories, like locking her teachers up in a basement to get them to do her homework?
  - Ask them if they think Harriet is really a horrible person deep down, or if she just needs a friend.
  - Now discuss the term *tantrum*. Ask them to describe how people feel when they are having a tantrum and how they behave towards people around them. Encourage them to guess why Horrible Harriet might be associated with a terrible tantrum?
- If your class has never heard of Horrible Harriet, ask them to imagine how a girl with that name might behave towards her teachers and fellow students. Explain to them that Horrible Harriet lives in a room at the top of her school and that all she needs to be good is a friend.
  - Discuss the word *tantrum* and what it means. Ask them to describe the sort of things someone having a tantrum might do, and what that might have to do with a girl called Horrible Harriet.
- Watch Leigh Hobbs talk about how he created Horrible Harriet in this short video: <https://vimeo.com/554580796>

### On the cover

- Now show the book’s cover and ask students to identify which character is Horrible Harriet and which is the Terrible Tantrum. Ask them the following questions:
  - Does Horrible Harriet look like she is going to be more funny than mean?
  - Does the Terrible Tantrum look like it’s going to be more mean than funny?
  - Why might it be in a cage?
  - Do the colours on the cover make you expect to laugh or cry in the story? [If students struggle to answer this, provide a scaffold by asking them if the colours make them feel happy or scared.]
  - [For older students:] Look at the font used for the words *Horrible Harriet*. Do the curls on the ends of the letter *R* make her name look funny or scary? Now look at the first *H* and finale *E* in *Horrible*. Do they look like they are hopping around and dancing? Just how horrible does this suggest Harriet will really be? Now look at the font used for the words *Terrible Tantrum*. How does it differ from the *Horrible Harriet* above it? How do the jagged edges on these words make you feel?
  - Guess what might happen when Horrible Harriet meets the Terrible Tantrum in this story.

## Read through

- Read the story to your class once through without stopping, but allowing lots of time with each illustration so students can enjoy the humour. Once finished, ask them the following comprehension questions:
  - What sort of girl does Horrible Harriet want to be?
  - What are some of the things Horrible Harriet does to convince her classmates she really is a good girl? Do these things work? Why not?
  - What creature is caged in her room?
  - Why does it need to be caged?
  - Why is the Terrible Tantrum voted the most popular student in Horrible Harriet's class?
  - How does Horrible Harriet react to the Terrible Tantrum being popular?
  - What does Horrible Harriet do when *she* throws a tantrum?
  - Do the students in her class like her more when she throws a Terrible Tantrum?
  - Why does she get awarded the *Good Girl of the Week* badge?
  - Do you think Horrible Harriet learned anything in this story?

## Illustrations and narrative

- Re-read the story to your class, this time stopping at key points to discuss how the words tell one story but a different story is told by the illustrations. A great example of this is on the page where Horrible Harriet is trying out some good-girl things with her classmates.
  - Ask students to look closely at each illustration on the page and to explain why everything she tries fails.
- Spend some time examining each of the expressions on Horrible Harriet's face as the story progresses, asking students to describe her feelings in each.
  - Discuss how the illustrator has used lines and shapes in Harriet's eyebrows, eyes and mouth to show her different emotions. Record the emotions on a word wall.
  - Once the word wall is finished, prepare the students for a mini-drama activity where you will call out an emotion from the word wall, allow a moment for thinking time and then clap to give students the cue to express that emotion on their faces.

## Emotion in art

- Leigh Hobbs has drawn a three-eyed, three-legged green monster to make a tantrum a living creature. Ask students to choose an emotion from the word wall, such as *love* or *hate*, and draw it as a living creature. Encourage them to think about whether lines will jagged, straight or rounded; the colours that best express that emotion; and whether their emotion should be drawn lightly or heavily.

## Perspective

- Ask students to retell the story from the Terrible Tantrum's perspective.
  - How do they think it felt about Horrible Harriet before and after she threw her tantrum? If the students react well to this activity, follow it by asking them to retell the story from one of Horrible Harriet's classmate's perspectives.

## Reflect

- Ask students to write a review of *Horrible Harriet and the Terrible Tantrum*. In the review, make sure they say whether they liked the book or not and what, in particular, they liked about it.

## In the Author's Own Words

'In the story, Horrible Harriet attempts to keep her more volatile side – what people might call her negative side – at bay or under wraps. She tries so hard to be good, but this other side of her demands expression. She has to learn to live with the Terrible Tantrum – it's actually a part of herself that she needs to recognise and accommodate.

'The story is also about friendship, school, life and humour. We are all imperfect and we all try to show our good side to the world, but our other sides will explode if they are not acknowledged. Children deal with strong emotions daily and are familiar with "losing it" – this story is a humorous way for teachers and parents to discuss this with their children.

'The story also reveals Horrible Harriet's vulnerable side – she's needy, she wants to be accepted, to have friends. She wants to be a good girl because she thinks she will win friends that way. In fact, the Terrible Tantrum is the one who wins friends by being itself.'

– Leigh Hobbs

