



**Wombat Books**  
Stories you'll want to share

## Teaching Notes



### Jacaranda Snow

Catherine Greer / Helene Magisson

ISBN: 978-1925563283

Recommended retail: \$24.99

Reading level: Age 5+ Picture Book

### Book Summary

Jess and Gran have always made the best of everything. When there's not much for dinner, they cook oodles of noodles. When there's no cake for birthdays, they toast marshmallows on the stove.

When it snows in the mountains, Jess longs to go. But there's no extra money for a holiday this year.

So Jess finds a way to see the most amazing snow of all.

*Jacaranda Snow* is about one family that lives with less money but plenty of love and optimism.

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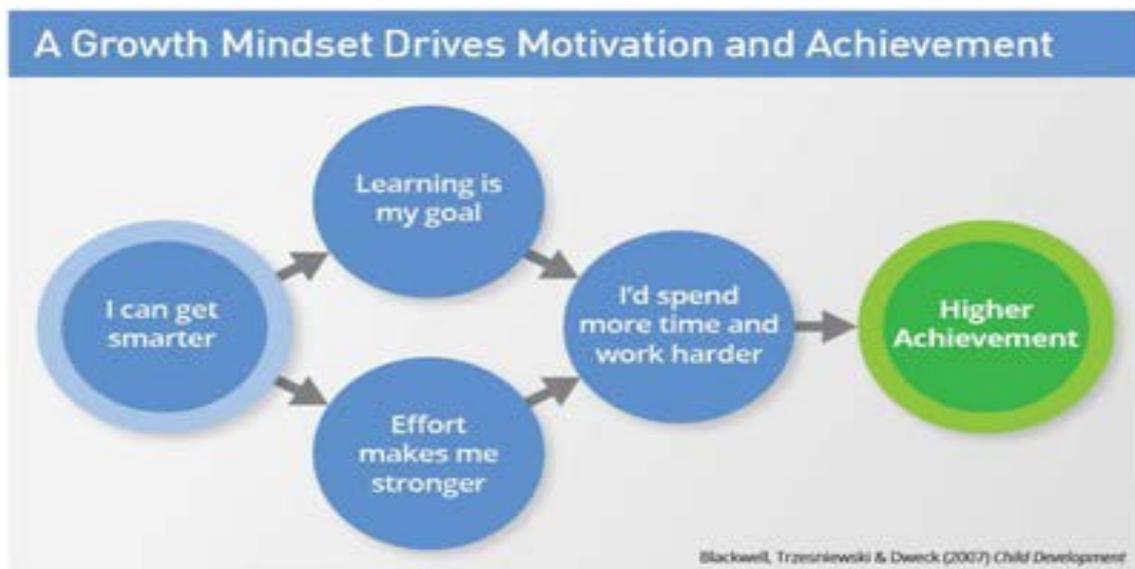
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## Themes

- Resilience • Optimism • The seasonal cycle of jacaranda trees • Australian culture
- Childhood poverty • Hope • Family • Imagination

## Reasons For Studying This Book

- **Introduces the history of jacarandas in Australia** – see Notes for Parents and Teachers in the front of the book.
- **Demonstrates Growth Mindset**, a concept introduced by Dr Carol Dweck at [www.mindsetworks.com](http://www.mindsetworks.com) and in her book, *Mindset*. Growth Mindset (as opposed to Fixed Mindset) is the belief that “I can figure things out” and “I can learn.” With a growth mindset, children can change their lives



Source: <https://www.mindsetworks.com/Science/>

- **Is an inclusive book**, telling the story of an Australian girl, Jess, who lives in poverty with her Gran.
- **It provides a beautiful original piano score**, *Jacaranda Snow*, composed by award-winning young composer, Alexander Lau. [You can find Alex Lau here.](#)
- **In addition to the Teachers' Notes, you can download a free Jacaranda Snow resource toolkit** at [www.educalme.com](http://www.educalme.com) using the code “JACARANDASNOW.” The EducAlme Jacaranda Snow resource toolkit includes:
  1. An audio-guided mindfulness practice that is five minutes long
  2. A worksheet to reflect on Growth Mindset
  3. Two classroom posters
  4. An easy-to-follow, step-by-step lesson plan

## About the Author



Catherine Greer, BA (Hons.), MA, is the author of a debut picture book *Jacaranda Snow* (Wombat Books, 2018), and the collaborating author of *Choosing Happiness* (Allen & Unwin 2006), winner of the Silver Nautilus Award and available worldwide. Her debut Young Adult novel, *Love Lie Repeat*, will be published by Penguin Random House in March 2019.

Catherine writes a weekly Happiness Blog at [www.catherinegreer.com.au](http://www.catherinegreer.com.au), exploring her interest in positive psychology with readers in America, Australia and Canada. She loves connecting with children, young people and adults, bringing an empowering growth mindset to audiences through her novels, picture books and Happiness Blog.

## About the Illustrator



Helene Magisson started her artistic career as a painting restorer in Paris, where she was also trained in the art of medieval illumination.

She has been living in different countries, including Africa, France and India, and finally settled down in Australia. She ended up understanding that the easiest way to reach people's mind is with her pencils and brushes.

She has illustrated several books including *Lily's Balloon*, *The Whirlpool*, *Slowly! Slowly!* (CBCA Notable Longlist 2018) and *Jacaranda Snow* with Wombat Books. Helene is an award-winning illustrator (first prize CYA conference 2013).

## Key Curriculum Areas:

### CURRICULUM AREAS AND KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### Foundation Year

(English, Social Science, Visual Arts)

ACELA1429	ACELA1430	ACELA1431	ACELA1432
ACELA1433	ACELA1435	ACELA1434	ACELA1786
ACELA1437	ACELA1439	ACELA1440	ACELA1438
ACELA1817	ACELA1818	ACELA1819	ACELA1820
ACHASSI001	ACHASSI002	ACHASSI004	ACHASSI007
ACHASSI008	ACHASSK001	ACHASSK012	ACAVAM106
ACAVAM107	ACAVAM108	ACAVAM109	

#### Year One

(English, Social Science, Visual Arts)

ACELA1444	ACELA1446	ACELA1787	ACELA1447
ACELA1448	ACELA1449	ACELA1450	ACELA1451
ACELA1452	ACELA1453	ACELA1454	ACELA1457
ACELA1458	ACELA1459	ACELA1778	ACELA1455
ACELA1821	ACELA1822	ACHASSI108	ACHASSI019
ACHASSI021	ACHASSI024	ACHASSI025	ACHASSI027
ACHASSK028	ACHASSK029	ACHASSK031	ACHASSK032
ACHASSK033	ACAVAM106	ACAVAM107	ACAVAM108
ACAVAM109			

#### Year Two

English, Science, Visual Arts

ACELA1460	ACELA1462	ACELA1463	ACELA1464
ACELA1465	ACELA1466	ACELA1467	ACELA1468
ACELA1469	ACELA1470	ACELA1474	ACELA1471
ACELA1472	ACELA1823	ACELA1824	ACELA1825
ACHASSK051	ACHASSI034	ACHASSI035	ACHASSI037
ACHASSI040	ACHASSI041	ACHASSI043	

## Questions and Reflections

Have the teacher read the book to the class, making sure everyone can see the illustrations. Alternatively, students can take turns at reading each page aloud.

### Pre-reading

The teacher can start by introducing optimism and growth mindset.

Being positive opens up our brains and gets them thinking. If we focus on what we can do, or dream about good things that could happen, our brains are ready to help us find ways to make things work out for us. If we ask ourselves, “How can I make this work?” then our brains love to give us good ideas.

Do you know where your feelings come from? This is how it works:

1. Your **thoughts** create your feelings.
2. Your **feelings** create your actions.
3. Your **actions** create your results.

The best place to start is with happy thoughts. This is what Jess does. We call this optimism.

1. Before reading, discuss the front cover. What might the book be about? Who is the author and illustrator? What type of story do you think it will be? I.e. funny? Serious?
2. Discuss the back cover and blurb. What does the blurb tell you about the subject of the book? Does it match the clues you found on the front cover? Who is the publisher of the book?
3. Does the title of the book give any indication of what the story might be about?

### Post-reading

4. Discuss the characteristics of a good story. I.e. What is the plot? Who is the central character? What is the conflict/problem in the story? How is that problem solved (resolution)?
5. Discuss the role of illustrations in picture books. Are there things we only learn from the illustrations, not from the text? Do the illustrations follow the text? Do they enhance the story? How? Do the illustrations make us feel things that the words don't, and vice versa?
6. How is Jess's family different from your family? How is her family the same as yours?
7. What is Jess's dream? How does she make it come true? Do you have a special dream and would you like to share it? Do you have some ideas about how you could make it come true?
8. Do you think it's possible to make good things happen in your life? (Remember how your brain works: thoughts create feelings, feelings create actions, actions create results!)

# Classroom Activities

## ENGLISH

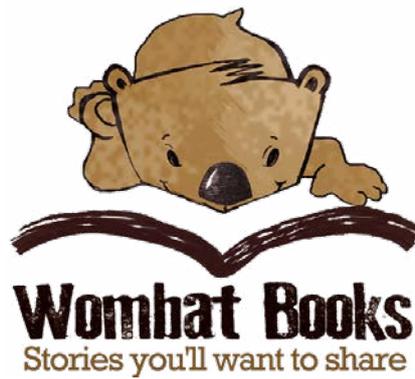
- **Letter Writing:** Do you remember a time when something really good happened to you? Write a letter to a friend about what happened and why it made you so happy.
- **Acrostic Poem:** Write an acrostic poem for Jacaranda Snow. Only use words that are positive to you. i.e. J could be for Jellybeans.

## SOCIAL SCIENCE

- **Gratitude list:** Write a list of all the things in our lives that make us happy and make us feel good. Your list can be crazy or silly or important. Make your list as long as you can! Some examples might be:
  - a. Your parents
  - b. Eating lollies
  - c. Your favourite pillow
  - d. How it feels to run barefoot on grass
- **Secret Dream:** Do you have a secret dream in your heart? (Don't worry – this can be private!) Write out your dream and why you want this dream to happen. Write down any ideas you have about how you can start to make your own dream come true. After you're done, fold up the paper as small as you can and carry it in your pocket, just for today. It's always good for everyone to think about their dreams. (Remember how your brain works: thoughts create feelings, feelings create actions, actions create results!)
- **Research:** There are 730,000 Australian children living in poverty. Divide the class into research teams. Each team must look up on the computer a charity that helps these children. They then can present to the class on their charity, including: Who is involved in the organisation, What they do, Where they are, Why they do it. Make sure each group presents on a different charity.

## VISUAL ART

- Make paper snowflakes like Jess does in Jacaranda Snow. [Free templates are here](#) or students can make their own!



Catherine Greer is available for author talks and workshops. Contact Wombat Books for more information.

*Jacaranda Snow Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.*

## Connect with Wombat Books

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