

Saving Marty

PAUL GRIFFIN

ISBN 9781925498868

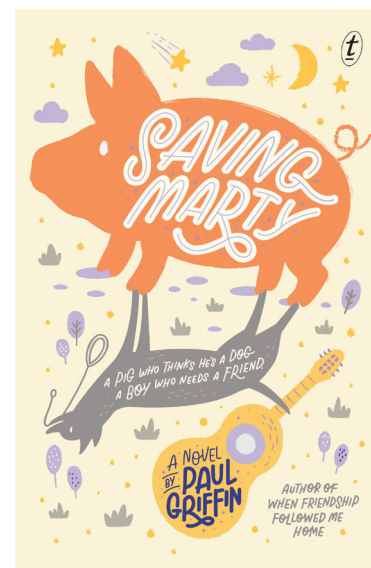
RRP AU\$16.99

Fiction

RECOMMENDED YEAR LEVELS: 6–9

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CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.

SYNOPSIS

Renzo lives with his mother and his grandfather on the family farm. His best friend is Marty, a pig who thinks he's a dog. Raised by Bella, a black labrador, Marty behaves like a gigantic, boisterous puppy. When Renzo's teacher asks him to write about a hero, the first person he thinks of is his dad, who died before he was born. Then Marty starts causing trouble, and Renzo's mother wants to take him to market. Renzo and his friend Pal decide they'll do anything they can to save Marty, no matter what. Along the way, Renzo learns that heroes come in all shapes and sizes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Griffin lives and works in New York City. *Saving Marty* follows the success of his previous novels, including *When Friendship Followed Me Home*, *Adrift*, *The Orange Houses* and *Ten Mile River*. In addition to being a writer, he is also a dog trainer.

BEFORE READING

1. Write a story about an unusual pet. It might be your own pet or one about which you have read.
2. It is better to know the truth, no matter how distressing. Hold a debate with your classmates on this topic or write a persuasive speech.
3. What does it take to be a hero? Make a list of the qualities a hero should have. Which of these qualities is the most important? Which is the least important? Do you see any of these qualities in yourself or someone you know?

WHILE READING

1. What is important to each character in the novel? What do they see as most important? Do these stay the same throughout the novel?
2. Why are the letters from Renzo's father so important to him?
3. What is the significance of names in the novel? For example, why is Marty the pig named after Renzo's father? Does Chainsaw's personality fit his name?
4. Not everyone in town likes Marty. Why do some people dislike the playful pig?
5. How does Renzo and Pal's friendship change when she leaves for music camp?

AFTER READING

CHARACTER

1. Draw a picture of one of the characters in the novel that illustrates their personality. Find two quotes from the novel that best reflect the character.
2. Compare Renzo and Pal. What do they have in common? How are they different?



3. What do you think of Renzo's mother? Why does she appear to be so hard on Renzo? How does our view of her change throughout the novel?

STYLE AND STRUCTURE

1. What is a 'cliffhanger'? The author includes a number of cliffhangers in the novel. One example is the scene in which Marty is attacked by a dog towards the end of the story. Find another example in the novel. Why does the writer include these moments?
2. *Saving Marty* is written in the first person. How does Lorenzo's voice shape the reader's response to the novel? How different would the story be written in third person?
3. The novel includes several different forms of writing, such as letters and songs. What are the different forms? Why do you think the writer has included these different forms?

THEMES

Family

1. Renzo's family isn't just his mother and his grandfather. Who are the other members of his family, and why they are important to him?
2. How have Renzo's mother and grandfather tried to fill the gap left by the death of his father?
3. What does Bella's 'adoption' of Marty tell us about family?

Heroes

1. Make a list of the heroic deeds done in this story.
2. When Renzo discovers the truth about his father, does it change the way he sees him? Is his father still a hero?
3. Is Marty a hero? Why? Or why not?

Loss

1. Each of the main characters has experienced loss. What have they lost and how do they cope with it?
2. What does Renzo fear when Pal leaves for music camp?
3. Sometimes the things we lose are not tangible. Can you think of examples from the novel?

RESPONDING

1. The local newspaper has heard about Renzo and Marty and wants to do a story on them. Write the story for the newspaper, including quotes from an interview, and images.
2. When we search for a hero, we sometimes discover that the hero is inside us. What lesson does Renzo learn about heroes in *Saving Marty*?
3. Imagine you are Renzo, helping to raise money for the animal sanctuary. Create a plan for an event that Marty can participate in. Be creative and think of

ideas that will promote the centre as well as raise money.

4. Renzo's family needs Marty as much as he needs them. Write an essay on this topic, giving examples from the book.
5. Renzo writes one final letter to his father a year after the story's end. Write that letter. What would he tell his father about Marty, about what he has learned and how he now feels? What has happened to the other characters? What are Renzo's plans for the future?