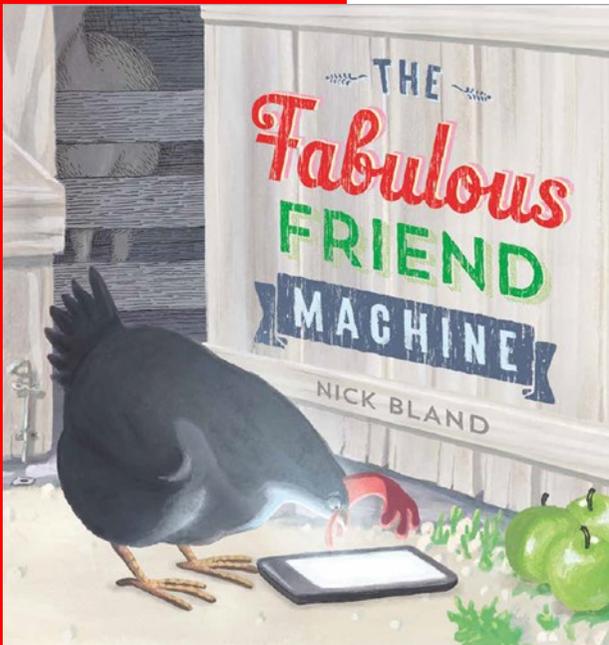


# THE FABULOUS FRIEND MACHINE

NICK BLAND



Popcorn is, quite simply, the FRIENDLIEST chicken at Fiddlesticks Farm! Every morning, she says "Hello!" to everyone on the farm. She is always ready for a friendly chat over tea, she entertains the cows at milking time and is ready to help out her friends whenever they need. She's so friendly, in fact, that she's won the prize for being the friendliest chicken at the Farmyard Fair — three years in a row! So when she finds a Fabulous Friend Machine in the barn, Popcorn sets about making some brand new friends. But behind the screen of the Fabulous Friend Machine, maybe her new friends are not so friendly after all . . .

A cautionary tale from the globally best-selling creator of the Very Cranky Bear series.

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**About the author:** Nick Bland always wanted to be a writer and a cartoonist, but it wasn't until he started working in a bookstore and rediscovered children's literature that he found a way to channel this ambition. He is the author of *The Runaway Hug* and *The Magnificent Tree* and author and illustrator of *The Fabulous Friend Machine*, *King Pig*, *Monster Chef*, *A Monster Wrote Me a Letter*, *Some Dads*, *Some Mums*, *Twinkle*, *The Unscary Book* and the Cranky Bear picture books. Nick lives in the jungle near Darwin, Australia.

Study notes written by  
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 SCHOLASTIC

## STUDY NOTES

- Look at the opening spread of the book. Popcorn has a similar house to the other chickens on Fiddlesticks Farm, but how has Nick Bland made her home stand out amongst the others? Without reading the text, how can you immediately tell that Popcorn is very friendly?
- What does it take to be kind, friendly and helpful? In pairs, write a short list of simple things you can do every day to be more kind, friendly and helpful. Over the course of a month, make a note of when your partner does any of these things (you could even keep a tally!). Also note how other people respond to your partner's behaviour. At the end of the month, compare your observations with your partner. What have you learned about being friendly to other people? How might positive behaviour like kindness and helpfulness have a flow-on effect (eg you might be kind to someone, who is then friendly to someone else and so on and so forth)? Can you implement what you have learned in your everyday life?
- Do you have a cell phone, or does anyone in your family own one? Are cell phones really "fabulous friend machines"? How are they useful things to have? What are some of the negative effects of having a cell phone? Divide the class into two team to debate the statement: "Cell phones are disconnecting us from the people in our lives". Each team should take care to list both the pros and cons of cell phones when formulating their argument.



- Turn to the spread where Popcorn begins to receive messages from the Fabulous Friend Machine. Why do you think each "Hello!" is written in a different font? Imagine that each "Hello!" ended with a period, rather than an exclamation mark. How would it change the meaning of the word? Why?
- Compare each spread after Popcorn finds the Fabulous Friend Machine to its reciprocating one before she has it. How do the illustrations show her change in demeanour and how her friends feel about it?
- Do you think Popcorn means to ignore her old friends? How can the excitement of making new friends sometimes distract us from our old friends? What can we do to make everyone feel included?
- Write a letter from Popcorn to her old friends, explaining why she may have ignored them, apologising for hurting their feelings and thanking them for their rescue.
- Popcorn's fabulous new friends aren't fabulous at all — they are wolves! As a class, discuss cyber safety. We all use the internet, cell phones and social media. How can we be safe while we do so? What is the difference between a friend with whom you keep contact using your phone and on social media and someone who you don't know *except* online? Is the latter really someone you can consider a friend, or are they acquaintances? What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?



- It's not just cyber safety we should think about when using our cell phones! While Popcorn is busy using her Fabulous Friend Machine, she almost gets run over by a tractor! This is a common problem: when people are so engrossed in their phones, they don't pay attention to their surroundings. Talk as a class about how we can be physically safe while using our cell phones.
- Nick Bland used acrylic paint and pens to create the artwork in ***The Fabulous Friend Machine***. Examine his artwork, particularly where he has illustrated grass and hay (you will find this on most pages). How has he used brushstrokes to create the grassy texture? Using acrylic paints, recreate this technique in your own paintings that include things with a grassy texture.
- Popcorn puts on a puppet show for her friends on the last page of the story. Act out your own puppet show for parents and family members! You can use socks or paper cut-out characters on popsicle sticks and craft materials to create your characters and stage setting for your show.
- Popcorn wins the award for friendliest chicken at the Farmyard Fair! Make your own award for the friendliest person in the class and award it to a different friendly student every week!

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