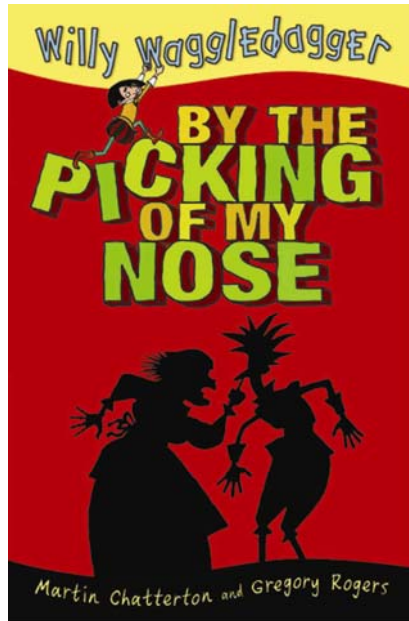


LITTLE HARE



TEACHER'S NOTES FOR **BY THE PICKING OF MY NOSE**

First book in the series *Willy Waggedagger*

Written by Martin Chatterton

Illustrated by Gregory Rogers

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Illustrating *By the Picking of My Nose*

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Word building activities

Word building activities - answers

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

MARTIN CHATTERTON grew up in Liverpool, England. As a small child, he loved books by Dr Seuss and Richard Scarry, and later enjoyed reading Richmal Crompton, Agatha Christie and Ian Fleming, among others. He names Dr Seuss as the biggest influence on his work.

Moving to London to attend Kingston University in the early 1980s, Martin graduated in Graphic Design. He then worked as a designer and illustrator in advertising

and publishing. He has taught graphic design to university students and formed a design company. After living and working in the USA, he now lives in northern NSW with his wife (also a designer and illustrator) and two children.

Martin has illustrated more than a hundred fiction and non-fiction titles written by authors such as Anthony Horowitz, Michael Rosen, Tony Bradman and Geoffrey McSkimming. In the late 1980s he began to write his own books for children. He has now written and illustrated more than twenty of his own titles. His recent books include *The Brain Finds a Leg* (shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Awards in 2008) and *The Brain Full of Holes*.

To find out more about Martin and his books, go to: www.worldofchatterton.com

GREGORY ROGERS has loved art and drawing from an early age. He studied fine art at the Queensland College of Art. He worked in the public service for a number of years as a graphic designer in media and public relations and became a freelance illustrator in 1987.

His first major commissions in the world of books were covers for young adult novels for UQP. He has since created many covers, and illustrated novels and picture books for authors such as Gary Crew, Margaret Wild, Libby Hathorn and Victor Kelleher. In 1995 he won the British Kate Greenaway award for his illustrations for Libby Hathorn's *Way Home*. To date, Gregory has illustrated more than forty picture books alone.

In 2004 for the first time Gregory illustrated one of his own stories, *The Boy, the Bear, the Baron, the Bard*. It was shortlisted for the Children's Book Council of Australia's book awards in 2005, and in the same year was chosen by the *New York Times* as one of the best ten illustrated children's picture books. Two companions to this book, *Midsummer Knight* and *The Hero of Little Street*, have also been released.

Gregory loves music, and is a collector of 'treasures, those odd and unusual objects that I can stare at and study if I need a distraction.' Books are part of this collection. His 'favourite of all time' is *A Day on the Avenue* by Robert Roennfeldt (1984).

SYNOPSIS BY THE PICKING OF MY NOSE

Young Willy Shakespeare just has to see his favourite act, the Black Skulls. He disobeys his father and the orders of Sir Victor Vile and sneaks into the theatre. When one of Sir Victor's men spots him in the crowd, chaos breaks out. Luckily Yorick, a stagehand, hides Willy.

When things quieten down, Willy hears strange voices. Going into the backstage kitchen to investigate, he finds the Hag sisters with actor Minty Macvelli. The Hags can make predictions by reading boogers. Minty's booger reveals he will become a lead player in the theatre troupe. He thinks Willy is a good luck charm and invites him to join the troupe. So Willy does, disguised as a girl to evade his pursuers. The Queen, meanwhile, loves the chaotic show and demands the Black Skulls perform for her at Sir Victor's, where she is staying.

The first rehearsal at Sir Victor's is sabotaged and the lead actor, Olly Thesp, is covered in kitchen slops. Suspecting Minty, Willy follows him into the garden. When Sir Victor arrives, Minty hastily climbs into an urn and Willy climbs a tree. They see Sir Victor fuss over a blue rose, named Ermintrude, that he plans to give to the Queen. Once Sir Victor leaves, Minty emerges and snips the rose from the bush. He gives the rose to an unsuspecting Olly to wear in the dress rehearsal. Then he lures Sir Victor to the rehearsal, saying the boy who escaped from Stratford Theatre will be there.

Willy is unable to warn Olly. When the actor wears the rose on stage, a furious Sir Victor locks him up and demands the troupe hand over the boy after the performance. Minty steps in as lead actor and Willy picks up the discarded rose.

Willy hatches a plan to trap traitorous Minty. During the play, when Minty calls for a ghost to appear, Willy descends in a blue rose costume, pretending to be the ghost of Ermintrude. Terrified, Minty confesses. Sir Victor dashes from the audience and attacks him.

The Queen is amused by all the carry on. Yorick saves the day, making Sir Victor look good by saying the lord planned everything. Willy tops it off by presenting her with Ermintrude. Delighted, the Queen asks the Black Skulls to perform at her palace. To comply with her wishes, Sir Victor has to release Olly and Minty.

Unfortunately Willy's parents turn up and take him home. But using tricks he's learned in the theatre, he gives them the slip and joins the Black Skulls on the road.

WRITING BY THE PICKING OF MY NOSE

Martin Chatterton was searching for an idea to use in writing a book with a historical flavour. He's always been struck by the fact that we usually think of William Shakespeare as an adult and don't know much about him as a boy in Stratford. He thinks that a young Willy must have loved the travelling theatre troupes that passed through Stratford, which for him 'would have been like rock bands coming to town.' *By the Picking of My Nose* grew from these ideas.

Martin conducted research into life in Elizabethan times, and specifically into Shakespeare's life. He has visited Stratford and Shakespeare's house, which helped him get a feel for the times and the place. However, he also wanted to give the books a contemporary flavour, so young readers could relate to the story, and he didn't want to become too bogged down by Shakespearean scholarship. By including references to modern life, such as rock bands, Martin hopes to help young readers have an understanding of how a young Shakespeare might have felt about theatre troupes.

The language Martin used in his story reflects this mix of Elizabethan and modern concerns. Elizabethan words, such as 'privy', 'arise', 'vittles', 'groat', 'beseech' and 'aplenty', are used alongside words we used today, such as 'boogers', 'digs', 'gofer', 'gig', 'stalker' and 'trampoline'. There is also a decidedly modern, rock'n'roll feel in the book, in Olly's performance in Stratford, for instance (pp9–11) and in a reference to 'Elizabethan Idol' (p115).

There are humorous elements in the story on many levels. Many of the similes used are plays on common sayings, giving them a fresh, funny twist. For example, at Stratford Theatre, the Black Skulls sell beards to boys, who are not supposed to attend performances, and the beards are said to be 'selling like hot cakes and cakes like hot beards' (p57). Similarly, when Willy suggests that Minty stand in for Olly, Minty is described as 'looking like a cat who'd found a sneaky way into a creamery.'

Elizabethan eating habits, which were rather different to our own, are used to full comic advantage in *By the Picking of My Nose*. The Hag sisters put all sorts of disgusting sounding ingredients into their stew (p33), which don't kill Minty and Willy's appetites at all. Willy also eats larks' tongues at the theatre, and the audiences come armed with an assortment of rotten vegetables in case they don't like the performance.

Martin says he loves writing dialogue, and in this book he particularly enjoyed using Shakespearean inspired insults. These included 'you ridiculous, tartan turnip-muncher' (p91) and 'you pestilential, plant-plucking peasant' (p166). He also makes much use of differences in language between characters who come from different places and classes. Yorick, for instance, says words like 'perfek' and 'anyfink', which show he is of the lower classes, although he makes a good job of 'talking posh' when he has to (p168). The upper class characters, with their ridiculously long names, speak in an entirely different way, using phrases such as 'tally-ho', 'This is ripping', and 'Let one rock' (p135), which make them sound silly and pompous, frequently matching their behaviour.

Martin says that he deliberately made fun of the Elizabethan upper class because reading about Shakespeare, he was quite annoyed at claims by some scholars that 'Shakespeare couldn't have written his plays because he was too "common". I hate this idea that you are straitjacketed by your birth. The class system is alive and well in England, where I am from, and I find it completely hateful.' Indeed, in this book, Willy breaks away completely from his expected destiny, which is to follow his father into the tanning business, and follows his passion, the theatre.

Of course, Martin also references Shakespeare's plays in *By the Picking of My Nose*. It is based loosely on *Macbeth* and plays with some of the more famous lines. The most prominent is the line 'By the picking of your nose,' she murmured, 'something wicked this way goes.' (p41) This is a play on a line from *Macbeth* in which the second witch's says 'By the pricking of my thumbs,/ Something wicked this way comes.' (Act IV, Scene 1, lines 44–45) The ingredients for their stew (p31) come from the same scene. Similarly, when Sir Victor is speaking to his gardener (p91) he uses the line 'Go on, get out, damned spots! Out, I say!', which is very close to Lady Macbeth's famous mad-scene line, 'Out, damned spot!, out I say!' (Act V, Scene 1, line 31).

The major plot points in *By the Picking of My Nose* are taken from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, neatly turning a tragic tale into a comic one. At the beginning of the story one of the minor members of the Black Skulls, Minty, is considered well beneath the lead player, Olly Thesp, as Macbeth is beneath King Duncan. Then the three Hag sisters make two predictions. First they predict that Minty will be the lead player, as the Witches in *Macbeth* predict Macbeth will be king. Second, they predict that Yorick will discover one of the greatest theatrical talents of all time, as the Witches in *Macbeth* predict that Banquo will father kings. Minty then begins to act on his jealousy of the lead player, Olly, leading him

into a trap. Olly is taken away and removed from his position in the theatre. This is similar to the betrayal and murder of King Duncan by Macbeth. When Minty doesn't want to go back on the stage after his disastrous attempt at singing, he is convinced by another prediction by the Hags: that he will be the lead actor until 'flowers talk'. This parallels the prediction in *Macbeth* made by the apparition raised by the witches that Macbeth will not be defeated until Birnam Wood walks against him. Finally when Willy acts as the ghost of Ermintrude, Minty is prompted by fear to confess his crimes against Olly, as the ghost of Banquo causes Macbeth to panic.

Martin doesn't think it is important that some of his young readers won't know much about William Shakespeare and his plays. 'The books are about Willy Waggledagger. I don't make a big deal about him eventually becoming a famous writer.' Having said this, Martin does, however, hope that the book might kindle an interest in Shakespeare. The story is really a reminder that 'when things happened in the past, for the people of that time, they were happening *now*.' Having read about Shakespeare as a young boy in a funny story, perhaps when today's young readers are exposed to him later they will be more likely to tune in and discover the genius of the Bard.

This is the first book Martin has written that someone else has illustrated. He says that although it is rather strange not to do the illustrations, he thinks Gregory Rogers' drawings are great: 'they are great fun. He clearly has a feel for the time and I think he's really caught the mood of the book.'

ILLUSTRATING BY THE PICKING OF MY NOSE

Gregory Rogers has always been 'fascinated by everything Elizabethan: the clothes, the music, the dancing, the food...' His book *The Boy, the Bear, the Baron, the Bard* and its companion books are set in this time. He finds 'the background to Shakespeare's life and the intrigues that surround him are a big part of his attraction to illustrating the Willy Waggledagger series. He found Martin's story 'funny and irreverent with strong, interesting characters.'

When Gregory is given a manuscript, sometimes the scenes he is to illustrate are chosen already. When he chooses for himself, he looks for those scenes that stand out as

being the most 'visual' as he reads. The story of *By the Picking of My Nose* gave him plenty of opportunity to choose active, humorous scenes to illustrate.

Having done a lot of visual research for his own books set in Elizabethan England, Gregory already had a great understanding of the clothes and hairstyles that he could use in *By the Picking of My Nose*. The ruffled collars, puffy pantaloons, caps and capes all belong to the times. Of course there are some additions necessitated by Martin's story – Minty's platform boots (p102), the blocks Willy walks on (p1), and the rose costume he invents (p161).

The scenery and backgrounds, too, are firmly of Elizabethan times. On p102, the chair on which Olly's mirror is propped has a rush-woven seat. Sir Victor's walled garden (p87) with its hedges and trees trained against the walls, were in fashion at the time. Sir Victor's home (p67, p87) has the distinctive visible beams of Tudor buildings.

For Gregory, it was important that his illustrations enhance and pick up on the humour in Martin's text. He says that 'Visual humour is very theatrical, stagy and exaggerated, a bit like a cheesy melodrama.' Creating the look of the characters is a big part of tapping into that humour. Each character is an individual and must be instantly recognisable. Gregory has created three delightfully horrid hags, a hip looking Olly, a malevolent looking Minimac, and Yorick has a most impressive bush of hair on his head and face. Gregory found re-inventing Shakespeare a challenge, but says that it was a lot of fun to draw him as a child. It took Gregory a lot of trial drawings to get some of the characters looking just how he wanted them. As with most of his illustrating work, he started with 'a first impression and let the character evolve and develop as I worked through the text. The characters grow as you get to know them.'

Much like actors on a stage, these characters have to be arranged so they are interacting in ridiculous ways. For example, on p102 where Ollie Thesp wears the rose that Minty has just given him, Olly, looking in the mirror, appears pleased, Minty and Minimac behind him look wickedly delighted and Willy, peering over the curtain, looks surprised and alarmed. What is happening and the relationship between the characters is made very clear by their facial expressions and gestures, and the humour is highlighted by the exaggeration of these features.

The illustrations in *By the Picking of My Nose* were made with pen and ink for the line work, with texture added using an ink half-tone wash and black coloured pencil. Watercolour is used on the covers. Gregory says that for him what is special about line

drawings is also what makes it difficult: 'Keeping the drawings looking fresh, alive and spontaneous, being able to describe a lot with very little, and making things look solid and three-dimensional with the use of only lines.' He believes that illustrations 'add life and another dimension to reading enjoyment, and not just in books for kids.'

DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. If the story is being read to the class, have them tell you the main thing that happens in each chapter as it is read. Using this information create a plot summary on the board.
2. At the start of the story, Willy sneaks off to go to the theatre, despite the fact that he could get into trouble. Why does he do this?
3. Willy is expected to work in his father's tannery and glove-making workshop when he grows up. Does he want to do this? What would he rather do? What happens at the end of the story?
4. Willy doesn't have much power – he's new to the Black Skulls, he is only a boy, and he is only the son of a tanner. Neither does Yorick – he is only a stagehand in a theatre troupe. How do Willy and Yorick make their voices heard and influence what happens?
5. What happens when Minty hears the prediction of his future? How does he try to change his future? Should he have done so, or might the prediction have come true anyway? What is different about Willy and Yorick's attitude to the predictions?
6. *By the Picking of My Nose* is a funny story but it comes from a very serious and sinister play, *Macbeth*, about a man who becomes king by murdering another king. Discuss the major plot points in *Macbeth* that Martin Chatterton has used and how he has turned them into a funny story.
7. Willy Waggledagger's story is set in Elizabethan times. How does the author make the setting of his story seem authentic? Talk about the words he uses, his descriptions and the objects he includes in the story.
8. How do Gregory Rogers' illustrations add to this feeling of authenticity? Pick out the things that are different in the illustrations to the world we live in.
9. As they read, have students pick out the words they are not familiar with. Look up dictionaries and find out what they mean. As some words may not be in children's

dictionaries, the Internet can be used by typing in the word and then the word 'definition' after it.

10. Have students choose a modern word, such as 'gig', or a phrase, such as 'inside job', and write a definition that would be familiar to an Elizabethan reader. Illustrate each of the definitions. Collect the definitions together into a class dictionary for 'Ye Olden Times Readers.'
11. There are lots of funny names in *By the Picking of My Nose*. Discuss where some of them come from and how they tell us something about the character. Start with these names: Willy Waggedagger (this is an old name for Shakespeare that plays on his name), Sir Victor Vile, Minty Macvelli, Minimac, Yorick, the Hags, the Codpieces, McDivot, Oliver Thesp and Lord Loudtrouser. Students can have fun making up names, then drawing their characters and writing made up facts about them, such as their age, favourite food, job and hobbies.
12. A simile is when one thing is compared to another to make the description more vivid. Martin Chatterton gives some old sayings a new twist. Have students identify some of these as they read. They can use sayings they know to make up funny new ones.
13. Students can find out more about Elizabethan times by choosing one of these areas to research: the life of William Shakespeare, the life of Queen Elizabeth the first, the Elizabethan theatre, Elizabethan clothing, Elizabethan food.
14. Make up a recipe for the Hag sisters to cook. Draw a picture of the food on a plate. These can be gathered into a class Hags' Cookbook.
15. Choose a scene in the story that the illustrator didn't draw and make your own illustration. You can look at his drawings to see how you might dress your characters.

WORD BUILDING ACTIVITIES

1 See if you know what these words from the story mean.

Draw a line from each word to its definition.

mangel-wurzel

a long shirt with no sleeves

tannery

a person who speaks without moving their lips and makes it seem as though something or someone else is speaking

tunic

a building where animal skins are made into leather

troupe

shrunken and wrinkled because of age

ventriloquist

something that makes sound louder

wizened

sly, clever and sneaky

cunning

a group of actors

amplifier

a vegetable like a beetroot with edible leaves

2 The English language has changed a lot over time. Words once used are no longer in use and new words are made up all the time. Draw a line between the words from the book that were used in Elizabethan times and their modern SYNONYMNS (words that mean the same thing).

<u>Elizabethan times</u>	<u>Today</u>
privy	servant
whelp	girl
hides	pup
varlet	skins
maid	toilet
twain	two

3 An ANTONYM is a word that means the opposite of another word. Choose the antonyms for these words from the story. Look up the page reference to see where the word is used. Read the page to give you clues about what it means.

(a) innocently (used on p4)

angrily guiltily joyfully

(b) wrinkled (used on p32)

smooth peppery lined

(c) genteel (used on p135)

handsome spotty rude

(d) terrified (used on p158)

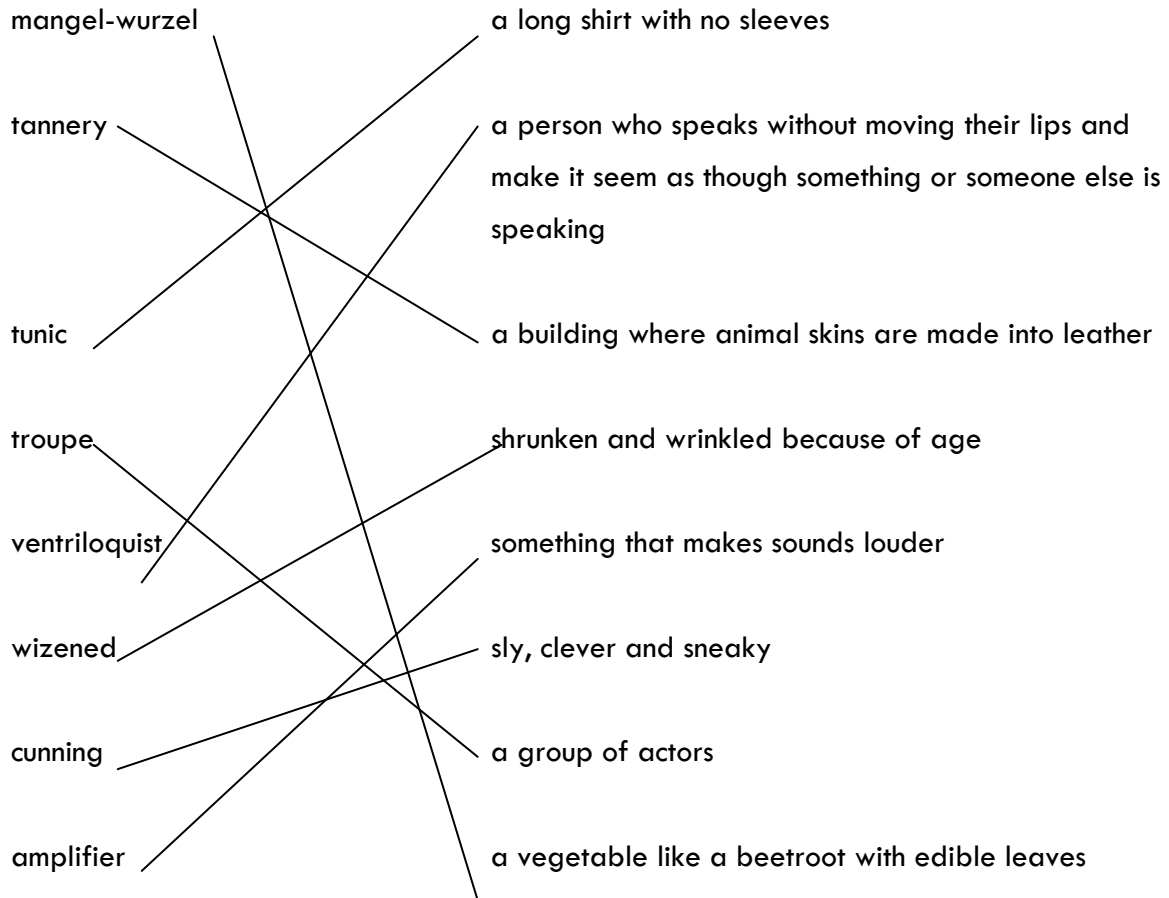
realised unafraid hungry

(e) tongue-tied (used on p174)

talkative speechless roped

WORD BUILDING ACTIVITIES - ANSWERS

1



2

Elizabethan times

Today

privy	servant
whelp	girl
hides	pup
varlet	skins
maid	toilet
twain	two

3

(a) innocently

guiltily

(b) wrinkled

smooth

(c) genteel

rude

(d) terrified

unafraid

(e) tongue-tied

talkative