

Teacher's Notes



Sagittarius Rising

Written by Maxine Beneba Clarke

Illustrated by Jade Goodwin

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower primary-aged readers (ages 7-10, grades 2+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English (AC9E2LA09, AC9E2LE02, AC9E2LY07)
- General capabilities:
 - Personal & social capability – goal setting
 - Personal & social capability – perseverance and adaptability
 - Literacy – speaking and listening

THEMES

- Pets
- Family
- Responsibility
- Friendship
- Poetry

SYNOPSIS

sagittarius rising noun: 1 one of twelve rising star signs of the zodiac 2 a very cheeky puppy

Tip has found a puppy in a basket outside the neighbourhood markets! Dad doesn't want to keep it, but Tip is determined to convince him. Soon the tiny puppy has turned into a cheerful, bounding, messy, disobedient dog named Sagittarius Rising. And Tip's life is packed with more adventure than could ever have been imagined!

Written in fun, bouncy rhyming couplets and filled with the wonder and mayhem of childhood, pets and family life, *Sagittarius Rising* is a brand-new chapter book from award-winning writer and poet Maxine Beneba Clarke and bestselling illustrator Jade Goodwin.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Maxine Beneba Clarke is the author of over fourteen books for adults and children, including the ABIA and Indie award winning short fiction collection *Foreign Soil*, the critically acclaimed bestselling memoir *The Hate Race*, the self-illustrated picture book *When We Say Black Lives Matter*, which was longlisted for the UK's Kate Greenaway medal, and the CBCA Honour Book *The Patchwork Bike* (illustrated by Van T Rudd), which won the 2019 Boston Globe Horn Prize for Best Picture Book. Her poetry collections include *Carrying the World*, which won the 2017 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Poetry, *How Decent Folk Behave*, and *It's the Sound of the Thing: 100 new poems for young people*, which won the 2024 ABIA for Book of the Year for Younger Readers. Maxine was the inaugural Peter Steele Poet in Residence at the University of Melbourne 2023–2025.

Jade Goodwin is a First Nations illustrator based in Australia. Jade's creative journey began at an early age in her grandparents' screen-printing studio, where she would spend an endless amount of time crafting anything she could from studio supplies. Her passion for creativity and illustration grew over time, eventually leading to a successful career in the children's publishing industry. Building on her debut publishing contract in 2021, Jade has expanded her portfolio by signing contracts for another 22 books. Jade loves bringing imagination to life through her sweet and bright illustrations and hopes to inspire children and adults alike.

THEMES

Pets and responsibility

Pets are a lot of responsibility! Dad's not sure that Tip is up to the responsibility of having a puppy, and Tip's experiment with Min's cat, Sun, does *not* go as planned. Share your experience of having a pet (or not!) and discuss the pros and cons.

- What are some of the jobs you need to do to take care of a pet?
- If you have a pet, share your favourite thing about having them.
- If you don't have a pet, what would be your dream pet and why?
- What does it mean to be a 'responsible pet owner'? What happens if we don't take care of our pets?

WRITING STYLE

Sagittarius Rising is written in fun rhyming couplets. But Maxine Beneba Clarke is playful with words, using loose rhymes, alliteration and onomatopoeia to bring rhythm to the page. Discuss different types of verse (rhyming couplets, haiku, sonnets). Choose a page from the book and underline the words that rhyme.

Look up the meaning of 'alliteration' and 'onomatopoeia'. Find an example of each from the book.



COMPREHENSION

- Why doesn't Dad want to get a pet? How does the arrival of Sagittarius change his mind?
- What are some of the naughty things Sagittarius does as a puppy? How does he prove himself in 'Sagittarius Saves the Day'?
- What interesting pets do some of the other kids bring in in 'Dogosaurus Rising'? What does Tip do to give Sagittarius an edge in the competition?
- Why is Min afraid of going on school camp?
- Why did Sagittarius need to stay on his leash at camp?
- What does Sagittarius dig up in 'A Sagittarius Sense'? What's so special about this object? What else does he sniff out?
- When the new baby arrives, Tip is surprised by how well-behaved Sagittarius is. But what does Tip think about the new baby?

WRITING EXERCISE

The book is divided into five parts – Sagittarius Rising, Sagittarius Saves the Day, Dogosaurus Rising, Camp Sagittarius, A Sagittarius Sense, Sagittarius Training. In each part, Tip and Sagittarius face a brand new challenge. Summarise each challenge in one sentence. Now come up with a name and summary for a new Sagittarius story.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Make a poster that celebrates your favourite pet. Include a section on how to care for it responsibly.
- In *Sagittarius Rising*, Tip and Sag win the *Most Unusual, Most Inspired* pet award for starting a Pet Week craze for make-believe pets. Design your own make-believe pet and introduce it to the class. Come up with prizes to award to people and their zany pets.
- What's your favourite Sagittarius moment and why? Draw a picture of Sagittarius in this moment.
- Poetry is best when you read it aloud – work in groups to prepare a short performed reading of one of the scenes from the book.

RELATED READING

The Tales of Mr Walker

By Jess Black and Sara Acton (illus)

A Fishboy Named Sashimi

By Dan Santat



Bin Chicken's Wild Ride

By Jol Temple, Kate Temple and Ronojoy Ghosh (illus)

Duck: Look Who's Talking!

By Matt Stanton

Fuzzball

By Nathan Luff and James Foley (illus)

Bitza

By Andrew Daddo & Stephen Michael King (illus)

