

# 52 Mondays

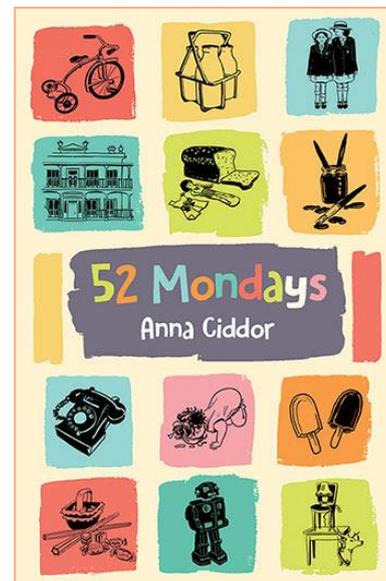
By Anna Ciddor

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paperback

Recommended for 8-13 year olds



## Summary

'We're going to look everywhere,' said Anna.

And they did.

For Anna, the quest to find the most beautiful doll she has ever seen is the most important thing in the world. But it's only one of the adventures to be had growing up in 1960s Australia. Was it really such a short time ago that there were no computers, no mobile phones... no seatbelts? That milk was delivered to your front door every morning, and animals lived in tiny concrete cages at the zoo?

Anna and her family celebrate birthdays and Passover, navigate friendships, illness, surprises and mishaps - all the lessons that come with growing up. And through it all, Anna never loses sight of her dream: to find an antique doll to love and treasure.

Based on the author's real childhood, this is a warm, funny and fascinating family story from the author of *The Family with Two Front Doors*.

## Use in the curriculum

This book is particularly suitable for students in Primary years 3 to 6. Aspects of the novel can be matched to the following Content Descriptions from the Australian Curriculum.

### HASS (Humanity and Social Sciences)

- Australia past and present and connections with a diverse world;
- Diverse communities and places and the contribution people make.

The book prompts discussion about change over time, immigration, and the reason people have come to Australia. It provides a comparison not only between 1960s Australia and now, but also has references to earlier generations, extending the comparison back in time and place to Poland in the 1920s and Poland during the war years. The reference to the war years in Chapter 31 also hints at the reason the family came to Australia, which could lead to a class discussion. These comparisons with the past can be taken further if the book is paired with *The Family with Two Front Doors*.

### ENGLISH

**Literature:** Context – compare with the *Little House on the Prairie* books, or Martine Murray's *Cedar B Hartley* books, set in contemporary Melbourne.

Several chapters (e.g. Chapters 3, 5 and 9) provide perfect examples of narrative writing that would be useful models for students in Year 4-6. These chapters reveal how children can use incidents from real life to create lively, self-contained short stories.

**Literacy:** Text features include chapter-opening illustrations, prologue, glossary and Author's Note.

**Language:** Excellent for the study of language variation and change over time: many examples of words where pronunciation, spelling or meaning have changed over time.

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## SCIENCE

Comparing the 1960s world of *52 Mondays* to the present day (e.g. the prevalence of mumps that is now avoided by immunisation, the use of seat belts in cars) can lead to relevant discussions on how scientific developments affect people's lives, help us solve problems and how science knowledge develops from many people's contributions.

## Themes

- Family life - realising and valuing the preciousness of life and family
- Melbourne in the 1960s
- Immigration to Australia – Anna is second-generation and non-Orthodox
- Jewish culture and tradition
- Persistence and perseverance in trying to achieve a dream
- The beauty and importance of simple lives and finding joy in the commonplace
- The early influences and incidents that led to the making of an author

## From the author...

*52 Mondays* is loosely based on my childhood in 1960s Melbourne. I have two younger sisters and many incidents in the book are inspired by true events in our family life. I really did glue a block of wood to my middle sister's foot!

While I worked on *52 Mondays*, details of the past came flooding back. I remembered newsboys hollering out 'Herald, Herald, read all about it' as they sold newspapers for a few pennies in the street, and milkmen with horses and carts delivering glass bottles of milk to our doorstep every morning. When we went to the city, we dressed in our best clothes, and had lunch in the Myer cafeteria. In the Myer lift, a lady in white gloves sat on a little stool by the door moving the levers to operate the lift and called out the departments on each floor as the lift moved up and down.

We had no television at home, and my sisters and I spent our time doing creative things like drawing, making up and producing plays, and reading HEAPS. One of my favourite books was *Hitty* by Rachel Field. This was the book that inspired my big wish to own an antique doll – a quest that forms the plot for *52 Mondays*.

As a child, I always wondered how people lived in 'the olden days'. I was disappointed when history lessons at school only taught me dry facts about kings, queens, explorers and wars. So I did research on my own, devouring anything I could find about life in the past, and the first books I created were filled with the fun stuff about history I hadn't learnt at school.

However, when I began writing about my Nana's childhood for *The Family with Two Front Doors*, I discovered I didn't necessarily need a remote historical setting to create a satisfying novel. Adventure and interest could be found in the intimate details of an 'ordinary' family. I started to think about my own childhood, and how strange and funny it would appear to modern children. I realised this was an era that would make a great setting for a book. I chose to make it into a novel loosely based on my childhood rather than an autobiography, so I fictionalised incidents and characters. The only true name in the story is the one for the main character – Anna.

*52 Mondays* celebrates family love and enjoyment of life, in contrast to the multitude of books about dysfunctional families or tragedies. The overwhelming responses from reviewers and readers to these positive themes in my earlier book, *The Family with Two Front Doors*, shows that this is what many people are craving!



## Discussion topics

1. What makes a person feel part of a particular culture or religion? (See Chapter 4 'Wine and Candles'.)
2. Discuss the role of a modern zoo compared with the role of zoos in the 1960s. (See Chapter 30 'Ponies and Tigers'.)
3. Discuss the ways science and laws and regulations have changed and saved lives (e.g. car seatbelts, immunisation for mumps, giving Disprin to sick children, leaving children alone in a department store, taking nuts to school for lunch...)
  - Which elements of 1960s life would be considered dangerous or inappropriate now?
  - Which would you like to bring back?

## Activities

### HEALTH and PE

- Have a 60s day –e.g. blackboards and chalk, play hopscotch, skip with long rope, hula hoops, cat's cradle, jacks, elastics, bring artefacts & clothes from home...

### HASS and ENGLISH

- Using the following topics, go through the book noting the changes between the past and now (this can be done in groups):
  - Classroom and schoolwork
  - Playground and play activities
  - Food
  - Library
  - Cars and roads
  - Zoos
  - Communication
- Research the history of your school – old uniforms, sports, playtimes etc.
- Interview people who remember the 1960s. (Prepare a list of topics beforehand.)
- Read AA Milne poems, *Dr Doolittle*, *Hitty* (NB: In 1999, Susan Jeffers and Rosemary Wells updated, simplified, and rewrote *Hitty* for modern readers.)

### DRAMA

- Act out the story of 'The Gingerbread Man'.
- Hold an auction. (Could be incorporated into Book Swap day.)

### CRAFT

- Make paper dolls
- Make a clock face traffic light
- Decorate egg cartons
- Learn cross-stitch

## About the author

### EDUCATION

I attended an all-girls school, so the lessons and playtimes in *52 Mondays* are inspired by my memories of my schooldays: swap cards, hand stands, hula-hoops, jumping over a long skipping rope, little bottles of milk for playlunch, book bags hanging on the backs of chairs, the thrill of being blackboard monitor and beating the duster clean and making clouds of chalk dust... And school lunches – while the other girls cracked Chocolate Royals on their foreheads, and licked off the chocolate and marshmallow, I ate healthy nuts and dried apricots.

### HOW I WORK

I started working in a corner of my kids' playroom, on one desk with an old manual typewriter with sticky keys. When the children were little there were many advantages to being a mum working from home but also lots of distractions when they were home. I spent one Christmas holiday getting up during the night and working between 2am and 5am in order to get a book illustrated.

Now I have a study with three desks, a computer, a scanner and photocopier, cable modem, a filing cabinet and lots of bookshelves (but never enough). I have boxes and papers piled everywhere trying to store my artwork and research notes for the nearly 60 books I have written and illustrated. I often refer back to earlier notes from other books when I work on new books.

When I first started, my children were my models and my critics. They are now grown up and have children of their own, and my grandchildren are my new inspiration. The ten-year-old is my test reader and gives me advice with my books, but I also ask students at the schools where I give workshops to be my special readers and give me opinions.

### ILLUSTRATING

I research just as much for illustrations as I do for writing. When I'm illustrating something historical it's obviously important to get the details right, including colour. Furthermore, when I'm drawing a person I always want a basis of something real to use as a model, either a real-life person or a photograph. Drawing animals can be tricky too. In my first book I had to illustrate a goat running and I couldn't find a picture anywhere. The problem is that all animals seem to move their legs a different way when they run. In the end I had to base the illustration on a deer running, but I still don't know if it's right!

I used to do rough drafts in pencil and then use a light-box so I could trace through onto good quality paper. Sometimes I would do the black ink outline then photocopy that onto watercolour paper and then colour in the photocopy – that way I could use White-Out to make changes or corrections to the black ink version. However, for *52 Mondays* I converted from working by hand to using a Surface Pro and drawing with a digital pen. It is much faster and easier this way – except for the times when I get very frustrated because I can't work out how to use the software.

More information about Anna Ciddor is available at <https://annaciddor.com/>

