

# Teachers' Notes

## MAVIS: THE LITTLE PLANE SPOTTER

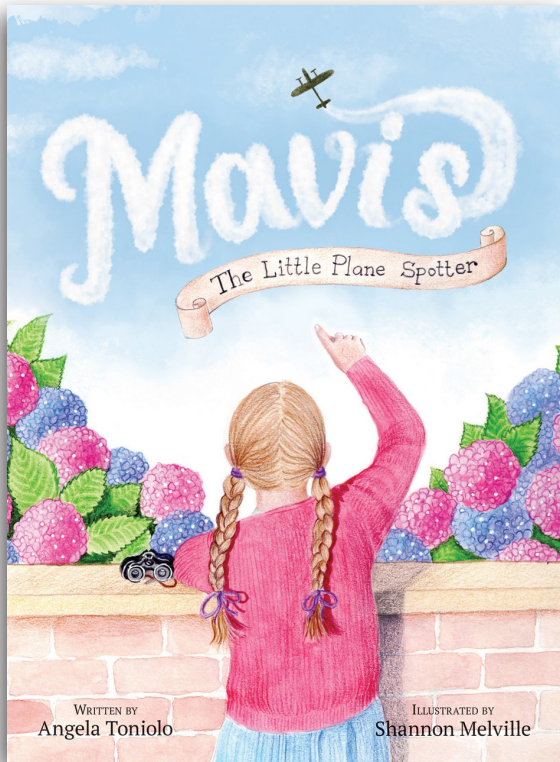
Angela Toniolo / Shannon Melville

**ISBN:** 9781761111938

**Recommended retail:** \$27.99

**Reading level:** 5 to 8

### BOOK SUMMARY



It's World War Two and Darwin is bombed.

Mavis wants to help the war effort, but what can a ten-year-old girl do?

Become a plane spotter!

Imagine her surprise when she sees an enemy plane through her binoculars!

Does she have what it takes to save the town?

### THEMES

Mathematics • Wordplay • Imagination • STEAM Concepts • Algebra for kids • Patterns

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**Angela Toniolo is available for author talks and workshops.  
Contact Wombat Books for more information.**

*Mavis: The Little Plane Spotter Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Angela is a Victorian-based writer. She works as a primary school integration aide and has a Bachelor of Education. Her previous publishing credits include articles in *The School Magazine* and her town's local newspaper. She loves writing fiction and nonfiction stories and exploring themes about relationships, overcoming obstacles, and friendship.

When she's not writing, Angela enjoys spending time with family and friends, playing with her cat, or making a lot of noise on the drums.

### AUTHOR NOTES

I listen to my regional ABC radio station every day. One morning, I tuned into an interview with 90-year-old Pat from Albury, NSW. She was talking about when she was a 12-year-old plane spotter during WWII. I'd never heard of plane spotters before, so listened with great interest. My curiosity was well and truly sparked, so I jumped on the computer and found out everything I could. I also liked Pat's story because she lived in my local region. My research led me to the story about the youngest volunteer plane spotter in Australia, and that's when I knew I'd found the perfect character for a picture book!

I decided to base my protagonist on my grandmother, Mavis, who was, from all accounts, one feisty kid. She grew up in Albury, and her family has strong connections to the region. Gehrig Lane in Albury is named after them, and her grandfather worked on the construction of one of the largest dams in the world, the Hume Weir, which was completed in 1936.

I love the concept of portraying children as heroes and not just helpless onlookers. I also relish the opportunity to create strong female characters and focus on how we contribute to our communities in positive and meaningful ways.

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## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

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Shannon Melville has found joy in creating and expressing herself in the visual arts since childhood, following in the footsteps of her artistic father. She grew up in Perth, Western Australia where she still lives with her husband, three delightful daughters and kelpie, Hugo.

Shannon has experience working as a book illustrator, school art teacher, disability arts worker and graphic designer. After time at home with her three daughters she is currently working as a Primary Art Teacher and illustrator. Shannon enjoys reading picture books to her children and inspiring both children and adults to find joy and satisfaction in expressing themselves creatively.

She illustrates with a wide range of both traditional and digital techniques.

Shannon loves assisting authors by bringing their story to life and thoroughly enjoys the whole book-illustrating process from researching image references, character sketches, first roughs, final artwork and graphic design layout.

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## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

Mavis: The Little Plane Spotter helps young people discover a small piece of Australian history and introduces concepts from the period in a fun and fascinating way. An excellent start for all youngsters in world history.

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

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Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes.

### YEAR ONE

#### English

**AC9E1LE02** - discuss literary texts and share responses by making connections with students' own experiences

**AC9E1LA03** - explore how texts are organised according to their purpose, such as to recount, narrate, express opinion, inform, report and explain

### YEAR TWO

#### English

**AC9E2LA03** - identify how texts across the curriculum are organised differently and use language features depending on purposes

**AC9E2LY01** - identify how similar topics and information are presented in different types of texts

### YEAR THREE

#### English

**AC9E3LE02** - discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences

**AC9E3LY02** - use interaction skills to contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas

**AC9E3LY05** - use comprehension strategies when listening and viewing to build literal and inferred meaning, and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features

**AC9E3LA09** - identify how images extend the meaning of a text

**AC9E3LE03** - discuss how an author uses language and illustrations to portray characters and settings in texts, and explore how the settings and events influence the mood of the narrative

**AC9E3LA03** - describe how texts across the curriculum use different language features and structures relevant to their purpose

**AC9E3LY01** - recognise how texts can be created for similar purposes but different audiences

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## TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

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This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

## KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

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### PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about? Does it remind them of something?
2. Check for prior knowledge, eg ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day. What do they already know?

### DURING READING QUESTIONS

1. Predictions - what do you think might happen next?
2. Discuss the characters' emotions and actions e.g. I think the character feels \_\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_\_.
3. How do the illustrations add to the story?

### AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students if any characters remind them of someone they know: a friend, a sibling, or themselves.
2. What are some of the issues within the story that are relevant today?
3. Why do you think the author wrote this story? What did they want you to learn?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES: F-6

- At the start of the story, Mavis has lots of chores to do. What types of chores or jobs do you have at home? How are they different from Mavis's? Why?
- Mavis's family kept tea, coffee and biscuits in their trench. If you had a trench in your backyard, what would you keep in it? Why? (Worksheet 1)
- To keep students safe at Mavis's school, they practised air raid drills. Why? What types of drills do you practice at school? Why?
- Why do you think Mavis wanted to be a plane spotter?
- Can you think of a time when you were told you were too little to do something? How did you react? What happened?
- Mavis was proud of herself for helping the war effort at home. Can you remember a time when you were proud of something you did eg helping a family member, volunteering in the community (Worksheet 2).

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES: YEARS 4-6

- Read the 1942 letter from the Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, asking the children of the day to help support the war effort. What did he ask them to do for their country?
- The Prime Minister asked the children to 'salvage worn-out materials!' What does this mean? What types of things were listed? Discuss how recycled items were used to help the war effort eg rubber bands for gas masks, nylon stockings for parachutes, and newspaper for making shell casings.
- Explore other ways children helped the war effort, e.g., planting and tending vegetable gardens to feed families at home, knitting socks, gloves, scarves, vests, sweaters, and balaclavas to send to the soldiers overseas. Imagine you are a child during WWII. What special skill do you have to help the war effort?
- What can children do today to contribute to their community?
- How do people contribute to your local community?

My Dear Children,

You, the children of today, are passing through a terrible period in the world's history.

Some 25 years ago, your mothers and fathers endured the dangers of the first world war in the hope that it would secure a happy world in which you could usefully and happily live your lives.

But that was not to be. So again, all the peoples who cherish freedom have had to take up arms to prevent their homes being overrun by wicked men who want to make themselves masters of the world.

We, the people of Australia, have cheerfully taken up our part in this struggle to secure for you a way of life more peaceful and happy than is ours today.

This has called for many sacrifices in each of your homes. Many of your fathers and brothers have put on the uniforms of the soldiers of freedom in the Navy, the Army or the Air Force. Others are working hard in the production of munitions and other things that armies need. Your sisters, and in some cases, your mothers are also engaged in some kind of war work necessary to secure our freedom.

Now, I want you to do your bit for the safety of this wonderful country in which we live.

As you know, we cannot afford to waste one little thing during these years of trouble. We cannot waste food or clothing or boots, paper or ink or other school material. In fact we cannot afford to waste anything.

Farther than that we must salvage all the worn-out materials that can be again used in the war effort—such things as aluminium, rubber and paper. Each school, with your loyal help, can be made a salvage depot for freedom.

In addition you can share in the sacrifice your country is making. By purchasing War Savings Stamps with your own few pence of pocket money, you, too, can make a real sacrifice for Australia.

With faith and trust in God, a spirit of service to your country and obedience and cheerfulness in your homes you can each help in the war effort and bring the days of peace much closer to us all.

Yours sincerely,



John Curtin  
Prime Minister.

The letter from the prime minister of the time asking children to be plane spotters.

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## ACTIVITIES

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### BINOCULAR MAKING

Here is a link to making home made binoculars .  
Instead of using toilet rolls you can use paper towel / food wrap roll cut in half too for hygiene purposes.

<https://www.kidskubby.com/toilet-paper-roll-binocular-craft/>

### PAPER PLANE MAKING

The following links contain resources for making paper planes and other activities for plane and NASA themed content.

<https://www.engineeringemily.com/4-simple-fun-paper-airplanes-steam-activity-for-kids/>

<https://www.olivehackney.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Make-Your-Own-Spitfire.pdf>

### RESEARCH THE TIME PERIOD

Consider the time period Mavis lives in (1940s Australia) and create a task challenge to find as many things as you can that provide information or images of life here in the 1940s. Perhaps you can find some photos from people's lives, magazines, newspaper articles, posters, or old videos. See who can find the most in your class and then have a discussion about what life would have been like then and how different living in the 1940s would have been like to life today.

### WORD SEARCH & WORKSHEET RESOURCES

Below please find a word search and worksheets created by the illustrator and author.

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# WORKSHEET 1

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**What would you keep in a trench in your backyard?**

**Draw or write the items in the boxes.**



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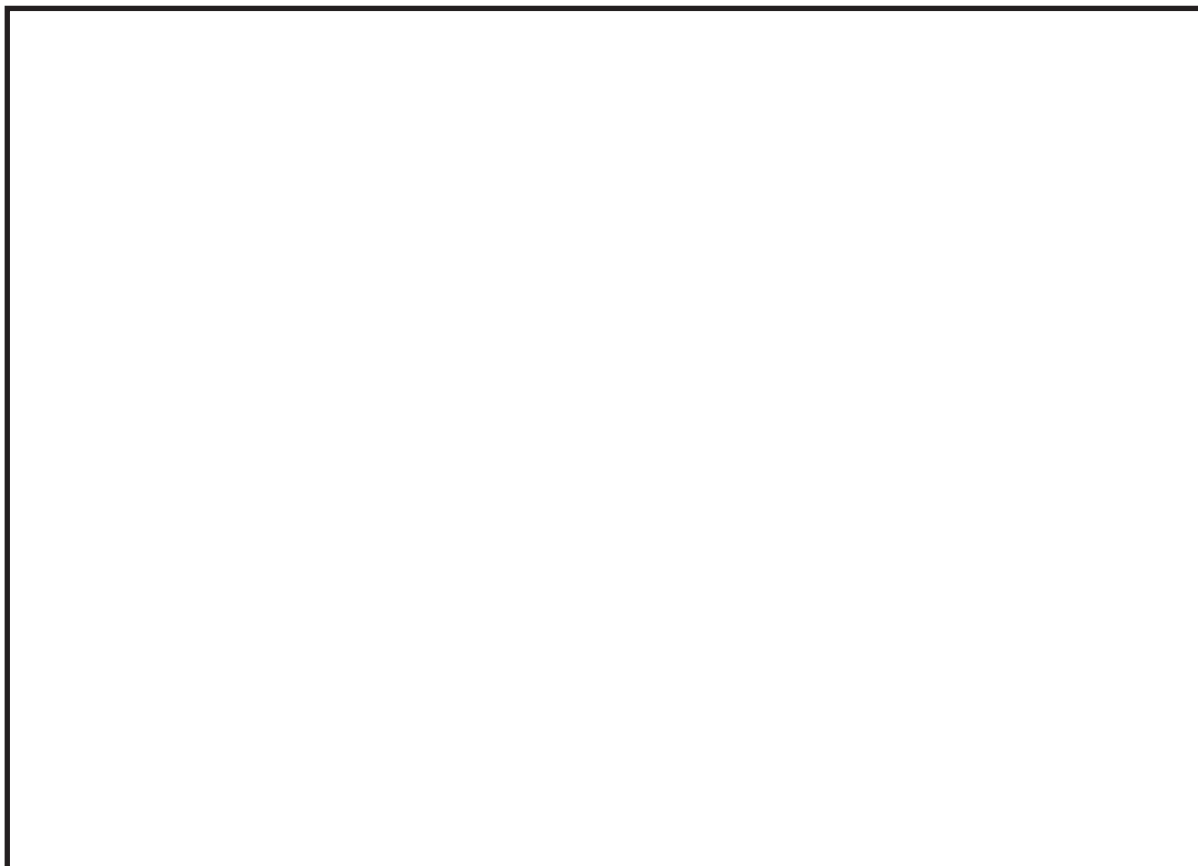
## WORKSHEET 2

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**When were you proud of something you did? Why?**

**Draw or write the items in the boxes.**



**I was proud when**

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# Mavis: The Little Plane Spotter

K I A Q M M B I N O C U L A R S U B B V  
O W I X C H Z U E K S H A C E D I A O L  
S A L V A G E L E J Q C C O G Q G L M O  
S L N P P S S E N E M Y X D Q Z E T B Y  
E P A A L Z O H P A D O R E E N P E E A  
R L F T A B L C D S P I T F I R E H D L  
V C R R N W D O U D K Z G M N N V S S T  
I K E I E E I M T L P E A C E Z H E V Y  
C J E O O Q E R Y C E R T I F I C A T E  
E F D T D V R A P L A N E S P O T T E R  
I S O I A O O D K A F T D I M N A C E T  
O I M C R L X E Q I K C R R E C O R D T  
W R J R W U I R G R H R X E O E T Z D V  
K E A A I N B Y N R L R H A N D J F G H  
B N T T N T T V A A M A V I S C H G B O  
T G T I W E U T Z I W S W P K W H A X N  
N V A O H E A W E D A A I R C R A F T O  
S S C N E R O W B E R I H Z L C W W F U  
F I K S R S D A Y J C O M M U N I T Y R  
Z P F C O A H V A I R F O R C E L U C F

Plane Spotter	Certificate	Binoculars	Hero
Volunteers	Patriotic	Community	Duty
Spitfire	Comradery	Aircraft	War
Air Force	Air Raid	Soldier	
Loyalty	Salvage	Rations	
Trench	Freedom	Doreen	
Bombed	Honour	Service	
Siren	Mavis	Enemy	
Peace	Code	Record	
Attack	Darwin	Plane	

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