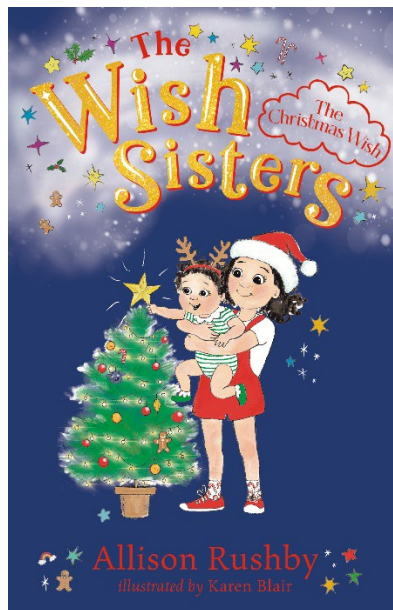


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THE WISH SISTERS: *THE CHRISTMAS WISH*

Allison Rushby / Karen Blair



Teachers' Notes

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Synopsis	2
Themes	2
Writing Style	2
Study Notes	2
Author/Illustrator Motivation	5
About the Author/Illustrator	6

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SYNOPSIS

Flick is feeling glum. It's her first Christmas without Granny Aggie, but remembering how her grandmother brought so much joy at this special time of year is helping Flick to feel better. So too is her dad's idea to invite the neighbours to decorate gingerbread houses with them...that is, until Birdie starts making some rather unusual wishes! How will Flick divert attention from the cheeky imp and his wish-twisting ways?

Perfect as a read-aloud to early readers or for newly independent readers craving their next chapter book, *The Christmas Wish* is fun, engaging, and filled with the joy that comes with Christmastime.

THEMES

- Magic
- Christmas
- Family; Sisters
- Belonging
- Community; neighbours
- Kindness; action

WRITING STYLE

Written in third person, past tense, *The Christmas Wish* is ideal for independent readers who are ready for chapter books. Flick is a wonderful big sister to Birdie, who has a habit of making wishes that the sassy imp loves to twist. The stories are well structured and paced, inviting the audience to make predictions, visualise and engage with the events and characters. The chapter lengths are digestible for younger readers, and the hooks at the end of each chapter allow children to develop their reading stamina and feel the satisfaction of reading a novel all the way to the end.

STUDY NOTES

- Before the story begins, Flick introduces herself and her little sister, Birdie, explaining how their wishes work. How do you think unlimited wishes could end in 'a whole lot of trouble'? Brainstorm some wishes that could go pear-shaped and that would make for a fun story.

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- Why is Flick feeling 'glum' this year even though it's Christmastime? How does this help readers appreciate the relationship between her and Granny Aggie?
- What does Birdie mean when she says 'bleh' and 'gah'? Why has the author used babytalk for Birdie? How does this make the stories more enjoyable than if she could speak properly?
- Flick's favourite photo is of her and Granny Aggie after Birdie was born. Share your favourite photo with your class, explaining why it is so special.
- What might being the 'best big sister ever' look like, sound like and feel like for Flick? For Birdie? How do Flick's actions show that she is already a great big sister to Birdie. Share examples from the text to support your thinking. How can you be the 'best sibling ever'?
- Why does remembering the gingerbread stamping she'd done with Granny Aggie make Flick smile? What does this reveal about the importance of memories?
- Look carefully at the illustration on p. 14. In the role of the imp, write a journal entry about baking with the family. If you have read other titles in The Wish Sisters series, refer to the growing understanding between the imp and its new family.
- Make predictions about how this Christmas might be different for Mrs Mortlake now that her family lives in Scotland. How do we know this is difficult for her?
- How do Flick and Oli show the power of kindness in *The Christmas Wish*?
- Why are the children careful not to let Mrs Mortlake know about Birdie's wishes? How would the story be different if they didn't have to keep them a secret?
- Using the illustration on p. 22 as stimulus, write a recount of decorating your Christmas tree at home. Include any special connections you have to certain decorations.
- Re-enact the scene in which Flick and Birdie decorate Mrs Mortlake's tree, including the appearance of the miniature imp ornaments.
- In what ways are Flick's family good neighbours? What can we learn about the importance of community and belonging from their actions?
- How does helping Mrs Mortlake help Flick to feel better about missing Granny Aggie? What does this show about the power of helping others?
- Create an invitation to the Honeysuckle Street afternoon tea at which everyone decorates the gingerbread houses.
- How does *The Christmas Wish* show the importance of friendship?
- Flick, Mrs Mortlake and Mr Tran are all feeling unsettled this year at Christmas. Why do they feel this way? What helps them to overcome these feelings?

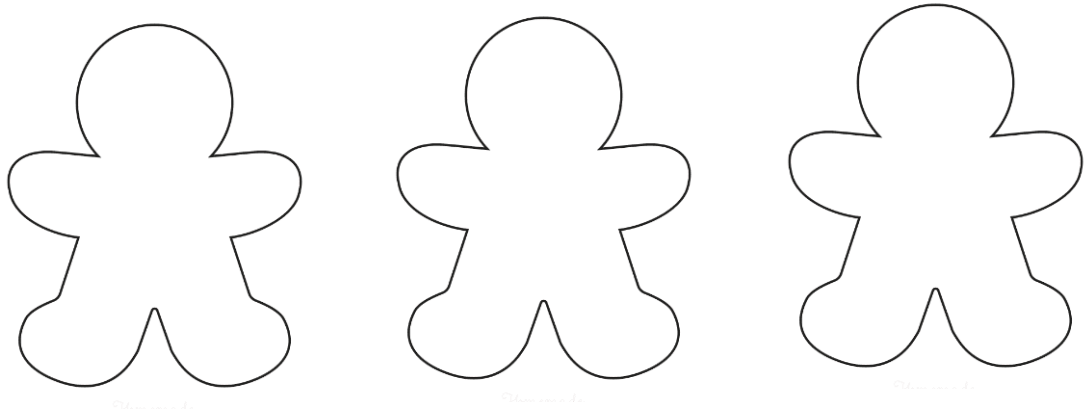
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- How did Granny Aggie make Christmas special? How does her legacy live on?
- Devise inventive ways to include the imp in the afternoon's fun without the others finding out about him.
- Discuss Granny Aggie's belief that 'what matters is we're having fun together' (p. 47). How does this help Flick to relax a little? Share a time when you and your family had fun together even though things may not have gone as planned.
- What do you think Mr Tran understands about the wishes? What clues do we get about this?
- What would you wish for if you could make a special Christmas wish? Why?
- After reading chapter 8 in which Claire wishes for a white Christmas, write the next few pages of the story. Compare your version with what happens in chapter 9.
- In the role of Birdie, retell a scene from *The Christmas Wish*.
- Why does Flick's heart feel much lighter at the end of the story than it does at the beginning? What has she learnt about herself in *The Christmas Wish*?
- Write a list of ways in which you can make Christmas special for other people this year.
- As you read *The Christmas Wish*, track the main plot points on a class story map.
- Choose a scene from *The Christmas Wish* to re-enact in a Reader's Theatre or freeze-frame.
- Retell *The Christmas Wish* using Talking Strips.

First...	Next...	After that...	Finally...

- Using recycled cardboard boxes and other repurposed materials, design and create your own version of Santa's Workshop, complete with elves. (See p. 2 for a description of Birdie's workshop.)
- With the help of some parent volunteers, make your own gingerbread houses or biscuits. Alternatively, create pretend gingerbread houses or people from art and craft materials.
- Using some of your gingerbread people, recreate the scene in chapter 10 in which the gingerbread people come to life.

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**AUTHOR MOTIVATION**

The truth is, I wrote The Wish Sisters series because the imp made me do it. Down one of my usual research rabbit holes, I stumbled across an article about the Lincoln Imp, a little grotesque carved figure housed atop a column in Lincoln Cathedral. The imp had a cheeky, gap-toothed grin and a jaunty cross-legged stance and it caught my attention immediately. That imp was definitely up to no good! I tucked a picture of the imp into my ideas folder. Not long after this, I was on the hunt for an idea for a junior fiction series and the imp jumped right out of my ideas folder and said, 'Me! Me! Write about me!' How could I say no? Everything came together very quickly after that. A bit more research told me thatimps could grant wishes. As soon as I dropped that imp into a family setting, the imp suggested the baby would make the best wishes. I started jotting down all the hilarious things a baby might wish for and the imp took it from there ...

ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION

I think the imp has been waiting patiently in my lounge room for the past 23 years to emerge in The Wish Sisters series ... I have seen the real Lincoln Imp in England, carved into the big Minster (church) centuries ago. I have a little replica that has been in every home since, and so when I was asked to illustrate this series the character emerged very quickly indeed! There are a few similarities between how the imp and baby Birdie look, with their toothy grins and curly hair. I suppose being in any family brings a bit of chaos, so I didn't need to look too far from my own family for inspiration. I love the way that Allison writes with all the fun and humour of the drama caused by the wishes, but in the end there's always love and togetherness – a big sister caring for her baby sister, and that is the most important thing I wanted to convey in my illustrations.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allison Rushby made a wish when she was six years old. She wished to be a ballerina with pierced ears. Not long after this, she wrote her very first book (not about a ballerina) and decided to be an author with pierced ears instead. She has written over twenty books for adults and children, including the Wish Sisters series, and is an admin of the popular parent Facebook group 'Your Kid's Next Read' with Megan Daley and Allison Tait. She lives in Brisbane with her family and her two not very useful assistants, Harry the Bordoodle and Titus the Sphynx. To learn more about Allison, visit www.allisonrushby.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

When Karen Blair was young, she wished she could see the fairies in the garden and would sometimes leave baked beans out for them. She also wished that she could draw all day and now the wish has come true! Karen loves to illustrate characters that are young, old and in between. She lives in Fremantle, Western Australia, with her husband, two children and a small dog called Dobby, who thinks he's a cat. To learn more about Karen, visit www.karenblair.com.au.