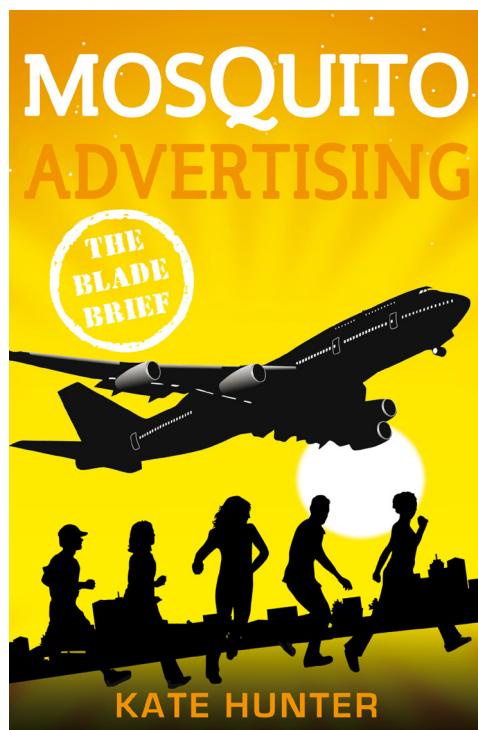


MOSQUITO ADVERTISING: THE BLADE BRIEF

by Kate Hunter



Teachers' Notes

Written by a Practising Teacher Librarian in context with
the Australian curriculum

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SYNOPSIS:

Mosquito Advertising: The Blade Brief is the second book in Kate Hunter's Mosquito Advertising series. Brisbane-based teenage advertising agency Mosquito Advertising has been offered an account that seems too good to be true.

High flying owner of Blade Air, Barry Sharp, wants to hand over his entire advertising account to the teenage advertising sensation he's read about in magazines. Rosie, his interfering and overbearing assistant however has no intention of letting Katie and her friends' work see the light of day. When Katie, Lorraine, Clementine, Joel and Dominic agree to fly to Sydney courtesy of Blade Air, they have no idea the kind of mess they're about to get themselves into.

Meanwhile, Katie has let the advertising agency overrun her adolescent life, and has compromised on her school work, principles and her relationship with her friends. Fortunately, she begins to think clearly again before it's too late and with help from her friends, manages to salvage what's really important.

THEMES:

Friendship:

- Katie jeopardises her relationship with her friends by letting the advertising business cloud her judgement.
- Lorraine is a loyal and forgiving friend.
- When Katie's friend and mentor Pat Parfitt dies, it takes some time for the reality and impact to fully sink in.
- Teamwork goes hand-in-hand with friendship.

Advertising:

- Campaigns, slogans and jingles feature in *Mosquito Advertising: The Blade Brief*.
- Creativity and teamwork are essential components of a successful campaign.

Greed:

- The greed of Rosie from Blade Air puts at risk the safety of its passengers and workers.
- Until she changes her mentality, Katie's greed and pride impede her judgment and actions.

Honesty:

- Blade Air is dishonest with the public about its safety.
- Rosie is dishonest with the owner, Barry, and with the agents from Mosquito Advertising.
- Katie is dishonest with her mother and her friends before realising the mistakes she's been making.
- It is when Katie is honest with herself that things start to improve.

Responsibility:

- Katie shows a lack of responsibility towards her debating team, the Parfizz Softdrink Company and her school commitments.

Humility:

- Katie realises her faults and acknowledges her mistakes. She returns to her school, her friends and the agency with a new sense of humility.

WRITING STYLE:

Mosquito Advertising: The Blade Brief is written in third person, past tense. Filled with adventure and mystery, this fast-paced narrative has a protagonist with a believable, contemporary teenage voice. The characters are realistic and their faults and attributes honestly depicted. The text is humorous, realistic and tangible.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION:

My main motivation to write a sequel to *Mosquito Advertising: The Parfizz Pitch* was that I had said I would. There was no getting out of it. Like Katie Crisp, I'm a big one for imagining things are easier than they appear.

Once I was into the writing, it seemed that the characters I had created became real, and I was curious about what they would do next. Advertising agencies grow, change and even shrink over time and Mosquito Advertising is like any other agency. Only with its office in a backyard.

Overnight success does funny things to people and I wanted to explore how Katie would handle it: how it would affect her relationships – both with her family and her mates – and how she would juggle her passion for advertising with the pressures of school.

It's also fun for me to write ads as Katie and the rest of the gang. To imagine what I would do if I had the opportunity to work on a dog-food account and an airline. What would the people who ran those businesses be like? Why would they do what they do?

As a writer, I wanted to create a bigger book – not in terms of word count but in terms of action and relationships. There's a death. A romance. A fight. In many ways, it was a challenging book to write, but I think because of that it'll be a fun one to read.

STUDY NOTES:

1. Before reading, discuss how the front cover gives the reader clues about the book's genre, plot, setting and audience. How is a book's cover an important way of advertising the text? Take notice of the graphic design elements such as the use of space, colour, font, images and silhouettes.
2. After reading p. 1, discuss the way in which the reader is given an insight into the plot so succinctly. What do we learn about Barry Sharp from this short passage? After reading the text, reflect on p. 1. Is Barry's character as represented on p. 1 a true depiction of his personality throughout the novel? Explain, giving examples from *Mosquito Advertising: The Blade Brief* to support your opinion.
3. The remainder of Chapter One introduces the reader to Katie and Mosquito Advertising. It also reveals the conflict between Katie's ambitions for the agency and her neglect towards her studies. Discuss the importance of narratives getting quickly to the conflict to draw the reader into the text. Reflect on this in your own writing.
4. Katie is driven by the advertising agency so much that she makes some questionable decisions in the first part of the novel. Evaluate Katie's choices throughout the novel, considering issues such as honesty, ambition, goals, friendship and family.
5. Using a mind map, compare Katie with Lorraine. Consider the various elements of characterisation such as physical attributes, personality, values and treatment of friends and family. Which character do you identify

most with? (This could be done with all members of Mosquito Advertising. Alternatively, allow students to select two characters on which to base their comparison.)

6. Debating features in *Mosquito Advertising: The Blade Brief*. Brainstorm arguments both for and against a range of debatable topics, for example:

- That parents should be allowed to choose the sex of their children.
- That weekends should be three days in length.
- That guns promote violence.
- That the age for obtaining a driver's license should be lowered to 15.

7. Rebuttal requires the debater to state what the opposition has said, explain why this is incorrect, state your side of the argument and then explain why this is correct. Practise this skill based on the brainstorming and discussion from the above topics, giving a few moments for the speaker to prepare their rebuttal.

- Hold your own class debate on the topic 'Advertising Destroys Young Minds'.
- Re-read the arguments put forth by Josie and Miranda (p104+). How would you rebut their points?

8. What do you think Carole Beauchamp means when she says, 'Katie, don't turn a minor crisis into a three-act drama' (p111).

- Are there times in your life when you overreact to situations? What strategies could be used to help in such situations?

Katie responds to this by thinking, 'Great. Another adult happy to point out all the problems, but doing absolutely nothing to help' (p112).

- Have you ever felt like Katie? Was Carole helping Katie by leaving Katie to solve her own problem? Discuss.

9. Katie does make mistakes but is fortunate to have mentors in her life to help guide her, even if she may not always realise it at the time.

- Who are Katie's mentors? How do they help her?
- Who are your mentors? How have they helped you?
- How might you be a mentor to someone, either now or in the future?
- What values and qualities can you help build in others?

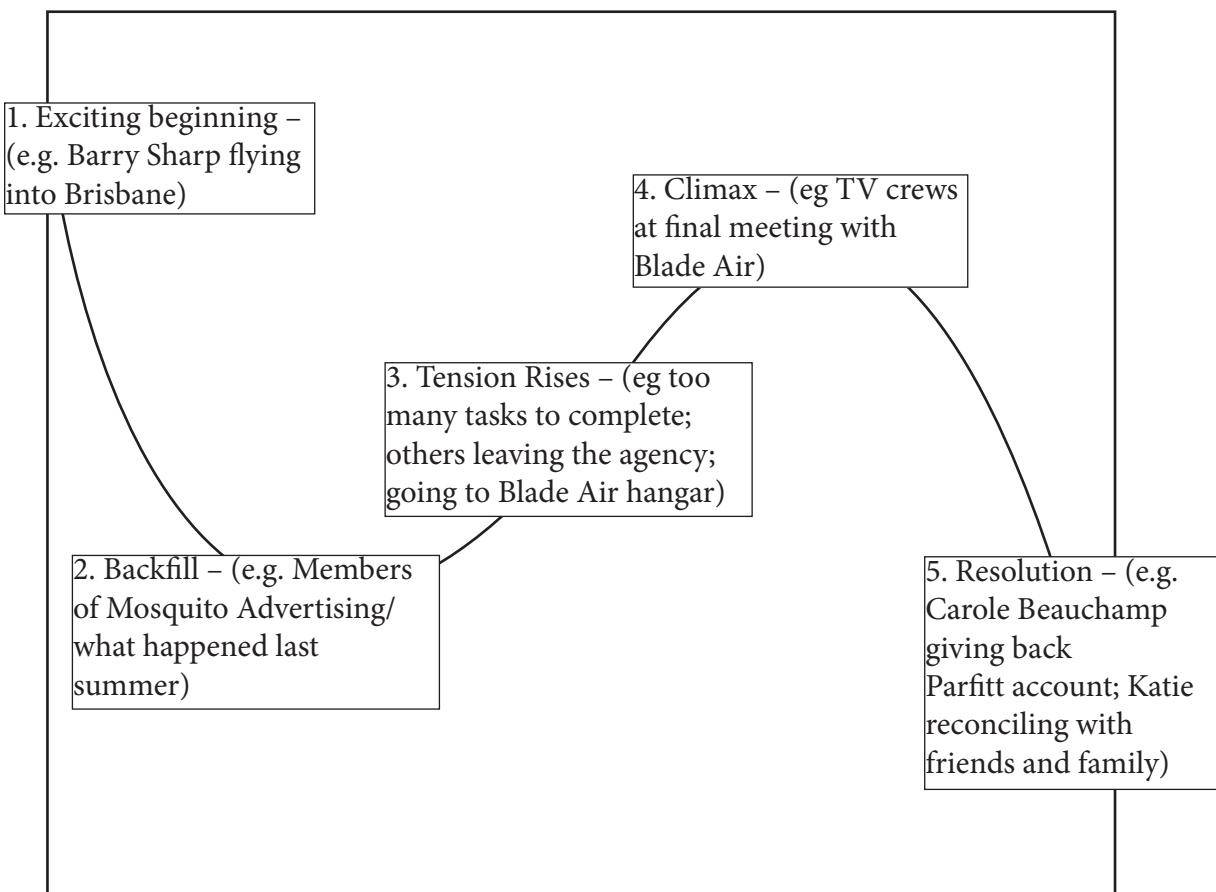
10. When Pat Parfitt dies, it takes a while for Katie to feel and show her true grief. Eventually, 'the tears came then. Real tears. For the man who had been like her father and grandfather and friend.' (p126)

- Why does it take so long for Katie to fully appreciate her loss?
- Have you ever lost someone close to you but found the 'real tears' took a while to come? Discuss grief and the different ways in which grief can affect people.

11. Advertising and debating both require persuasive skills. Focus on the elements of persuasion including:

- The use of ethos, pathos, logos and kairos.
- Emotive language.
- The use of effective adverbs (e.g. adverbs of comment – fortunately, absolutely, completely) and adjectives (e.g. comparative or superlative adjectives – worst, escalating, diabolical).
- Connectives (e.g. however, therefore, consequently).
- Using clear introductory sentences.
- Communicating opinions/points clearly and cohesively.
- Use of relevant information.

12. Graph the events that take place in *Mosquito Advertising: The Blade Brief* using the following Story Graph as a guide.



13. Create a book trailer for *Mosquito Advertising: The Blade Brief* using Windows Movie Maker or Photo Story. (Watch the book trailer for *Mosquito Advertising: The Parfizz Pitch* www.mosquitoadvertising.com)



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14. In partners or small groups, plan some storylines for future Mosquito Advertising novels using a story graph like the one above.

- Create a book cover for your new story.
- Write the first two or three paragraphs similar to the introduction on p. 1 of *Mosquito Advertising: The Blade Brief*.

15. Spend time evaluating advertisements from a variety of media including print, television, the internet and radio. Allow students to find examples of both exemplar and ineffective ads. Establish criteria as a class for what makes a good ad. Compare these criteria with the advice given by both Auntie Nancy and Mosquito Advertising on www.mosquitoadvertising.com/any-ideas/

16. Mosquito Advertising creates a ‘bad ad’ for Blade Air – one that the reader never gets to see. In a small group, create this ‘bad ad’ and share it with the class. You may wish to use Flip videos or digital cameras. Present via a DVD or use software such as Windows Movie Maker or Photo Story.

17. The members of Mosquito Advertising have different skills and talents (see p7).

- What talents would you bring to an advertising agency?
- Think about the strengths of other class members. Who would be good at which roles in an advertising group like Mosquito Advertising? What are the different roles in an advertising agency?

18. As a class, create a range of ‘briefs’ to be used in the Group Work Activity below. When finished, these briefs will be put into a ‘Brief Box’. These briefs should outline the company and product for which groups will create a pitch and advertising campaign.

19. Group Work Activity – Create your own advertising firm ensuring that your group has a variety of skills and talents.

- Create a name for your agency.
- Allocate various roles to group members.
- Select a ‘brief’ from the ‘Brief Box’.
- Devise a range of possible pitches for this brief.
- Conduct a meeting at which the group decides upon which campaign will be pitched.
- Create the campaign. Assign different components of the campaign to different group members. You may like to create a range of ads including print, online, television and radio ads. Include a jingle.
- Present your pitch to the class.

20. On Kate Hunter’s website, she writes that, ‘All serious advertising agencies need a website. So do not so serious ones.’

- Visit and evaluate Mosquito Advertising’s website www.mosquitoadvertising.com
- Create your group’s own website to promote your advertising agency.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Kate Hunter has been writing one thing or another since she was very small. Originally keen on journalism, her inclination to embellish the truth got in the way of a credible journalistic career. After twenty years as a copywriter, Kate still writes ads but prefers writing novels. In 2010, Kate published her first novel *Mosquito Advertising: The Parfizz Pitch*. She lives in Brisbane with her husband, their three kids, a dog, and – after rain – more than a few mosquitoes. Kate writes regularly for the popular website www.mamamia.com.au.