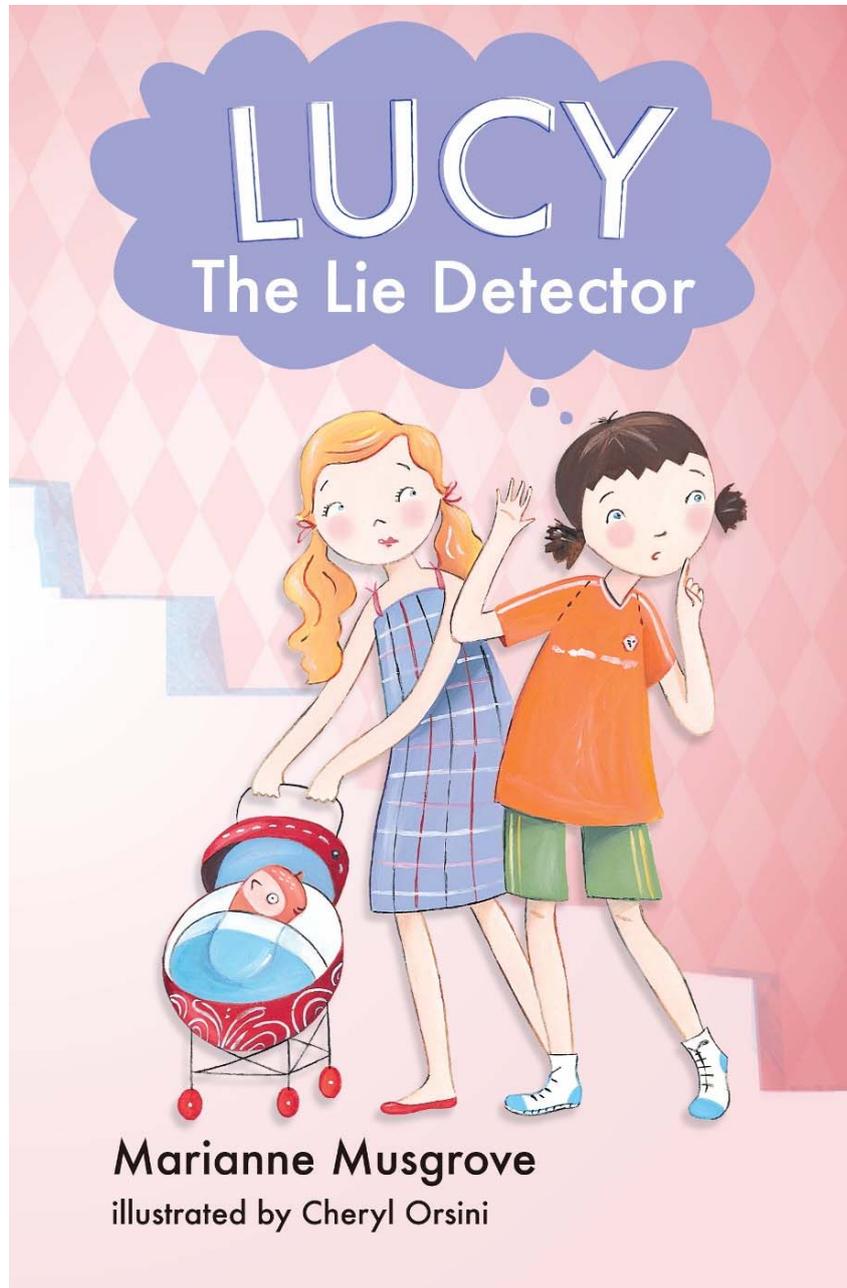


Lucy the Lie Detector

by Marianne Musgrove



Teachers' Notes

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Lucy the Lie Detector Teachers' Notes

Contents

The Lucy series

About the author

Introduction to *Lucy the Lie Detector*

Synopsis

Origin of the story

Structure & style

Themes

Discussion questions

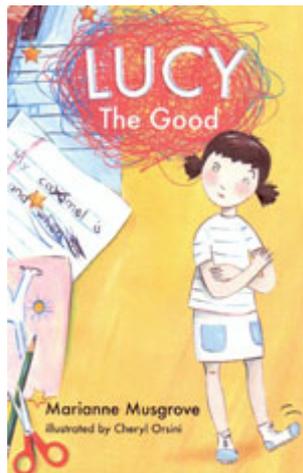
Activities

Information on Guinea Pigs

The Lucy series

The concept behind the Lucy series is that each book explores a different life question. In *Lucy the Lie Detector*, that question is what is truth? In book one of the series, *Lucy the Good*, Lucy is on a mission to discover what does it mean to be good?

More on *Lucy the Good*



Lucy van Loon knows she's a good girl. So why is she always sitting on the Time Out chair? After all, she had a very good reason for tipping Jacinta's unicorn pencils all over the floor. And she only had a shriek because her grumpy aunt called her a bad girl and a greedy liar, which was UTTERLY not true. But what if Lucy is bad? Her aunt has brought something from Holland that Lucy wishes she'd never seen. Now she has to figure out how to avoid it, and fast. It's time to prove she really is Lucy the Good. But how?

About the author

South Australian author, Marianne Musgrove, is a descendant of King Henry VIII's librarian so you could say books are in her blood. At age ten, she won the Sinbad Award For The Most Outlandish Stories To Be Written, in high school, she received the Award For The Least Changed Hairstyle, and in 2007, her first novel, *The Worry Tree*, won the Australian Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature (Younger Readers). It was also short-listed for 2007 National Children's Peace Literature Award, the 2008 Queensland Premier's Literary Award and the 2008 SA Festival Awards for Literature. A trained social worker, law school drop-out and one time tomato-picker, Marianne has also written *Lucy the Good* and *Don't Breathe a Word*, both of which have been short-listed for awards. She has since changed her hairstyle.

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Introduction to *Lucy the Lie Detector*

When Lucy accidentally scratches Dad's brand-new car, one small mistake turns into an enormous fib involving Lucy's best friend Harriet, Lucy's worst enemy Jacinta, a telepathic camel and a guinea pig with an escape plan. Is it time for Lucy the Lie Detector to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Award-winning author Marianne Musgrove brings her light touch to a story about the complicated nature of the truth, that is laugh out loud and heart-warming in equal measure. *Lucy the Lie Detector* is the second book in the Lucy series, following *Lucy the Good*. It is suitable for children aged 6 to 9.

Synopsis

When is a lie not a lie? What's the difference between a rule and a law? And why are there so many rules anyway? These are some of the questions Lucy van Loon ponders as she finds herself in trouble once again.

When Lucy accidentally scratches Dad's beloved Toyota, she paints over it, hoping Dad won't notice. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, he discovers her handiwork. Under pressure, Lucy blames it on her five year old brother, Calvin, and Dad punishes Calvin by banning him from playing with his friend the next day.

Lucy feels badly but she is afraid that if she confesses, Dad won't let her go on the camel ride with Harriet that day. She determines to confess all when she returns. That way, Calvin can still go to his friend's and Lucy can go camel riding. Nevertheless, the lie eats away at her all day.

At the beach, Lucy accidentally lets the camel escape. She alerts the camel guide and he mistakenly thinks someone else set the camel loose and that Lucy has saved the day. He rewards Lucy and Harriet with a free camel ride. Harriet believes it is a lie to accept the free ride under false pretences but Lucy reasons that it is only a lie if you have said something untruthful out loud.

Back at home, Lucy confesses that she falsely accused her brother. Calvin is very hurt by her betrayal.

Dad is a member of a school fundraising committee and the meeting is being held at the home of Lucy's arch nemesis, Jacinta Preston. The two girls are forced to play together for the duration of the meeting. Jacinta is hiding her pet guinea pig, Miss P., in her bedroom. Jacinta will be punished if Miss P. is discovered by her mother. In a short space of time, Lucy becomes attached to Miss P. and decides to help Jacinta return the guinea pig to her cage before she is discovered.

Later, Jacinta's mother arranges for Lucy to feed Miss P while the Prestons are on holidays. Lucy fibs to her dad that she is allowed to bring Miss P. home to their place. Unfortunately, Miss P. escapes into the van Loon's backyard. Lucy convinces a reluctant Calvin to help. Harriet joins in the hunt and the three children build a trap. They try to distract the now suspicious adults but Miss P.'s disappearance is discovered. Mum and Dad pitch in to help find her, though Lucy is still in trouble.

Lucy eventually catches Miss P. but there is a problem: having had a taste of freedom, Miss P. is now somewhat feral, leaping around manically. After a discussion about whether or not to tell the Prestons the guinea pig had escaped, Lucy knows she must confess the truth. Dad and Lucy go to the Prestons and Jacinta is livid over Lucy's lie. Jacinta's mother decides that since Miss P. is now feral, she will need to be given away. Jacinta is distraught and Lucy feels guilty. Lucy suggests to Dad that the Prestons build a guinea pig run to give Miss P. adequate room to accommodate her more energetic self. Mr Preston agrees and Jacinta is grateful to Lucy. The two dads enlist the help of their daughters and Lucy and Jacinta become not-quite friends but no longer enemies.

Origin of the story

When I was ten years old, my cousins went on holidays and asked my family to look after their guinea pig for three weeks. As luck would have it, the guinea pig escaped and we spent the next three days attempting to catch it. Some years later, I was speaking to a school group and one of the students asked me if I had any pets. I told

them the story of my cousin's guinea pig. A short time later, I dreamt about this guinea pig and when I woke up, I had the plot for *Lucy the Lie Detector*.

I picked truth and lies as a theme because telling the truth is such a complicated issue, especially when you're young. On the one hand, you are told lying is always bad. On the other hand, if someone has a bad haircut and asks you what you think of it, you are taught to say it is nice, regardless of your true feelings. I wanted to explore these grey areas in a humorous way, casting Lucy in the role of Lie Detector.

Structure & style

The story is told in the third person from the perspective of Lucy, the main character. It consists of twenty-four chapters and the action takes place over several days. The scenes focus on the different kinds of lies a person might confront throughout their day.

Lucy is very imaginative and the book is peppered with short scenes in which she daydreams about ways to overcome the difficult situations in which she finds herself.

The style is humorous and light-hearted although there are some dramatic scenes when Miss P., the guinea pig, goes missing.

In the back of the book, there is section devoted to guinea pig facts and instructions on how to care for them.

Theme 1

- Truth/lies
 - Telling the truth is a complicated matter. Children are advised to be truthful under all circumstances while, at the same time, adults regularly tell white lies, eg, Dad and Mum have made a pact to diet but when Lucy catches Dad eating a piece of cake, he asks Lucy not to tell Mum. Similarly, when Lucy catches Mum eating a TimTam, she asks Lucy to hide her indiscretion as well.
 - Truth-telling is a grey area and the book explores:

- white lies
- pretending versus lying
- lying for personal gain
- how lying breaks trust, and
- whether leaving out certain information to mislead someone (lying by omission) is as bad as explicitly misleading someone.

Discussion questions

1. Think of all the different words for telling a lie (for example, fib, whopper, porkie pie, exaggeration, tall tale, story, talking rubbish, untruth, falsehood, distortion, deception). What exactly is a lie?
2. Why do people tell lies?
3. What is a white lie? In your opinion, is it ever okay to tell them? When Jacinta's mum asks Lucy what she thinks of her artwork, Dad stops her from completing her sentence. In Lucy's eyes, she is only being honest but Dad and Mrs Preston are not impressed by her response. What would you do if you were asked for your opinion and it wasn't favourable, for example, if a friend got a bad haircut?
4. At first, Lucy believes that if she covers up the scratch, Dad will be none the wiser and, therefore, she needn't mention it. Harriet thinks this is the same as lying. Do you agree? Why? Why not?
5. After Lucy blames Calvin for the scratched car, she has to work very hard to win him back. Why is he reluctant to forgive her?
6. Do you think Lucy should have come clean about how the camel escaped? Why? Why not?
7. Calvin accuses Lucy of lying when she says the marmalade jar is a magic potion. Do you think pretending is the same as lying? What makes it different?
8. At first, Dad isn't keen to tell the Prestons that Miss P. has escaped. Instead, he wants to replace Miss P. and pretend it never happened. Mum, however, thinks it's important to be honest. What would you do? Why?

Activity

1. Break into groups and make up a skit where one or more characters tells a lie. Perform the skit then have a class discussion about alternative ways of dealing with the problem.
 2. Write out some scenarios on squares of card and put them in a bag. Each scenario involves a situation where a person has choice about whether or not to tell the truth. Examples include:
 - a) A friend has baked a cake and it tastes terrible. She asks you if you like it. How do you reply?
 - b) Your friend copies your answers during a test. Later, your teacher notices you have identical answers. What do you do?
 - c) You're organising a surprise party for your friend and the only way to get them to the venue without them realising is to trick them.
- Have a student pull out a card at random and debate the alternative courses of action.

Theme 2

- Family
 - Lucy lives with her parents and her younger brother, Calvin. Her parents are migrants from The Netherlands. Dad is the home manager and Mum works as a tram driver. Dad, in particular, is very involved in the children's lives. He interacts with them in a positive way, providing guidance and support.
 - Generally, Lucy gets along very well with Calvin. However, when she falsely accuses him of scratching the car, her relationship with him is strained.
 - Despite being a bossy and somewhat argumentative girl, Jacinta is, at heart, very lonely. Her mother is distant and very concerned with appearances while her father, despite being devoted to her, works overseas much of the time and is therefore frequently absent, giving her gifts rather than the quality time she craves. This is in contrast to Lucy's family.

Discussion questions

1. How are Lucy and Jacinta's families different?
2. Lucy is very concerned /confused/annoyed by rules. Unlike Harriet, she is never entirely certain what the rules are and, even when she is, she wonders why she should have to follow them. Both Jacinta and Lucy's family abide by certain rules. What are some of those rules? (Lucy's house: don't ride your bike near the car, no temper tantrums allowed, don't falsely accuse someone of something you yourself have done. Jacinta's house: keep your bedroom tidy at all times, don't get your clothes dirty, no animals inside the house.)
3. Do you think these rules are fair?
4. All families have rules. What are some of the rules in your family?

Theme 3

- Conflict
 - Lucy is in conflict with a number of the characters, in particular, Calvin (over the false accusation), Jacinta (over who gets to be top dog, Miss P.'s disappearance) and Dad (Lucy telling whoppers).
 - Lucy has quite a temper and this sometimes gets the better of her and makes the situation worse when she doesn't feel able to control it.
 - Lucy is caught in the middle when both her parents ask her to tell a white lie (they each eat something 'naughty' then ask Lucy not to tell the other parent).

Discussion questions

1. Why does Lucy dislike Jacinta in the beginning?
2. How does Calvin feel when he finds out Lucy blamed him for scratching the car? Why does he take so long to forgive her?
3. Lucy has quite a temper and this can make the conflict worse. What makes Lucy mad? What are some of the ways Lucy uses to keep her temper under control?

Activity

Draw a sociogram

The purpose of this exercise is explore the conflictual relationships between each of the main characters.

- Draw a circle in the middle of a sheet of paper and write ‘Lucy’ inside it.
- Draw three other circles surrounding the first circle, leaving as much space as possible between the circles. Write Dad, Calvin and Jacinta in these circles.
- Draw a picture of each character inside their respective circle.
- Draw lines between the outer circles and the central circle and have arrows going both ways.
- Choose an adjective to describe how Lucy feels about each character and another adjective to describe how that character feels about Lucy. Pick a quotation from the book to illustrate this, eg, along the Lucy to Calvin line, you could put ‘guilty’ as the adjective and the quotation could be: “She knew she was supposed to say sorry, but the word wanted to stay in her mouth where it was nice and warm. At last, the guilt got too much for her. ‘Sorry,’ she said softly.” (Ch. 9)
- On the Calvin to Lucy line, you could put ‘hurt’ as the adjective. The quotation could be: “You’re a liar and I hate you!” (Ch. 10)
- If you can’t find a relevant quotation, invent something you imagine that character might say to the other.

Theme 4

- Friendship
 - Lucy and Harriet are best friends. They don’t always agree. In fact, Harriet often pulls Lucy up if she thinks Lucy is doing something wrong.
 - At the beginning of the story, Lucy and Jacinta are enemies. By the end, they have formed an uneasy alliance.

Discussion questions

1. Harriet and Lucy are very different people yet they are still great friends. How would you describe them?
2. What makes Harriet a good friend?
3. Why don’t Lucy and Jacinta like each other?

4. Lucy and Jacinta seem to be becoming friends by the end of the book. How is that so given they were enemies to begin with?
5. Do you think it is possible for enemies to become friends? Why? Why not?

Theme 5

- Siblings
 - See family and conflict.

Theme 6

- Guinea pigs
 - Make a class poster about guinea pigs then hold a quiz to see who knows the most about them.

Information on Guinea Pigs

You can find further information on guinea pigs at your local pet store. Otherwise, you can check out these websites:

- www.rspca.org.au
- www.australiancavysanctuary.com
- www.burkesbackyard.com.au/factsheets/Others/Guinea-Pig/366