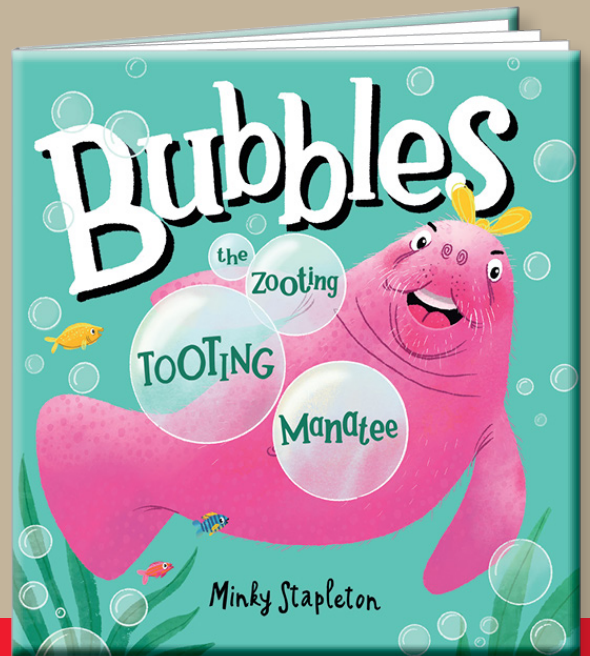


# Bubbles the Zooting, Tooting Manatee

By Minky Stapleton



• Reading • Writing • Science • Art

## Synopsis

Bubbles is a young manatee who lives in peaceful river inlet with her family and friends. She and her young cousins attend daily classes to learn how to move as a manatee should - slowly and gracefully. They also learn how to use flatulence as a flotation device. But Bubbles discovers that the more seagrass she eats the more she toots, and the more she toots the more she zoots! And Bubbles has a need for speed, earning the disapproval of those around her. Her mother is horrified and urges her to behave. Upset, Bubbles considers running away. But when an alligator threatens her friends, Bubbles' huge fart bubble saves the day!

## About the Author/Illustrator

**Minky Stapleton** is a multi-faceted illustrator with a range of styles, all with a heavy dash of dark humour. She spent her formative years as an award-winning Art Director and later Creative Director in Johannesburg, working in some of South Africa's best advertising agencies. After many years of corporate life, she threw it all in to follow her first love, illustration. She now resides in Auckland, where she balances a number of local and international illustration projects with running classes for kids on how to design scary monsters.

Minky has illustrated a number of books for Scholastic New Zealand including *Things in the Sea are Touching Me!*; *Kia Kaha*; *Kia Ora, You Can Be a Kiwi Too*; *My Kiwi Gumboots*; *There's a Bear in the Window* and the redesign of the *My New Zealand Story* series covers. *Roo and Vladimir (an unlikely friendship)*, written and illustrated by Minky, was a finalist in the 2023 NZ Book Awards for Children and Young Adults Best Picture Book category.

# Writing and Illustration Style

*Bubbles the Zooting, Tooting Manatee* is a 32-page paperback picture book that will make you laugh out loud and maybe even toot with laughter! The author, Minky Stapleton, starts the story off on page 3 in a gentle and graceful manner introducing the large extended family of manatees. Then before long, she lets her writing rip ... and plunges the readers into the world of manatee flatulence in a fun-filled, farty way. The book will appeal to children in the 3–7 age group and everyone beyond that age. After all, most people enjoy a good flatulence story. Part way through the story, there's a succinct lesson on how manatees use their farts as a flotation device. At the end, there are some fun, farty facts presented in a non-fiction format and bubble design. A small snail also features on five pages to explain to the readers about some of the French and English words. The main text is written in the third person present tense, and the book's themes are celebrating your differences and finding your own place in the world.

Minky's bright, bold illustrations are created in Adobe Photoshop and Procreate. Bubbles is the charismatic main character brought to life by her many wonderful facial expressions and bodily actions (aka farting), helped along by lots of movement lines and great puffy, billowing clouds of flatulence. The factsheet on page 32 is typeset in Ubuntu. The rest of the text in the book is predominantly hand lettering done by Minky. Parts of the story are set in larger type, on curves and in different colours. The main text is also presented on different angles, which adds to the book's feeling of quirkiness.

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Read the story aloud and have students read alongside you or follow along as you read. Use the questions provided to help guide the students and promote more in-depth discussion. Asking questions about who, what, where, when, why and how can help students understand the text better. Using open-ended questions encourages them to provide more than 'yes' or 'no' answers.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back cover.

- Look at the animal on the front cover. Have you seen an animal like this in a book, a zoo or the wild?
- What do you know about manatees? How do you think they live?
- Have you heard the word 'tooting' before? What might it mean?
- Look at the illustrations on the back cover. What does Bubbles like to do?
- Why might the other manatees find Bubbles and her antics not very elegant or graceful?

### COMPREHENSION:

- Bubbles lives with her mother, aunties and cousins. What does this tell you about how manatees live? (p.3)
- Why do you think that manatees move slowly? (p.3)
- Manatees eat seagrass and mangrove leaves. What does this tell you about their diet? Are they plant eaters (herbivores) or meat eaters (carnivores)? Cows eat grass all day long too. Why do animals such as manatees and cows have to eat so much vegetation each day? (p.3)
- Do you know what the symbols after each of the three larger coloured words on page 4 are? Talk about how the author put an asterisk after these words because she wanted to explain something at the foot of the page, and how the snail's speech bubble contains an explanation that relates to these words. The three words are French, but the English words are very similar. (p.4)
- Bubbles' mum was the most elegant of all the manatees. What did she look like when she performed her swimming move? Why might she be swimming up to the surface of the water? Can manatees breathe under the water or do they need to come up to the surface for air? (p.5)
- How can you tell that the manatees lining up for their daily lesson are a similar age to Bubbles? (p.6)
- If you didn't know what the word 'flottant' in the text means, how can you find out? (p.6)
- Why do you think the five young manatees have such funny facial expressions? Do you think it's easy or hard for them to learn to float, glide, sashay and do pirouettes? (p.7)
- Read the snail's explanation of the word 'pirouettes'. How is the snail trying to be funny? (p.7)
- Look at the manatees on page 8. Why might they all be looking very surprised? What does the 'grand secret flottant' mean? Use the snail's text to help you. What do you think the manatees' big floating secret might be? (p.8)
- Do you know what the heading on the blackboard on page 9 means? Have you heard this word before? Read its explanation directly under it. How might controlling their toots help the manatees to glide up and down? Explain your answer. (p.9)
- Why do you think the manatees on page 10 have picked up the art of floating so easily? Why do you think Bubbles can't glide and float so gracefully as the others? Have you ever done something differently to your friends? Explain how it made you feel. (pp.10–11)



- What does 'lets it rip' mean? The author said that Bubbles could shoot through the water 'like a bullet'. What other ways could she have described Bubbles' speed swimming using the word 'like'? For instance, she could have written 'like a tornado'. (p.11)
- The word 'Squeee!' indicates speed. What other words would also work well here? (p.12)
- What does 'pas de deux' mean? (p.12)
- Bubbles' mum is worried about what the aunties will think. Do you think she herself minded that Bubbles liked speed? Explain your answer. Have you worried about what other people might think of something that you've done? How did it work out? (p.13)
- Bubbles practises and experiments all day long. What does this tell you about how she felt about tooting and zooting? (p.14)
- A pod of jellyfish is a group of jellyfish. What other names do you know that are given to groups of animals, such as a *pride of lions*? (p.15)
- Why did Bubbles' mum want Bubbles to slow down around the school of fish? Think about the size of Bubbles compared to her small fish friends. (p.17)
- Look at the facial expressions of old Turtle Hank and Bubbles. What do their expressions tell you? (pp.18–19)
- The illustrations are so expressive in this picture book that you could retell the whole story using only the pictures. How would you retell pages 18 and 19? (pp.18–19)
- Sea turtles are usually slow swimmers, but they can swim at bursts of speed. Would old Turtle Hank be expecting a manatee like Bubbles to be flying through the long seagrass? Why or why not? (p.19)
- What would the horrified aunties be thinking about Bubbles right now? (p.20)
- Have you ever had the words 'That's it! Time out!' shouted at you? Were you put in time out? How did it make you feel? What else could Bubbles' mum have said instead? How else could she have handled the situation without yelling or putting Bubbles in time out? (p.21)
- Bubbles sat in the seagrass and felt sad, mortified, upset and so mad. Was she right to feel that way? Should she just be herself or be like all the other manatees? (pp.22–23)
- Bubbles wondered why the others couldn't just accept her and her differences. Have you ever felt like that? How did you resolve those feelings? (p.23)
- Long ago, when people felt like running away from their situation at home or work, they often ran away to the circus. What do you notice about the other things that Bubbles said she could be? Are they boring and ordinary or fun and exciting? (pp.24–25)
- Bubbles saw the alligator hunting her fish friends. Why might the alligator have chosen to hunt down the fish rather than chase the manatees? Think about the size of the manatees and how hard it would be to bite and swallow a large manatee and how difficult it would be to drag them under the water like alligators do when they hunt other animals. (pp.24–25)
- When Bubbles cried out to her friends, they didn't notice the alligator. What do you think Bubbles is going to do next? (p.27)
- Was your solution the same as the author's solution or different? Do you think having the alligator engulfed in a fart bubble was a good idea? Why or why not? Did you expect that to happen? (p.29)
- The manatees were watching the alligator float away in the big bubble. They looked calm and relaxed. How do you think the alligator was feeling? (p.30)
- In the end, Bubbles got to be herself and do what she liked doing best after her good deed. Why was that the best outcome for Bubbles and other manatees that might be born in future years? How is being a trailblazer (an individual who is the first to do something) both scary and rewarding? (p.31)
- Why was Bubbles' name perfect for a farting manatee? (p.32)



# Activities

## ACTIVITY 1: TOOTS AND FLUFFER-DOODLES!

There are different words for the word 'fart'. Ask the class to brainstorm words for fart or the act of farting.

The author uses the word 'toots'. On page 11, she said that Bubbles 'lets it rip'. In fact, there are many words and phrases that are fart related. For example, you could say when you farted that you broke wind, cut the cheese, dropped a bomb, beeped your horn, passed gas or let out a stinker. The actual word for a fart could be a bottom burp, an air biscuit, a trump, a frump, a toot, a fizzer, a honker, a fluffy, a putt-putt, a stinker, a raspberry or a fluffer-doodle!

Together as a class, choose your five favourite fart words (verb phrases and/or nouns) and then create a class mural with the manatees saying them.

## ACTIVITY 2: SNAIL TALK

On page 6, there's a green asterisk after the word 'FLOTTANT' in the text. An asterisk is a star-shaped symbol (\*) that's most commonly used to signal a footnote. The asterisk is placed after a word or a sentence in the main text that has a footnote attached to it. The footnote usually defines or explains a word or an idea more in-depth. In this case, the footnote at the bottom of page 6 has the snail explaining that the word 'FLOTTANT' is 'French for floating'. The snail makes five appearances throughout the book, and each time, it explains about some of the French and English words. Imagine that the snail isn't commenting on this at all. Instead, it's saying something about what Bubbles and her mum, aunts and cousins are getting up to. For example, on page 4, the snail's speech bubble might say: *Snails move slowly too!* Create five speech bubbles (relating to pages 4, 6, 7, 8 and 12) and write a snail comment in each of them. Work in groups, then share your five speech bubbles with the rest of the class. This could be a class activity if more teacher input is necessary.

## ACTIVITY 3: PIROUETTE LESSON

On page 9, the manatee teacher gave a lesson on manatees and flatulence. Imagine that you're the manatee teacher and are teaching your students about the word 'pirouette' in a ballet dance class. Draw a manatee doing a pirouette (use pages 7 and 10 to help you) and then write a brief explanation about what a pirouette is. You could include one or two fun facts, such as: *Pirouette means 'to whirl about on one foot'*. Work in pairs or groups.

## ACTIVITY 4: FOUR FUN, FARTY FACTS

Many people like reading about things that are true. On page 32, the author wrote some fun, farty facts that relate to manatees. Write four fun, farty facts that relate to humans. For example: *Humans fart about 13 to 21 times a day. A fart's speed can be about 11 kilometres per hour. A scientist who studies farts is called a flatologist.* You could work together in groups or have this as a teacher-led class activity. Use the Internet to help you.

## ACTIVITY 5: JOKES FOR ALL FOLKS

Farts can be funny when you're aged five, six and even seventy-six! Reading about farts is just as hilarious. In fact, there are so many children's books about farts, and it doesn't stop there. There are also butt books and poop books! Since these topics seem to be extra funny for children, you could make your own children's book. As a class, create a fun-filled book loaded with fart, butt and poop jokes. Use the Internet to help you find lots of suitable jokes for kids. Each student could write out and illustrate one joke, and then combine them all into a class big book for the reading area for everyone to share.

## ACTIVITY 6: WHAT NEXT...?

At the end of the story, the alligator floats away out to sea, never to be seen again. Bubbles and her fellow manatees might never see the alligator again, but the drama doesn't stop there for the alligator! Pretend you're a storyteller and tell your audience about the alligator floating away in the big bubble and then landing in some strange place. In your storytelling, explain where the alligator landed and what happened to it after that. This is a mini short story, so keep it to one main event. For example, the alligator might have landed in a land of giant people, and it ended up as a giant child's alligator bath toy and got to play with bubbles in a bubble bath every single night. Practise your short story and then tell it to the rest of the class.

Written by Janine Scott



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC