

REAL PIGEONS FIGHT CRIME

Teachers Notes

Written by Andrew McDonald

Art by Ben Wood

Published by Hardie Grant Egmont in July 2018

SUMMARY

Ever wonder why pigeons always act so weird? It's because they're out there chasing the bad guys and saving everyone!

Real Pigeons Fight Crime is based on the premise that the city is protected by a secret squad of crime-fighting pigeons.

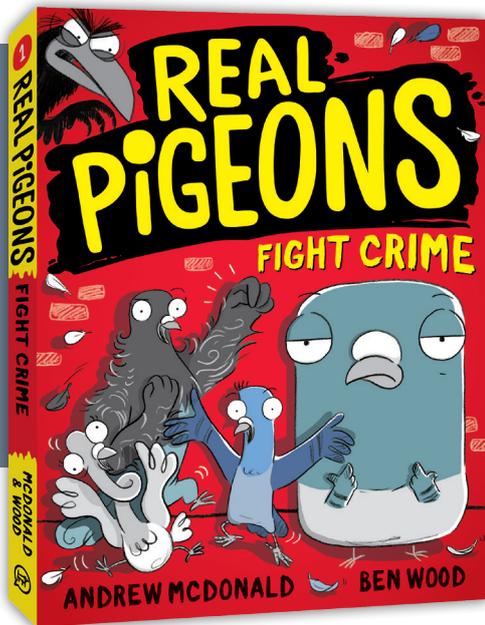
With master of disguise Rock Pigeon, bendy Tumbler, strong Frillback and super-finder Homie, the REAL PIGEONS will solve any mystery and fight any bad guy to keep the city safe!

Perfect for fans of **Aaron Blabey's *Bad Guys*** and **Dav Pilkey's *Dog Man*** books, the *Real Pigeons* series is a hilariously silly and highly visual introduction to the joys of reading and crime-fighting for readers 6+.

In the first book of the series *Real Pigeons Fight Crime*, Rock and his mystery-solving friends will tackle their first caseload: Why have all the breadcrumbs disappeared? Who on earth is kidnapping bats? And can the pigeons avert a dinner disaster?

THEMES

- Environmental issues and sustainability
- Teamwork
- Friendship
- Problem Solving
- Humour



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AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Andrew McDonald is a reader and writer of books for young readers. His first children's novel, *The Greatest Blogger in the World* featured the story of Charlie Ridge, a young blogger navigating family, friends and the internet. His second novel *Son of Death*, a black comedy about a family of modern grim reapers, was published in 2015.

Andrew is an avid reader of children's and YA literature. He has worked for Readings bookshop in Melbourne and at the flagship Foyles bookshop on Charing Cross Road in London, where he was thrilled to put his knowledge to work as a children's bookseller. He has previously judged the Young Adult category of the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards and the Centre for Youth Literature's Inky Awards.

Andrew is a graduate of RMIT's Professional Writing and Editing diploma and his writing has taken him around the world. He completed an artist residency at Caldera Arts in Oregon, USA and a May Gibbs Children's Literature Trust fellowship in Adelaide.

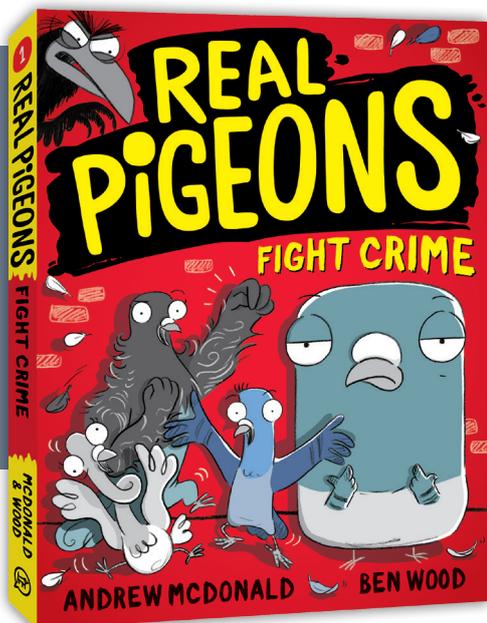
He is a regular presenter on the schools circuit in Australia, conducting writing workshops; talking about his writing life; and sharing the stories and experiences behind his books.

Ben Wood is a freelance illustrator based in Sydney and NSW region, Australia. Having been an illustrator for 10 years, he has developed a wide range of illustration styles and skills using both traditional and digital tools. He is a multi-talented illustrator who can be innovative and creative, and can also follow current styles depending on what is needed.

Working with a diverse range of creative agencies in Australia, USA and Europe, Ben prides himself on his flexible illustration ability. Having worked with creative design studios, marketing teams, and publishing firms, Ben creates brief-specific illustrations that offer an exciting solution.

When not drawing in his studio, Ben visits schools to teach students about the world of publishing, character design, and the joys of creating stories.





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WRITING STYLE

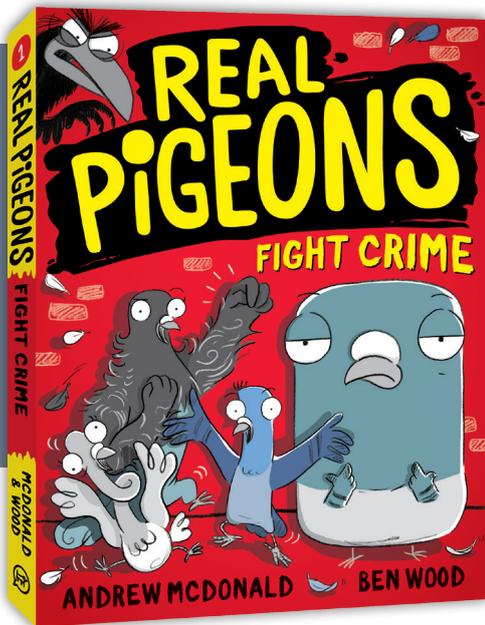
Real Pigeons Fight Crime is a humorous, illustrated series written specifically for younger or less confident readers. With highly engaging illustrations, *Real Pigeons* is perfect for building reader confidence in ages 6 – 10.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

Andrew was motivated to write a series for younger readers that might make them look at everyday situations a little differently. He wanted the series to be engaging and entertaining, and thought provoking at the same time. Mostly, he just wants children to find books they love to read.

MARKETING PROMOTION

Real Pigeons Fight Crime is a series that Hardie Grant Egmont is highly committed to making a success. Special offer dumpbins are being designed for in store distribution. There will be a very special advance mailing to key booksellers, teachers and librarians. Digital marketing includes web banners, cover reveals and advance promotion on company, author and illustrator channels, with key influencers also being engaged to promote. Andrew and Ben will be doing school and bookseller events in Victoria and NSW for Book 1.



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STUDY NOTES AND ACTIVITIES

- *Real Pigeons Fight Crime* is based on the premise that Pigeons, though seemingly harmless birds, are actually hidden heroes saving humans and animals from danger. Ask students to think about other animals in their lives, or neighborhood's, even their local zoo. Could these animals have secret super powers or thoughts? Ask students to choose animals they see every day and give them character profiles. Write a short story about an adventure these animals might have.

- Ask students if they knew there were different kinds of pigeons. Ask them to research the different types of pigeon breeds, chose a favourite pigeon to become a character in *Real Pigeons Fight Crime*.

- Students can then write a character synopsis for their chosen pigeon. What would they name their pigeon? What pigeon powers would their pigeon have? Where would they live? Ask students to draw their pigeon.

Suggested sites for research

- <http://www.pigeonrescue.org/resources/types-of-pigeons/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_pigeon_breeds

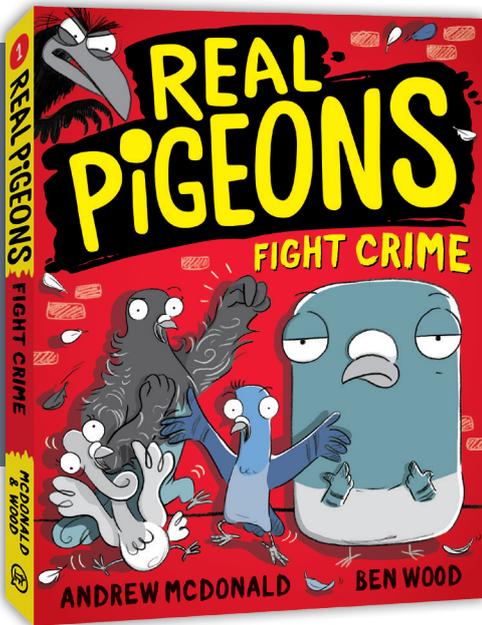
- Ask students to list possible enemies pigeons need to be wary of. In *Real Pigeons Fight Crime* cats and crows are listed as enemies. What or who else might present as a threat to pigeons?

- Ask students what they know about bats. How do they feel about bats? Why might some people think bats are creepy? Why might people want bats removed from a public park?

- Megabat says he can sing in sonar. Ask students to research what this means and share with the rest of the class why sonar is important for bats. Are bats the only creatures that use sonar to navigate or communicate? Can students list others?

- Ask students to draw a map of the park the Real Pigeons use as a home base. Be sure to include key features of the park.

- Frillback gets her super strength from eating sausages! Ask students to think of three foods that might make them feel super strong after eating. Students can then gather in groups to compare food choices, who has chosen the same foods? Has anyone chosen a food no one else has chosen?



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STUDY NOTES AND ACTIVITIES CONT.

- Ask students if they know what a fortuneteller is. Ask students to pretend to be fortunetellers and write a fortune for their classmate.
- Ask students whom of all the characters would they want for a friend? Why? What would they do or talk about together?
- Ask students to design a newspaper headline and front page telling the community about the Real Pigeons and their escapades.
- Ask students to keep a diary as if they were a character in the story. Write down events that happen during the story and reflect on how they affected the character and why.
- Ask students to chose a pigeon character from *Real Pigeons* and interview one another as though they were on the evening news. What questions would a reporter ask if they were interviewing one of the Real Pigeons?
- Use the story as the basis for a court trial; what if Megabat or Monster Crow had to be put on trial? Assign all the traditional roles to students for a courtroom trial. Students can be witnesses, called to testify, judge, jury, bailiff, or court reporter.
- Ask students to list and share other books that feature animals as characters. Examples might include picture books or middle grade fiction. Ask them to compare and contrast characters from *Real Pigeons* and their chosen other title. (A good example is *Aaron Blabey's – The Bad Guys*)
- Ask students to write a new story featuring their chosen character from *Real Pigeons* and the chosen character from the other title. How would they work together? Would they be friends or enemies? Could they solve mysteries together? What adventures would they have?