



2009
FINALISTS

JUNIOR FICTION



Chicken Feathers

Joy Cowley, David Elliot (illus)

Puffin

ISBN 978-0-14330-390-9 pb, RRP \$17.95

Target Age 9+

Josh is a worrier – and for good reason. Grandma has arrived to run the household while Josh's dad is busy with their chicken farm, and his mother's in hospital about to give birth. Then there's Semolina, Josh's cantankerous but extraordinary pet hen. In return for prawn crackers and the odd beer she'll tell Josh all the animal gossip. *Chicken Feathers* is a warm and funny tale about a very special friendship.



Joy Cowley's books are loved by children all around the world. Many of them have featured as finalists and winners in the Aim and New Zealand Post Book Awards. In 2008 *Snake and Lizard* was the New Zealand Post Book of the Year.



David Elliot is an award-winning children's illustrator and author, who has achieved national and international success. Over the last ten years, David has illustrated a wide range of children's books, including poetry, short stories, novels and picture books.

Great Activity and Event Ideas...

1. There are a lot of good descriptions of Semolina in this story. Find some of them and read them again. Imagine how Semolina might describe Josh and Grandma (remember she calls humans 'biggies'). Try and imagine what she would see with a hen's eye when she looks at humans. If you read some of the dialogue between her and Josh, you might be able to pick up some clues about how Semolina might express herself.
2. Nobody believes Josh when he tries to tell them about Semolina talking to him. Find the bits in the story where this happens and describe in your own words how it makes Josh feel. Think about how you would feel, and write it as if you were Josh keeping a diary. You could also describe what happens right at the end when Semolina finally says something in front of everybody. How do you think Josh's family would feel when they knew he had been telling the truth?
3. Do you think the writer likes birds and animals, especially pets? What makes you think so? When you have answered, check out what Joy has written in the front of the book (the part that starts "This book is dedicated to") to see if you are right.
4. The chickens at Josh's poultry farm are raised in barns. You may have seen eggs at the supermarket described as "barn laid" while others are described as "free range." Find out the main differences between these styles of raising hens. What do you think is the kindest way to raise hens?
5. Have a competition to see who can do the best chicken noise imitation. No roosters allowed!



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Activity

In Question One, you wrote a description of how Semolina sees her human family. Now imagine you are the illustrator of this book and do a drawing of Grandma the way Semolina might see her. Remember how small she is compared to people, and also think about how Semolina feels about Grandma, what happens between them, and how you might show that in your drawing.