

# RANDOM HOUSE TEACHERS' RESOURCE KIT

## The Loblolly Boy and the Sorcerer

James Norcliffe

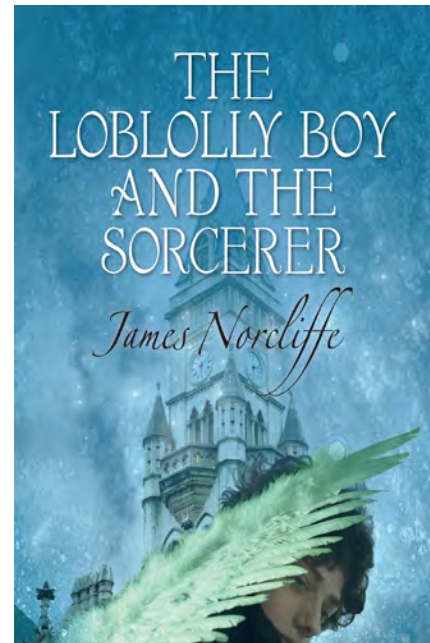
The exciting sequel to *The Loblolly Boy*, the winner of the 2010 NZ Post Award for Junior Fiction.

How do you escape from being the loblolly boy? The answer is simple: find the boy who stole your life and Exchange. But when the loblolly boy seeks help from the mysterious Captain Bass, he discovers it's not going to be simple. Standing in his way will be the Jugglers, the unpredictable Gadget Man and the sinister Sorcerer. Lost in a strange town with only one friend — the feisty Mel — the loblolly boy has to deal with the biggest obstacle of all: Benjy, the treacherous boy who stole his life.

*The Loblolly Boy and the Sorcerer* is a poignant yet magical and inventive tale written with the sure hand of an author whose characters are as much grounded in the real world as the fantastic and whimsical whirl he creates around them. This magical and astonishing story, full of lurches and unexpected twists, will keep readers captivated from beginning to end.



James Norcliffe is a poet, editor and the author of several fantasy novels for young people. The most recent, *The Loblolly Boy*, has been published in the United States (as *The Boy Who Could Fly*). James lives at Church Bay, Lyttelton Harbour, and teaches at Lincoln University's Foundation Studies department.



### SPECIFICATIONS:

Imprint: Longacre  
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Format: Paperback  
Extent: 224pp  
Readership: 9+

### RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Before reading
- Language
- Characters
- Creative responses
- After reading

Price (GST inclusive) and author details are correct at the time of writing but are subject to change without notice. Visit [www.randomhouse.co.nz](http://www.randomhouse.co.nz) for up-to-date information.

## Before reading

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1. What does the cover picture indicate that the book is about?
2. When and where might the story be set?
3. What does the title suggest to you?
4. This novel is the sequel to *The Loblolly Boy*. Write a one page summary of the previous book to explain to readers what it is about.
5. Choose another book that is a sequel. Write a description of the book and/or an author study.

## Language

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1. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that might otherwise be difficult to express. Metaphors and similes are examples of figurative language. An example of a metaphor is, 'He was a loose cannon' (p. 174) and an example of a simile is, '... it was as solid as a rock wall' (p. 169). Find more examples of metaphors and similes from the book.

a poem or paragraph about a body of water in your local area using personification.
2. What do you think the genre of this book is? List the aspects that are indicative of this genre.
3. The story is told in the third person. Why do you think the author chose to do this? Was it effective? Choose a passage in the book and rewrite it in the first person narrative.
4. The loblolly boy wonders what being 'in the pink' means (p. 38). What does this saying mean? Where does this saying come from? Find five other sayings in the book and research the same questions.
5. The author uses symbolism in the book. What might the following phrases symbolise:
  - bed of roses (p. 119)
  - cold feet (p. 123)
  - dog's breakfast (p. 136)
6. The author uses personification to help describe inanimate objects. For example, '... the tongues of the waves' (p. 29). Write
7. The author uses animal imagery in some similes. For example, 'The tiny skeleton ran towards the door and then shimmied up it like a lizard ...' (p. 180). Write a simile using each of the following animals: rabbit, cheetah, kiwi, bear and hippopotamus.
8. The author also uses food imagery in some similes. For example, 'He was beginning to feel like some sort of pancake flipped from pan to pan ...' (p. 155). Write a simile using five of your favourite foods.
9. What figure of speech are the following words examples of: 'plinkety-plunked' (p. 25), 'DING! DONG! BOING! BANG!' (p. 73) and 'Bam! Bam!' (p. 158). Think of five more examples of this figure of speech and write a poem or descriptive paragraph which includes these words.
10. 'Badmouth' (p. 161) and 'underhand' (p. 191) are blend or portmanteau words. What does this mean? Who invented the figure of speech 'portmanteau'? Find examples of some more blend words from the novel.
11. The loblolly boy says he wished he had been warned about the Gadget Man's awful puns (p. 193). List the puns the Gadget Man makes (pp 185–186). Think of more examples of puns.

12. Find definitions for the following words from the novel and write one sentence for each.

- ominous (p. 23)
- odious (p. 101)
- sliver (p. 147)
- coy (p. 210)
- effervescent (p. 234)
- dexterity (p. 44)
- sullen (p. 118)
- saunter (p. 163)
- wistful (p. 231)
- eccentric (p. 282)

## Characters

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1. Think of three adjectives to describe Ben and Benjy when they are each the loblolly boy.
2. Describe Ben's reaction to the following events:
  - Being tricked into Exchanging into the loblolly boy again.
  - Seeing his father in the café.
  - Witnessing Mel being harassed by bullies.
  - Being transformed into a cockatoo.
3. List the qualities of Mel's personality and find examples of when she displays each of these qualities.
4. Look at the list of names that Ben has been called by the Captain, the Sorcerer and Benjy (pp. 153–154). Find an example of when he behaves accordingly from the book.
5. Draw a picture of one of the characters based on their physical descriptions. For example, Captain Bass (p. 20), Mel (pp 75 and 113), Benjy (p. 117) or the Gadget Man (pp 177 and 185).
6. Write a character summary of one of the following characters: Ben, Captain Bass, Janice, the Sorcerer, Benjy or the Gadget Man.

## Creative responses

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### Chapter One

1. When Ben first becomes the loblolly boy again, 'He had almost forgotten how exhilarating flying was' (p. 15). Write a poem or descriptive paragraph about how you imagine it would feel to fly.
2. When Michael returns the Hornby locomotive to the loblolly boy it is 'all he cared about at that moment . . .' (p. 16). Do you have an object or possession that is really important to you? What is it? Why is it important? Imagine it has been taken from you. Write a letter to whoever took it explaining why it is important and why it they should return it to you.
3. Ben thinks that 'His stepmother was so horribly awful she would surely have made the boy's life a non-stop misery' (p. 17). Think of a fairytale in which the stepmother character is awful and makes another character's life a misery. Re-write and illustrate the tale as a children's book.
4. Ben's family do not know that he 'had been usurped and there was an imposter in his place' (p. 17). Find and research another historical figure that was usurped. What were the consequences of this event? Present your findings to your class.
5. Captain Bass sings the loblolly boy an old sea shanty (p. 23). In groups, study other

sea shanties and then compose and perform your own sea shanty for your class.

6. The Captain attends to his crab and crayfish pots (p. 35). Where are the fishing areas around New Zealand? What are the laws and regulations surrounding them? Which species of fish are allowed to be fished and which methods are permitted to be used?
7. The Captain points out to Ben that most telescopes look through space (p. 35). Visit or research the observatory closest to you and write about the star constellations, planets, or recent discoveries that have been seen through the telescope there.

## Chapter Two

1. The author describes the town that the loblolly boy flies over (p. 43). Write a descriptive paragraph about the area where you live.
2. The loblolly boy is part of a crowd that watches the Jugglers perform at a country fair (pp 44–46). Design a marketing and advertising campaign for their act. For example, you could create posters, radio or television advertisements and jingles, and a slogan.
3. Ben tells the Jugglers that when he saw them 'it looked like a prophecy was being fulfilled.' (p. 54). What is a prophecy? Find out who else in history has been a prophet or made prophecies and whether or not they have been fulfilled?
4. The Jugglers feel that Ben finding them 'is a case of mistaken identity' (p. 55). Research another case of mistaken identity from history. Write a short story based on your chosen case.
5. The Jugglers use doves in their juggling act (p. 63). Divide the class into two teams and debate the pros and cons of using animals in live performances or for entertainment.
6. The author describes the doves as flying in a 'small phalanx' (p. 63). What is a phalanx and when was it used?

## Chapter Three

1. The author describes dawn breaking (p. 69). Write a haiku about either the sunrise or sunset.
2. From his vantage point, the loblolly boy can see a war memorial in the city centre (p. 70). Is there a war memorial in your local area? Which war does it commemorate?
3. In order to get down from a tree, the loblolly boy 'then Tarzan-fashion swung from branch to branch until he landed on the grass' (p. 74). Who wrote the original Tarzan story? Write an author biography on him.
4. Mel knows three boys named Ben and the loblolly boy thinks this is because Ben is a common name (p. 78). Take a poll of all the names in your class. Does anyone share the same name? Find out what the most common boy and girls names have been in New Zealand over the last few decades. If you could choose your own name what would it be and why? What does the name you chose mean?
5. Mel describes Benjy and his friends as 'lowlife rats' (p. 87). What does this suggest about their personalities and actions? What animal would be symbolic of you, your personality and actions?
6. The loblolly boy wanders down the street to look in shop windows (p. 89). Describe from memory the shop windows and their displays from a street in your local area.

## Chapter Four

1. The Sorcerer's clothes do not look as though they came from the Salvation Army (p. 92). What kind of organisation is this? What kind of work do people do there?

Is there a Salvation Army or an equivalent organisation in your local area?

2. The Sorcerer is busking on the street (pp 92–94). Find out from your local council what the busking laws in your area are.
3. The Sorcerer's eyes 'seemed as old as time, like coal, like anthracite, aeons old' (pp. 93–94). Write a timeline of major events from throughout history.
4. When he was busking The Sorcerer 'bowed deeply, as if he'd been performing at the Royal Albert Hall' (p. 95). What is this building? Where is it located? What other famous buildings or landmarks are in this city? Choose one to study. What famous buildings or landmarks are there in your local area or country? What is their purpose?
5. The Sorcerer shows the loblolly boy a small ivory rat (p. 95). Research the history of the ivory trade.
6. The author describes the restaurant the Sorcerer dines in (pp 98–99). Describe in writing an interior space of your choice.
7. The Sorcerer describes the loblolly boy as being 'trapped in the limbo land of the loblolly boy' (p. 102). What is limbo? What is the origin of this concept?
8. The Sorcerer cannot understand why the loblolly boy would want to give up being invisible and the 'opportunities for fun!' that it would present (p. 108). Imagine if you were invisible for a day. What would you do?

## Chapter Five

1. During the weekdays the loblolly boy only sees bigger kids and the odd truant at the skateboard area (pp 109–110). What is a truant? What are the consequences of truancy at your school?
2. The loblolly boy sleeps in the branches of

a linden tree (p. 110). Find the other trees or plants that are mentioned in the book. Research these. For example, are they native to New Zealand, what do they look like and where do they grow? Write an illustrated report of your findings.

3. At the skateboard ramp, the loblolly boy sees that Mel is very good at skateboarding (p. 111). Choose an activity you are good at and list the skills needed to succeed in it.
4. Mel and a couple of her mates play in an adjacent playground for smaller children (p. 111). Either design a new playground for children in your local area, or investigate an existing playground and make improvements. Create a presentation of your design and improvements for your local council.
5. Mel says that she began to think meeting the loblolly boy was 'a crazy dream' (p. 112). Write a story describing an unusual event that has happened in your life.
6. The loblolly boy says seeing Benjy in his body is 'like seeing yourself in a movie' (p. 116). Draw or write a description of yourself.
7. Benjy asks Mel if she thinks she is 'Robin Hood or the caped crusader?' (p. 117). Who are these people? If you were a hero or superhero what would you look like and what powers would you possess? Describe briefly how you came to have these powers.
8. To the loblolly boy, Benjy's school looks like any other suburban school (p. 121). Draw the school in the novel or your own school.

9. The loblolly boy describes Janice's car as 'the sort of car Janice would drive: a loud look-at-me car' (p. 123). This suggests that inanimate objects can be a reflection of the personality of their owner. Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Why or why not? Take a poll in your class of what

kind of cars everyone would like to own. Do you think each person's choice reflects their personality? What objects do you own that you feel reflect your own personality?

10. Ben lists the things he soon missed once he became the loblolly boy (p. 124). List the five senses and describe something you would miss for each of the senses if you were the loblolly boy.
11. Ben describes himself as a 'fly on the wall' (p. 126). Where would you want to be a fly on the wall and why? Write a description of what you imagine you might witness.

## Chapter Six

1. When he Exchanges with Benjy, Ben feels as though he has 'woken up from a long period of amnesia' (p. 131). What is amnesia? Research and answer the list of questions Ben asks about amnesia (p. 136).
2. Benjy steals a PlayStation game (p. 135). In groups, think of an idea for a new video game, create the pitch and present it to your class.
3. Ben tells his father that it was like he'd been possessed (p. 140). Which cultures and religions believe in possession? How do they deal with it?
4. The loblolly boy asks Ben 'how else are people going to remember you, if you don't leave a mess behind?' (p. 142). Who has been remembered throughout history and for what reasons? Research an infamous dead figure. Write an obituary for them.
5. Ben listens to Mr Findlay's carefully honed lecture about the consequences of shoplifting (p. 145). Imagine you are Mr Findlay. Write out his lecture and present it to your class.

## Chapter Seven

1. Ben collects homegrown tomatoes from his dad's garden (p. 149). Design an instruction manual on how to grow your own tomatoes.

## Chapter Eight

1. The Gadget Man has an object that becomes 'a tiny skeleton, a perfectly articulated miniature skeleton' (p. 179). Draw and label a diagram of the human skeleton.
2. When the loblolly boy sees the Gadget Man's private apartment he 'thought he'd stepped into one of those rooms from a couple of centuries ago that are recreated in museums' (pp 181–182). Research or visit a museum near you. Find and describe items that are exhibited there from a couple of centuries ago.
3. The Gadget Man tells Mel and the loblolly boy that his new version of his singing gorilla will also cook sausages and eggs (p. 184). Plan a prototype of a robot including what it will look like and what it will be able to do.
4. The Sorcerer and the Gadget Man like to play draughts (p. 187). Design a pamphlet describing the rules of draughts or another of your favourite board games.

## Chapter Nine

1. They decide to turn Benjy into a dog because dogs are obedient (pp 200–201). What animal would you choose to turn into and why? What are the qualities of that animal?

## Chapter Ten

1. The policewoman asks Mel to recount the events in the park from her point of view. Choose another bystander found

in the book, such as the park gardener, the Gadget Man or the ambulance driver, and write a description of the events that occur in the park from their point of view (p. 218).

### Chapter Eleven

1. The Sorcerer says 'Au revoir' to the loblolly boy (p. 237). What does this mean? What language is it? Find out how to say this phrase in five other languages.

### Chapter Twelve

1. The author writes that 'There is much truth in the old saying that the best laid plans often turn belly up' (p. 249). What is the original saying the author is referring to? Who wrote it and where is it from? What other common phrases has this playwright coined? Research the playwright and write a biography.
2. The Sorcerer lists some things humans cannot resist (p. 251). Do you agree with his list? Take a poll of your class of things they cannot resist and why.

### Chapter Thirteen

1. Ben is transformed into a sulphur-crested cockatoo (pp 270–271). Research and write an illustrated report on the sulphur-crested cockatoo including details about its habitat, food, calls and mating rituals.

### Chapter Fourteen

1. When the loblolly boy is transformed into a cockatoo he shares a cage with a stuffed parrot (p. 282). What is the job title of someone who stuffs animals? Think of some other unusual jobs and their titles.

### Chapter Fifteen

1. Ben gives his father a summary of what has happened to him (p. 294). Choose a chapter from the book and write a summary.

### After reading

1. Design a health and safety pamphlet on one or some of the issues that are mentioned in the book, such as:
  - bullying (p. 81)
  - smoking (p. 107)
  - drugs (p. 141)
2. Imagine why Benjy chose to become the loblolly boy. Write his story. For example, where did he come from, what was he trying to escape, and how did the loblolly boy manage to Exchange with him?
3. If you had to Exchange who would you want to Exchange with? Why and how would you go about it?
4. Without speaking, act out a character doing something from the book. See how quickly the class can guess who you are and what you are doing.
5. Design your own cover for the novel.
6. Imagine the novel is going to be turned into a film. Look at some movie posters. Notice the pictures and the words. Design a movie poster to advertise it.
7. Get into groups of two or three. Choose a scene from the novel. Write a script and act it out in front of the class.
8. Write a review of the book, aiming it at the readership of your favourite magazine or newspaper.
9. Write your own version of the cover blurb.
10. Choose one of the descriptive passages in the novel that you find particularly effective and use it to set the scene or the mood for your own piece of descriptive writing. Quote the passage as the epigraph for your work and clearly state the source (title, author, publisher, date, chapter and page number).