

The Adventures of
Naughty Nora

14 fun stories of everyday life
for collective worship, assemblies and storytelling
in the classroom

Stephen Cottrell

Contents

	Foreword	6
	Introduction	7
Chapter 1	Naughty Nora cleans up	10
Chapter 2	Naughty Nora discovers the importance of listening.....	17
Chapter 3	A most unusual harvest festival.....	25
Chapter 4	Naughty Nora discovers how fibs grow	34
Chapter 5	Naughty Nora discovers how <i>not</i> to get ready for Christmas	44
Chapter 6	Mrs Watkins has a bright idea.....	52
Chapter 7	What not to keep in your bed.....	59
Chapter 8	Naughty Nora gives up nothing for Lent.....	67
Chapter 9	The true meaning of Easter.....	74
Chapter 10	Naughty Nora's favourite day of the year	83
Chapter 11	Naughty Nora is transformed	90
Chapter 12	Water, water	98
Chapter 13	What to do on a rainy day	107
Chapter 14	Nora's ark	116
	Bible index	126

Introduction

Naughty Nora is the naughtiest girl in her school.

There is a little bit of naughtiness inside everybody, but just imagine taking all those little bits of naughtiness and putting them inside one person! Well, that gives you some idea of how naughty Naughty Nora is. She is *very* naughty indeed.

But, like many naughty people, as well as getting into trouble, Naughty Nora knows how to say ‘sorry’. She knows about fun, forgiveness, mischief, joy and grace. This book is the story of her adventures.

How to use this book

Stories are a vitally important way of communicating Christian faith. Jesus told stories, and the intention behind the stories about Naughty Nora is that (in a similar way to the parables we find in the Bible) they will encourage children to think through the ideas and make connections to their own experiences of school, home and the teaching of the Christian faith.

At the end of each story, there are suggested questions and Bible references that can help the storyteller to lead the children into a deeper understanding of the story and to encourage them to question and explore it. First of all, though, a story is just that—a story. It is to be read and enjoyed.

I imagine these stories being used in a number of different ways, as outlined overleaf.

In collective worship

Most of the stories in this book began life as school assemblies. This book can therefore be used as a resource book for schools. However, I don't imagine the stories just being read out. Rather, I hope that whoever uses this book will have the courage to retell the story. This takes a bit of practice and a lot of nerve, but I think that most people can do it. Once we have the basic plot inside our head, we can retell a story to others. In this way, I hope that teachers, clergy and others who regularly go into schools to lead collective worship will be inspired by these stories and then make them their own.

At the end of each story, there is a short section headed 'Retelling the story'. This gives a few tips, particularly on the use of props. Most of all, though, you just need to get the story into your head and rehearse it a few times at home—preferably with someone else listening and prompting. A story being told works much better than a story read out in the context of an assembly. It leaves the storyteller free to add their own ideas and other points of local detail that will bring the story even more to life.

The questions to explore with children, biblical references and parallels can be used; there is also a prayer that can be said. All this can be woven into the collective worship in whatever way seems appropriate.

In the classroom

Most primary schools have a time each day—perhaps as part of Literacy Hour—when the children gather on the carpet and a story is read. Naughty Nora's adventures and the questions that can be explored with the children afterwards make a perfect way of using this time. In this context, the stories are better read out than retold.

Other contexts

As well as retelling these stories in assemblies, I have field-tested them all on my own children, reading them aloud at home. Children love having stories read to them. This book is just as relevant for the home as it is for school—either for children to read themselves or for parents to read with them.

All that was said for collective worship above is also true for family services in church. These stories can be retold as part of worship. Many of the stories relate to themes and seasons in the Church year, so Naughty Nora could become a regular visitor at family worship.

At the moment, there is a huge interest in reflective storytelling. Its emphasis on exploring faith through story encourages a sense of wonder and invites children to explore stories through questions, discussion and creative exploration. This collection of stories supports this approach to ministry with children.

Naughty Nora cleans up

Nora Grace is the naughtiest little girl for miles around.

She lives with her mum and dad, her little brother Nat, and their pet cat Pickles, in a small house on the edge of town. She is nine years old, with pigtails and dark brown eyes.

She likes football, loud music, dancing and getting into mischief. She always has a twinkle in her eye. She is always hatching exciting plans. She is quite a handful.

Nora doesn't mean to get into trouble, but she often does. She is one of those people who are fun to be around. She tries to fill every moment of every day with as much adventure as possible, but she doesn't always think carefully about what she is going to do before she does it. At school and at home everyone knows her as 'Naughty Nora'.

On Saturday mornings, Nora and Nat usually play football. They come home tired and happy and covered in mud. But on this particular Saturday—and not for the first time—Nora trudged into the house without taking her boots off.

'Nora!' screamed Mum, coming in behind her.

'Oh, sorry, Mum,' said Nora, looking at the trail of muddy footprints following her across the hall.

'Clear this up, please,' said Mum.

So Nora spent the next ten minutes cleaning the carpet in the hall.

'And now go and clean yourself!' said Mum.

So Nora spent the next twenty minutes in the bathroom,

and when she came downstairs she was squeaky clean.

‘That’s better,’ said Mum. ‘Now please try not to make any more mess today.’



Later in the morning, Nora made herself a large bowl of cereal. She dribbled some honey and a dollop of gooseberry jam over the top. (I forgot to tell you: Naughty Nora does have very strange taste in food.)

She went into the sitting room and started tucking into her cereal hungrily, but then she and Nat got into an argument—like brothers and sisters often do. Nat said that Nora was sitting in his chair, and she said that the chairs belonged to everybody. Then, with the bowl of cereal still on her lap, she reached out to give Nat a good poke. Nat pushed back at her and all of a sudden the bowl of cereal wasn’t on her lap any more, but flying through the air, and gooseberry jam and honey-coated cornflakes were raining down on the carpet. Some landed on Nat, and he ran out of the room, screaming. Some landed on the cat, and she went and hid under the settee. There were quite a few flakes plastered across the television screen... and some on the wall.

Nora was amazed. Could there really have been that many cornflakes in the bowl? The room seemed to be covered in them.

One flake that Nora didn’t notice had landed on the lampshade hanging from the centre of the ceiling. When Dad came into the room to see what the noise was about, he found Nora down on her knees, picking cornflakes out of the carpet.

‘What on earth is going on in here?’ he cried.

‘Cornflakes,’ said Nora. ‘Bit of a disaster. I’m clearing it up.’

‘I should think so,’ said Dad. But at that moment the cornflake on the lampshade fell off and, fluttering downwards, landed on his bald patch.

Nora knew she shouldn’t laugh. She knew she should really be looking solemn and serious. But she couldn’t help it. There are some things you just have to laugh at, whatever the consequences. Dad looked so funny with a large glob of sticky cornflakes on his head. So Naughty Nora spent the rest of the morning in her bedroom.

Mum came to fetch her at lunch time. ‘Will you *please* behave nicely,’ she said. ‘And *please* be more careful. And *please*, no more mess.’



In the afternoon, Nora decided to take herself off on her own. Nat had a friend round and they were playing upstairs. Mum was doing some gardening out the back. Dad was in the kitchen, surrounded by pots and pans, cooking up a feast for tea. He didn’t want to be disturbed. He was wearing his ‘please do not disturb me’ face.

Nora went round to the garage. For some while she had been planning to do something to her bike. It was just an ordinary, fairly boring bike at the moment. She wanted to paint it... and put mirrors and stickers on it... and maybe fly a flag from the back mudguard... or get some really big handlebars... and a bell—or, even better, a horn.

She stood looking at her bike, dreaming of the super-bike she hoped it would become. Well, maybe she could get started this afternoon. There was nothing else to do.

She rummaged about among Dad’s pots of paint. At the back was a tin of black enamel paint. ‘Just the thing for a

bike,' thought Nora. Jet black was the perfect colour.

She carefully opened the tin and gave the paint a stir with a piece of stick. It seemed OK, and the tin was nearly full. She felt sure that Dad wouldn't mind if she borrowed it.

She wheeled her bike on to the front drive, turned it upside down so that it was resting securely on its handlebars, and started painting. Pickles, the cat, wandered out of the house and came and sat on the wall to watch. Before long, most of the metalwork was painted and the bike was gleaming black.

But some of the paint was dripping on to the drive. Nora didn't notice it at first. She should have put down some newspaper before she started, or an old sheet, but in her enthusiasm she hadn't thought of this. When she did see the mess she was making, instead of thinking calmly about how to clear it up, she panicked. She had been kneeling down, and she quickly jumped up.

'Oh, goodness!' she said. 'I must do something.'

But as she jumped up, Nora lost her balance. Taking a step backwards, she put her foot right into the tin of paint. Taking a step forwards, she bumped straight into the bike. The bike fell one way, and Nora fell the other, and the paint went everywhere. When she looked around, there was a puddle of black paint in the middle of the drive, and splatters of black paint all around her and all over her.

She ran to the house to get something to clean up the mess and, for the second time that day, she was leaving a trail of dirty footprints. This time, though, it wasn't mud, which was easy to clean up, but paint. Just as Nora was opening the front door to go in, Mum came round the side of the house. She saw the mess on the drive. She saw the footprints. She saw Naughty Nora about to go indoors.

'STOP!' she shouted. 'Do not take another step. Stand

absolutely still. Do not move a muscle. Do not even breathe.'

Nora froze on the doorstep.

'Now, turn round really slowly, and try not to move your feet more than you have to.'

Nora slowly turned around. It was then that she saw that her shoes were covered in black paint.

'Oh, lummy,' she said.

Mum was about to say something else when Pickles, who had just padded through the puddle of paint herself, gave a loud 'Meow' and jumped up into Mum's arms. Mum was covered with black enamel paint pawprints.

'This really is the limit,' said Mum. 'Nora, roll up your sleeves: you've got some cleaning to do!'

But this mess was too big for Nora to clear up on her own. So, after she had said how sorry she was, and promised that she would always be more careful in the future, and after she had checked that her bike was OK and explained to Dad her plans for it, both she and Mum spent the next hour cleaning and scrubbing the front drive and the porch.

The porch was already quite dirty and hadn't been cleaned for ages. As Nora and Mum scrubbed away, they both calmed down and they even began to enjoy themselves. 'This step needs a good clean,' said Mum.

They also noticed that beneath the paint, and beneath the dirt, there was some sort of pattern to the stones, and some of them even seemed to be a slightly different colour and made of a different material.

'This is interesting,' said Nora.

'Yes,' said Mum. 'Let's keep scrubbing away and see what we find.'

As they cleaned, more of the pattern was revealed, and in between the stones there were thin, rusty red strips of what

seemed to be brick or tile. By the time they'd finished, the front porch looked as good as new, and the step was shown to be made up of different stones and pieces of brick laid out in a criss-cross pattern. They had never seen the pattern before. Dad and Nat came out, and they all stood and admired their new front step. It looked really nice.

'So some good came out of my naughtiness today,' said Nora as she was getting into bed.

'I suppose so,' said Mum. 'Now get some sleep; we've had a most eventful day.'

Nora looked up at her mum as she turned out the bedroom light.

'Washing isn't just about getting rid of dirt, is it, Mum?'

Mum thought for a bit.

'You're right. Cleaning something shows you what's really there. When you had that shower this morning, it wasn't just to get rid of the mud. It was so that we could see the beautiful you, all squeaky and clean.'

'And the step this afternoon,' said Nora. 'We never realized how pretty it was until we cleaned it.'

Mum came over to give Nora a last kiss goodnight and Nora stretched up to hug her mum. As she did so, her elbow caught the edge of the bedside table. On it was her glass of water. It tumbled sideways, splashing all over Mum's feet.

Nora and Mum looked at each other. Neither of them said a word.

'Oh dear,' said Nora, eventually. 'Still, perhaps they needed a clean. Now we'll be able to discover what beautiful feet you've got!'

Mum stared at Nora for another moment with a cross look on her face, but it soon melted into a smile.

'You are without doubt the most exasperating person I know!'



Questions to explore with children

Have you ever cleaned something and discovered that it was more beautiful than you realized? Have you ever got into trouble making a mess, like Naughty Nora, and had to clean it up? I wonder how it feels to discover something really beautiful?



Jesus says...

'Love each other, as I have loved you.'

JOHN 15:12

It is God's love for us in Jesus that makes us clean and whole. It is our love for each other that can bring healing and peace to the world.

In the Bible there are stories about Jesus cleaning, washing and healing people, and revealing how beautiful they are to God. He washes his disciples' feet (John 13:5) and gives them the 'new commandment' to love one another (15:12). He heals ten lepers, but only one comes back to say 'thank you' (Luke 17:11–19). A woman washes Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:36–50). He says that she must have been forgiven a lot because she loves so much.



Prayer

*Caring God,
wash me through and through
so that I can become the beautiful person
I am meant to be. Amen*



Retelling the story

Showing a picture of dirty footprints, or even making some footprints on the floor (as long as they can easily be cleaned afterwards!) would be one way of bringing this story to life.