Coco Banjo is Having a Yay Day
Written and illustrated by N.J. Gemmell

ABOUT THE BOOK
Coco Banjo does not want to go to school today. Instead she's planning a Yay Day of fun on her secret island home on Sydney Harbour, with her friends.

But wait . . . what’s that Secret Signal?
Coco’s best friend N is in danger.
Coco needs to head to Banksia Bay Public after all.
And headmistress Miss Trample will not be happy.

Coco Banjo is a laugh-out-loud series from bestselling author N.J. Gemmell!
PLOT SYNOPSIS

Today is a gorgeous sunny day, and Coco Banjo doesn’t want to go to school. Instead she’s planning a ‘yay day’ of fun at home, playing with her animal friends, swimming, designing a cool fashion outfit, drinking hot chocolate and doing handstands.

Coco lives on a secret island home in the middle of Sydney Harbour. Her fashion stylist mum, Clem, is often away, and although Clem asks an old family friend (aging rock star Rick Ragger) to look after Coco, Coco prefers to be left to her own devices. She and her best friend, Narianna (known as N), send each other secret signals about what they’re doing each day.

But N sends Coco a secret signal from school, and Coco knows it means that N is in trouble. She sets off in her rowboat for Banksia Bay Public School, wearing a uniform that she has customised herself – including a gladiator skirt and a hat with jellybeans on a string.

N isn’t in their classroom, and Coco finds out that N has been sent to the principal’s office? Why? Because apparently N has stolen a precious and very expensive iPad from someone else’s school bag.

Coco knows that N would never do such a thing, because she is always good. She suspects that their classmate Belle has set N up. Belle hates N because N is so smart – and Belle is very good at running to the teachers to tell tales on other kids. Belle never gets in trouble because her mum donates a lot of money to the school.

Coco’s big character defect (according to some) is that when someone she loves is in trouble or the world seems horribly unfair, she acts quickly to help . . . without properly thinking it through.

So Coco runs in to Miss Trample’s office, where N’s parents are meeting the headmistress, and she announces that she was the one who took the iPad out of the bag.

Trouble ensues, with cranky Miss Trample determined to get to the bottom of where Coco’s parents are, where she lives and how she should be punished.

There’s a surprise in store, though, when Coco’s carer, Rick Ragger, is called to the school – and it seems that there might be a way out of this mess after all!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

N.J. Gemmell is the bestselling author of seven novels and four works of non-fiction for adults under her full name, Nikki Gemmell. Her work has received international critical acclaim and been translated into many languages. Nikki is currently a columnist for the Weekend Australian’s Saturday magazine, and a Friday regular on the Today programme in Australia. Born in Wollongong, Nikki lived in London for many years but has now returned to Australia with her family.

Her first books for children, The Kensington Reptilarium and The Icicle Illuminarium, are about the adventures of four Aussie bush kids in London.

Nikki has written and illustrated her latest series for children, Coco Banjo.

AUTHOR’S INSPIRATION

N.J. Gemmell was inspired to write the Coco Banjo series when she was trying to find books that her seven-year-old daughter would like to read.

She says:

My daughter went straight from reading books like Billie B. Brown in kindy to funny books like the Treehouse series, Big Nate and Wimpy Kid. She couldn’t find anything in between to read that grabbed her, to my incredible frustration. And the class readers she was given at school were so earnest and ‘p.c.’ – and had such drab illustrations. It was a chore to plough through them.

I wanted something fun and zippy, that an advanced reader would have a chuckle over (like a comic), but an early reader would find clear and easy to read, too. I can’t underestimate how desperate a lot of us mums are to have a our kids read a book, any book. I leap on a new Wimpy Kid or Treehouse as another distraction from wretched screens, because my daughter will not put those books down when she
There's so much more at randomhouse.com.au/teachers
Meet Coco Banjo!

What do you know about Coco Banjo? Fill in this sheet as you read the story.

Who are Coco’s animal friends?
_________________________________________________________________________

Who is her best friend?
_________________________________________________________________________

What does Coco’s mum do?
_________________________________________________________________________

Where does Coco live?
_________________________________________________________________________

What is the name of Coco’s school?
_________________________________________________________________________

Who is Coco’s teacher?
_________________________________________________________________________

Who else is in her class at school?
_________________________________________________________________________

What does Coco like doing?
_________________________________________________________________________

What things does Coco NOT like?
_________________________________________________________________________
My Yay Day!

You can find Coco's idea of a perfect day on page 12. What’s yours? Draw pictures inside the imagination bubbles of what you would do if you had a **Yay Day**. What food would you eat? Where would you go? What activities would you plan?
Fashion designer to the stars!

Imagine you’re going to a concert for your favourite singer or group. What would you wear? Design a dream outfit for yourself – or design a costume for a pop singer to wear on the stage!
Who am I?

Here is a mind map of some of the ways Coco would describe herself. Now draw a picture of yourself and add all the ways you could describe yourself. Like Coco’s, some of them might be things you dream about or that you’d like to be!
More activities

Find out more about bush tucker and make a garden for your school.

Learn more about the First Fleet and Australia’s convict past.

Draw a map of your neighbourhood, including all your favourite places.

Research the marine wildlife of Sydney Harbour, including dolphins and little penguins. What else can Coco see from her island home?
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