TEACHERS’ RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR
Readers aged 6–8

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS
• Learning areas: English
• General capabilities: Literacy, personal and social capability, critical and creative thinking

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK
• Encourage discussion on friendship, belonging, courage and critical thinking
• Develop independent reading

THEMES
• Family
• Friendship
• Courage
• Belonging

PREPARED BY
Penguin Random House Australia

PUBLICATION DETAILS
ISBN: 9780141308944 (PB)

PLOT SUMMARY
Kerry is a little bewildered by how different things are on her first day at a new school. But she soon finds old friends in her favourite books in the school library and a real live friend Black Dog.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christobel Mattingley was born in SA in 1931 and died in 2019, and is the author of more than 50 books, 47 of which were for children. After publishing her first book, *The Picnic Dog*, in 1970, Mattingley went on to win numerous awards for her work including the Children’s Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Children’s Book of the Year Award in both the Younger Readers and Picture Book categories, and an Australian Human Rights Award commendation for *No Gun for Asmir*. Her work has been translated into other languages, won various awards in Australia and the USA, and has been made into films for ABC Television. In 1990 she received the Advance Australia Award for Service to Literature, and in 1996 she was made a Member of the Order of Australia for her service to literature, particularly children’s literature, and for community service through her commitment to social and cultural issues.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Craig Smith’s warm, exuberant illustrations have delighted children for more than thirty years. Craig has several award-winners to his credit and his titles appear regularly on Children’s Choice Award shortlists. Finding humour in domestic, family and school situations, and a fondness for unusual perspectives and energetic characterisation are features of his work.

Questions

1. Have a look at the cover of this book (including the title) – what does it tell us about the story inside?
2. How do the illustrations help to tell the story?

Activities

1. Can you tell us in one sentence what *First Friend* is all about?
2. Think about your first day at school or your first day at a new school and make a list of words that help describe how you felt, e.g.:
   1. Scared
   2. Worried
   3. Nervous
   4. Excited
   5. Curious
   6. Happy
3. What were some of the things that happened during that day that were **new** to you?
4. Make a list of some of the things that were new to Kerry when she started in her new school:
   1. New teacher
   2. New ways of doing things such as working on your own rather than sharing an activity (p 14) and a bigger library (p24)
   3. Finding her way around the school
5. List all the different ways Kerry makes new friends when she starts her new school. Use the following categories:
   1. Teachers
   2. Children
   3. Library
   4. Books in the library
   5. Dog
6. Tell us about the friends in your life. They can be two legged, four legged or they can be things, such as toys, books etc.

WRITING STYLE

*Questions*

1. Christobel Mattingley has written a first chapter book. How many chapters are there in this story?
2. The **story arc** goes a bit like this:
   1. **Introducing the characters**
      - Introducing Kerry and her family and then her school community
   2. **Introducing the major theme of the book**
      - Kerry is starting at a new school which means finding new friends and adjusting to a whole new environment
   3. **Introducing a problem**
      - Kerry finds it all a bit daunting – things are done differently, the school is much bigger than her last one and to top it off, there’s a large dog and she’s scared of dogs!
4. **Solving the problem and ending the story**
   - Kerry takes comfort in finding books that are like old friends to her – no matter where she is, the books feel familiar.
   - The dog helps Kerry to navigate her way around the school and the children and teachers look out for her and encourage her to play.

**Activities**
1. Write a short story (with any theme) and see if you can use a similar story arc – introduction of characters and plot, problem, problem solution and conclusion
2. Draw some illustrations to complement your short story.
3. Create a storyboard to reflect the story arc of *First Friend*

**KEY STUDY TOPICS**

**Topic**

**FRIENDSHIP and BELONGING**

**Questions**
1. Discuss why it is important to welcome new people – both teachers and children to the school
2. In your discussion, give some examples of how your school helps to make it easier for newcomers to the school community
3. Tell us about the things you do to make new children to the school feel welcome

**Activities**
1. Make a list of the books that Kerry finds that she knows and loves from her previous school and home library
2. As a class, make a list of the books that are classroom favourites and combine this list with Kerry’s.
3. Create a poster of the books on the list so that others in the class can look for them in the library.
4. For your next library lesson, select a number of books from the combined list and make a display of those books that are in the library and label your display: YEAR (*insert name of class*) FAVOURITE FRIENDS

5. A popular song about Friendship is Randy Newman’s ‘You’ve Got a Friend in Me’ from *Toy Story 1*.
   a. Learn the words to the song and as a class, sing along.

**Topic**

**COURAGE**

Kerry shows great COURAGE heading off to her new school on her own

**Questions**
1. What does the word COURAGE mean?
2. Can you think of another word for COURAGE
3. Describe another moment in the story when Kerry shows COURAGE

**Activities**
1. Do you know of Mr Walker? He lives at The Park Hyatt Hotel in Melbourne and acts as a friendly, welcoming face to visitors and guests.
   a. Research Mr Walker and make a short PowerPoint presentation to show the class what his role is at the hotel.
2. WELCOME is such a great word.
   1. Write a little story or poem about a time you felt welcome somewhere – a party, a friend’s house, school, another classroom etc
   2. Create a WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL sign for the entrance/foyer.
3. Think of a time where you felt courageous or brave. Share your experience with the class.
GENERAL ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities

- Compose a letter or email to send to a friend letting them know all the reasons you enjoy having them as a friend.

- Create a map of your school so that when new students come, they know where the following areas/landmarks are:
  - Toilets
  - Main playground
  - Office
  - Library
  - Your classroom
  - Art room
  - Music room
  - Hall

- Arrange a morning tea to welcome someone to your classroom and to share in the work that you’ve been doing on the theme of friendship—perhaps it is the Principal or parent helpers.

This activity will require **sub-committees** to manage:

  - **Catering:**
    - Make a list of food that will be brought along
    - Organise people to hand food around to guests and classroom participants

  - **Official activity:**
    - Designate someone to write and say the words of welcome.

  - **A Spotify playlist of songs with a friendship theme that will be played quietly in the background.**

  - **A display of the books that were noted as favourite books—books that felt like old friends. (these can be taken from the library display that was made).**
FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

Scruffy’s Day Out
by Rachel Flynn, illustrated by Jocelyn Bell
Dad nearly runs over a stray dog! A very scruffy stray dog. But who does it belong to?
If you enjoyed The Mermaid’s Tail you will also enjoy other Puffin Nibbles in the series.
Teachers’ resources available.

The Mermaid’s Tail
by Raewyn Caisley, illustrated by Ann James
Crystal longs to be a mermaid. So her mother makes her a flashing silver tail. But the tail doesn’t feel real enough, until the night Crystal wears it to bed.
If you enjoyed The Mermaid’s Tail you will enjoy other Puffin Nibbles in the series.
Teachers’ resources available.

Blast off!
by Margaret Clark, illustrated by Tom Jellett
Adam wants to be an astronaut. It’s all he ever thinks about. One day he discovers Mad Marvin and his amazing space bubble, and it’s time for blast off!
If you enjoyed The Mermaid’s Tail you will also enjoy other Puffin Nibbles in the series.
Teachers’ resources available.
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