



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Middle to upper primary
(ages 7–11; years 2 to 5)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Emotional literacy, problem-solving, empathy, creative writing, school life.

THEMES

- Friendship, families, starting school, changing schools, primary-school life, sport, theatre, reading, fitting in, being yourself, bullying, problem-solving, creative writing, emotional literacy.

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia and the authors of this book.

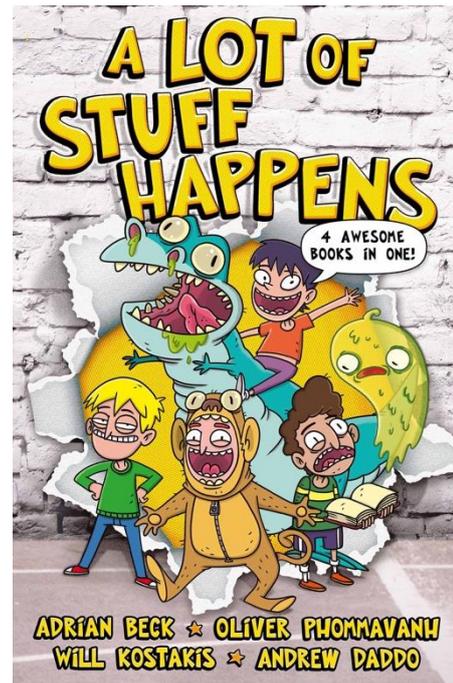
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A Lot of Stuff Happens By Adrian Beck, Andrew Daddo, Oliver Phommavanh and Will Kostakis

PLOT SUMMARY

A collection of four awesome Stuff Happens books in one, from some of Australia's favourite children's authors, edited by Susannah McFarlane, the concept creator behind Zac Power and Go Girl!

When stuff happens to Ned, Dale, Sean and Ethan at Monvale Primary, it's just the everyday stuff.

You know, friendships, ghost stories, the school play, disappearing hamburgers, new teachers, singing monkeys and lions, the first day at school, flags made of underwear, living up to older brothers and sisters, warring dinosaurs.

Stuff that happens all the time!

PRAISE FOR THIS BOOK

'Highly recommended . . . this collection of humorous stories set in the fictitious Monvale school and featuring overlapping characters, is a quick easy read. Four separate stories combine despite separate narrators. The great thing about continuity is learning that a minor character . . . in . . . one story, like Dale . . . can have his own set of challenges and strengths when it's his turn to tell his story. Dale plans on a loser's revenge on the popular kid during the finale of the school play but his conscience gets the better of him. Ned overcomes the new teacher's . . . praise of his older siblings. Sean is the new boy desperate to make friends and prove he is responsible and Ethan learns the fine balance between fitting in and being true to his inner bookworm.

'Whilst Adrian Beck and Andrew Daddo aim for laughs, Will Kostakis and Oliver Phommavanh, . . . serve up situations that cause upheaval, hard choices and growth. Aptly titled, "a lot of stuff" is always happening! Of course, it's the kind of stuff that happens to every student – changing schools, making friends, getting into trouble, school plays, group work, playground issues . . . These writers remember what it's like to be boys at school but more importantly the kind of boys who successfully navigate dilemmas by focusing on character strengths rather than stereotypical male masking behaviours. It helps that all four authors master their realistic dialogue and inner monologues. While a potentially good read-aloud to enjoy and discuss collectively, this book will have a strong appeal to middle primary students – enough to warrant extra copies.'

Deborah Robins, www.readplus.com.au

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Adrian Beck

Adrian Beck is a TV producer and the author of the Kick it to Nick books with Shane Crawford, the Champion Charlies series, and the editor of *Total Quack Up!* with Sally Rippin.

Like Dale, Adrian is a redhead and he really did use lemon juice to try and change his hair colour. It didn't work. But when word spread around the schoolyard that redheads were fiery, suddenly everyone wanted him on their team during lunchtime footy.

Andrew Daddo

Andrew Daddo is a TV host and accomplished author of twenty-five best-selling books for all ages – picture books, chapter books, short story collections, young adult novels and adult non-fiction. Over the past ten

years he has spoken to literally hundreds of thousands of school children around Australia.

Unlike Ned, Andrew had a crush on Ms Duncan, his year five teacher. She was great – one of his best teachers ever!

Will Kostakis

Will Kostakis is the author of three books for young adults, *Loathing Lola*, *The First Third* and *The Sidekicks*.

Will remembers forgetting his hat one day in year five. He had to sit in the No Hat, No Play area, but there, he met his best friend for the first time. The next day, he left his hat in his bag on purpose, just like Sean.

Oliver Phommavanh

Oliver Phommavanh is a Thai-Australian writer for children who has worked as a primary school teacher and a stand-up comedian. He is the author of *Thairiffic!*, *Con-nerd*, *Punchlines*, *Thai-no-mite*, *The Other Christy*, *Super Con-nerd*, *Natural Born Loser* and *Don't Follow Vee*.

Oliver remembers being a bookworm like Ethan in primary school. Once, he sat on the toilet all night to read a novel. He got a red bottom but it was worth it.

ABOUT THE SERIES EDITOR

Susannah McFarlane is one of Australia's most respected children's book publishers and authors whose books and series have sold over a million copies in Australia alone. She is the creator and writer of the award-winning EJ12 Girl Hero and EJ Spy School series, the creator and co-author of the hugely popular series for boys, *Boy vs Beast*, the author of the *Little Mates* series, and the series editor for *Stuff Happens*.

Susannah, who was also the original concept creator of two of Australia's leading tween fiction series *Go Girl!* and *Zac Power*, understands kids and loves creating stories they enjoy to read. Her belief in the need for age-appropriate but fun content for kids comes from over twenty years' experience as a children's book publisher and from having worked with some of the world's leading brands and writers.

Watch Susannah talking about the *Stuff Happens* series here:

https://youtu.be/CMHA_hUJXy4



AUTHORS' INSPIRATION

Will Kostakis says

When I was brainstorming *Sean*, I looked to the experiences that defined my final years of primary school – briefly changing schools and striking up an enduring friendship in the No Hat, No Play area. Combining the two experiences, I was able to craft a story about the challenges of being an outsider facing a daunting new environment. Stories are powerful, they not only allow you to revisit your own experiences, but you have the power to reshape them. In primary school, I would watch episodes of *BTN* and dream of starting my own student newspaper. I didn't have the confidence to follow through with it, but in writing *Sean*, I got to imagine a childhood where I had given it a crack (and sprinkle in some of the things I learned about journalism during my tertiary studies).

When discussing *Sean* with readers, I encourage them to not only explore their own experiences in their creative writing, but to think about their interests and aspirations, and find a way to incorporate them in their work.

Questions/activities

1. Which event from any of the *A Lot Of Stuff Happens* stories would you write a news article about? What would the attention-grabbing headline be?
2. Sean, Angelo, Jeff and Karlie become friends when they collaborate on a project together, but it's tougher than it looks! As a class, or in small groups, have a go writing a story together. Write one sentence and then pass it on. You'll be amazed where the story goes. If you're out of stuff for an idea, you can use one of the characters in *Sean*, or even Captain Wondersmash!
3. Brainstorm a list of things your class could do to help a new kid like Sean feel welcome at your school.

Oliver Phommavanh says

As a lifelong bookworm, I always wanted to write a story about a bookish kid, someone who basically lived in the library. There's a lot of myself in *Ethan*. I used to visit the library every lunchtime and borrowed a book each day. I wanted to get the award for the most books borrowed in a year. I was keen to read anything and everything, but it was a love of dinosaurs that got me hooked into reading (which is referenced in the book *Dino-riders* mentioned in the story). I enjoyed creating Monvale's library, which is a circus at lunchtimes.

Ethan is an overzealous library monitor and can't stop thinking about books, which made him a perfect candidate for *Stuff Happens*. Friendship is a strong theme here. Ethan doesn't have many friends, so he cherishes his first best friend, Trent. They formed a friendship over a book and when Trent moved onto the next thing, Ethan is scared of being left behind. There's nothing worse than having your best friend not liking you anymore. In my days as a teacher, I would find these kinds of friendships happening in schools all the time, when two unlikely people become friends with one small thing in common, and the friendship has to adapt, otherwise it'll fade away. Of course, other friends are formed by proximity too. Ethan is grouped with the 'rejects' and finds out that he enjoys hanging out with Dale and Monica. Ethan shows empathy towards Dale and Monica, and learns how to become friends with all kind of kids.

Questions/activities

1. Thinking about friendships, how did you make friends? What kind of things did you have in common with them?
2. When Ethan first met Dale and Monica, he didn't know that they would become friends. What kind of things did Ethan like about Dale and Monica?
3. Describe how Ethan is feeling when he realises that Trent may not like him anymore. If you met Ethan, what kind of advice would you give him? How would you help him become friends with Trent again?
4. Create a handy tips guide of how to make friends with people.
5. Thinking about reading, why do you think Ethan loves reading so much?
6. How much of a reader are you? What kind of things do you read?
7. Think about how Ethan wants to convince Trent to read again. How would you convince a friend to read again?
8. In what way is your own school library like Monvale Primary's library? What are the differences?



Further Activities

Dale

1. Pick one of the following characters from *Dale*:
 - Dale
 - Boaz
 - Dan
2. Draw three faces with different emotions and write a story with a character who goes through all of these emotions.
3. Make a list of the page numbers whenever they feel:
 - Happy
 - Embarrassed
 - Nervous
 - Excited

What makes them feel each of these things?

What makes them change how they're feeling?

Talk about your findings in groups, thinking about how each of the characters influences the way the others feel and act.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
A Lot of Stuff Happens	Adrian Beck, Andrew Daddo, Oliver Phommavanh and Will Kostakis	978 01437 9475 2	2-5	\$19.99		
TOTAL						

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