

TEACHER NOTES

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SARAH'S HEAVY HEART

Author: Peter Carnavas

Illustrator: Peter Carnavas

1. Synopsis

Sarah has a heavy heart. She carries it wherever she goes.

Sarah knows the heart will always be hers to carry – if only it wasn't so heavy.

One morning at the bus stop, a small boy floats into Sarah's life, clutching a heart that is so light it just gets carried away.

After quiet contemplation in a paddock on the edge of town, Sarah and the boy soon discover that their burdens will disappear if they learn to share their hearts with each other.

Love and friendship are the key themes in the book.

2. Author/Illustrator style or medium

Peter has used watercolour and black ink for the illustrations in the book. The initial pages set the scene of Sarah trying to go about her days under the weight of her heart, with each illustration a simple one page picture set against white space. As the story moves on and the boy enters the narrative, double page illustrations are introduced as Sarah's world expands. The use of colour is important in several scenes, in order to depict Sarah's despair. The final double page illustration uses bright colours to represent the hope and optimism of both characters.

3. Author/Illustrator Motivation

Sarah's Heavy Heart began as an image Peter had drawn of a young woman carrying a heavy heart on her back. From that image, Peter devised a story of a young girl whose heavy heart represents the feeling that we all get sometimes, feeling as if we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders. The cause of Sarah's sadness at the beginning of the story is deliberately unexplained, allowing readers to make their own assumptions and engage personally with the story. The story became a visual fantasy for Peter, with several double-page illustrations acting as the visual centrepiece of the book.



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4. Author/Illustrator Background Information

Peter Carnavas was born in Brisbane in 1980. As a small boy he enjoyed copying out his favourite picture books and occasionally typed a small newspaper about the goings-on of his household. At age ten, Peter's family moved to the Sunshine Coast, where he gave up the violin, took up the guitar and learned to fish.

Like most children his age, Peter was an enormous fan of Roald Dahl and Quentin Blake. He spent most of his teenage years playing the guitar and drawing characters all over his school books, often wishing he could draw as well as his brother.

Peter initially studied Media Studies before becoming a primary school teacher. He has conducted cartooning workshops with children, painted school murals and developed an online travel buddy with students, which was awarded an Education Queensland Showcase Award. If it was all up to Peter, he would spend most of his time reading books with his daughters, trying to play the mandolin and drawing little pictures of people.

Sarah's Heavy Heart is Peter's second published book.

5. Educational Applicability

Love and friendship are the key themes in this book.

Discussion topics

Before reading the book

1. Talk to the children about different feelings. Sometimes we feel happy and sometimes we feel sad. These feelings are natural and are part of everybody's life.
2. Ask children to think of a time when they felt a little sad. What happened? What did you do about it? How did you begin to feel better again? Did somebody help?
3. Introduce the book and ask the children what feelings they would associate with Sarah on the front cover. How do you think Sarah's feelings are related to the title?
4. As you read the initial pages, ask children to anticipate how Sarah can live with her heavy heart more easily.

After Reading the book

1. How did Sarah solve her problem of having a heavy heart?
2. Did Sarah's solution also help the boy? How?



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3. Discuss the idea of sharing a problem in order to ease the weight of the problem – a problem shared is a problem halved.

4. Throughout the book, Sarah was being followed by a turtle and the boy was being followed by a little bird. Why do you think the author chose these animals as friends for the children? What do the animals have in common with the characters they are following?

Friends in Hearts

Draw a big heart in the middle of the page. Then draw smaller hearts tied to the big heart, as many as you like. Draw a picture of yourself inside the big heart and draw pictures of people close to you in the smaller balloons.

Art, Craft & Design

Animal Feelings

Step 1.

Talk about the turtle and bird in the story. The turtle carries a heavy weight to match Sarah and the bird is light and flighty to match the boy. Brainstorm some words and feelings that match the animals.

Turtle: heavy, sad, slow, plodding, trudging, etc.

Bird: small, light, flying, floating, drifting, etc.

Step 2.

Collect images of different animals. Students then draw or trace their own outlines of the animals. Inside or around the outside of the animals, students write words and feelings associated with the animal. For example:

Wombat: shy, lonely, quiet, burrow, dark, etc.

Crab: quick, angry, restless, running, scampering, etc.

Step 3.

Make a display of the animal feelings, then use them to play charades – a student acts out one of the animals and the other students must guess which animal they are pretending to be.

Further Research

1. Think of some other ways that Sarah could have eased the weight of her heart. Could she have built something in which to carry it? Write an alternative ending to the story.

2. Make lists or posters about how you can help somebody else who is feeling sad.



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3. Some illustrations are painted with different tones of the same colour. Experiment with paintings and drawings using different tones of the same colour. How many different shade of blue can you make by adding different amounts of water to paint, or by pressing down lightly or heavily with a pencil?

6. Marketing & Selling Points

The book depicts a story of a girl and a boy discovering that their problems are eased by sharing their respective loads. This is an important lesson for children to learn – that sharing troubles is the first step to losing them.

Young children enjoy hearing stories about people their own age, experiencing things they may be going through,

Children will enjoy spotting the different poses and positions of the turtle that follows the central character.

7. How the book is to be promoted

Review copies to Magpies, Reading Time, metropolitan and regional dailies and various online forums.

Editorial

Radio interviews



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