

Sarah and the Steep Slope

By Danny Parker & Illustrated by Matt Ottley

Publisher: Little Hare Books

ISBN 9781742974675 SCIS: 1820826

\$24.99

When everything feels like an uphill battle, your friends will get you through. Sarah wakes to find a steep hill has sprung up around the house overnight, preventing her from leaving. No matter what she tries, the hill won't budge. When the Hill Doctor suggests she gets in touch with her friends, Sarah discovers how the healing power of friendship can transform the steepest slope.



Teacher notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher, Little Hare Books. A full version is available on our website.

Themes:

- Daily struggles
- Asking for help
- Friendship

Discussion Questions & Activities:

- Sometimes text is most effective when it says nothing. The second spread of the narrative pages has no text. How does the 'silence' of this spread enhance the combined effects of the text of the preceding and following spreads?
- *Sarah and the Steep Slope* portrays an intensely emotional situation, but never mentions emotion directly. Readers are left to guess, intuit, ascertain and experience the emotions of the story for themselves. Which are the key emotions that appear to be alluded to in the narrative? How do we know which emotions to identify?
- Matt Ottley uses a number of visual devices to illustrate the feelings of the story. One of these devices is distorted perspective. Another is extreme points of view (such as close-ups, bird's-eye view, worm's-eye view). Find an instance where Matt has distorted the perspective and describe the narrative purposes of this distortion. Find where he has shown a similar or identical scene later in the story, where the distortion has been removed. What effect does this have?
- How does Matt's portrayal of Sarah's house change throughout the story? What are the narrative effects of these changes?
- The story of *Sarah and the Steep Slope* is a metaphor for the struggles – both large and small – that we face in our daily lives, and it is suggested that the solution lies in the power of friendship and community. Talk to your class about a problem you have faced and how asking for help from others helped, and encourage your class to share their own stories of overcoming adversity.
- Author Danny Parker begins the story by dropping readers straight in the action: Sarah is confronted by a seemingly insurmountable steep slope right outside her door. Have your class write their own story where the main character is immediately faced with a problem. What is their character faced with? What do they do? Some examples could be where the world is suddenly upside-down; where they can only talk underwater; or where the sky is green.
- Illustrator Matt Ottley has used wild distorted patterns to give the story texture. Talk to your class about surrealism in art and encourage them to draw their own exaggerated pictures.
- Take your class outside and have them re-enact the story on a hill. Who is the slope doctor and what advice does she or he have? How do Sarah and her friends overcome the slope?