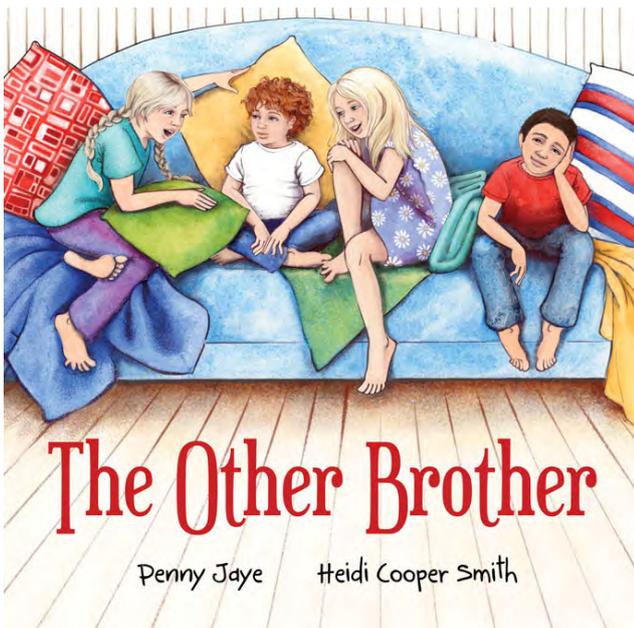




Wombat Books
Stories you'll want to share

Teacher's notes



The Other Brother

Penny Jaye / Heidi Cooper Smith

ISBN: 9781925563689

Recommended retail: \$24.99 hardback

Reading level: Ages 5–8 picture book

Book summary

Jayden James thought his family of five was perfect — until last Wednesday when Mitchell David arrived.

Now the car's too small, picnics at the park are ruined and no-one's paying attention to Jayden anymore. But when Jayden is kept awake by someone crying, he knows something has to be done — and he's the only one who can do it.

Maybe perfect for Jayden is less about what's always been and more about how, and with whom, he can make it.

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Why study this book?

Change can be difficult for children to cope with, especially when they take comfort in routine. Nothing stirs up a family more than a new arrival, and Jayden's initial coping strategy showcases behaviours many children exhibit. By acknowledging the effects of an addition to the family and easing that transition, this story beautifully portrays a gradual realisation of compassion, and how to adjust to the new normal.

Themes

Family

What makes a family? Is it simply biology, or something more? *The Other Brother* gently explores what it means to be a family and how acceptance, kindness and compassion can extend that family to include other people when needed. Many opportunities are provided to discuss family structure and changes in an inclusive and encouraging manner. Themes of foster care/adoption can be addressed either directly or indirectly.

Change

Change is an inevitable part of our lives: social, emotional, physical, environmental and relational. Jayden and his family experience change at Mitchell David's arrival. The family must purchase a new car, routines change, and even Jayden's status in the family goes from being the youngest to a 'big brother'.

Belonging

What does it take to be inclusive and welcoming? Why do we need to be welcomed? This book discusses how the routines and actions of a family create a sense of belonging. This triggers discussions about what it means to belong, the role of community and steps to promote inclusion.

About the author



Penny Jaye is a western-Sydney-based author of books for children and older readers. From YA novels to picture books, she writes to find the beauty, hope, strength and love hidden in every situation. Penny is also a trained teacher and has her Master of Arts (writing and literature). When she is not writing or doing author visits, Penny enjoys sunset-spotting with her children, lunch by the river, family movie nights and the luxury of snuggling up in bed with a new book!

About the illustrator



At an early age Heidi knew she wanted to write and illustrate picture books. But during a Visual Arts degree, she fell in love with ceramics and spent the next 20 years covered in clay. Heidi rediscovered her passion for drawing in 2014 when she joined the '52-week illustration challenge'. Six months later she was offered her first illustration contract with Koala Books for *Two Birds on a Wire*. This wonderful experience inspired her to start writing, and in 2015 and 2016 she won the CYA illustrated manuscript competition (aspiring).

Author interview

1. What drew you to the topic of this book?

I often find that the stories I write come from the questions I'm thinking about. What would it be like for a young child to welcome a new child into their family? What if all the reliable routines and affirmations the first child was used to were suddenly displaced because of this new arrival? Jayden's story flowed naturally from here.

2. How would you suggest helping a child cope with change?

Being present with a child is extremely important when helping them adjust to change. This can involve taking the time to see the child's perspective about what is occurring and to consider what their emotions reveal about the deeper issues at stake for them. It takes courage, strength and support for children to reach beyond their own feelings and care for others. Adults can facilitate this process by validating their feelings, affirming them, reminding them of their security and supporting their attempts to grow through change.

3. Why did you decide not to mention foster care or adoption explicitly in the text?

If books can be windows and mirrors for children, then stories depicting flexible families are important. I knew right from the start that this would be a story told within the setting of home care. However it was

Author interview p2.

crucial to me that the mirrors and windows found in this story were experienced by children as they find them, not as an adult might expect them to be. While I do hope this book stimulates discussion, I wanted those to be had at the level they are required; for teachers to be able to explore or subtly leave unspoken the issues raised. *The Other Brother* is a story about something bigger than just out of home care. It's about compassion, courage and acceptance. And these things are possible in all kinds of families, all kinds of situations and all kinds of children.

Questions and reflections

Pre-reading questions

Looking at the illustrations on the front and back covers.

1. What do you think this book is about?
2. What do you think these children are thinking?

Read the blurb, leaving out the last line.

3. Which character do you think is Jayden James? Which one is Mitchell David?
4. Have you ever felt like no-one was paying you attention? What did you do about it?

After-reading questions

5. How do you think Jayden felt when Mitchell David arrived?
6. Why did Jayden put himself to bed?
7. Why do you think Mitchell David was crying?
8. Do you think Jayden did the right thing? What would you have done in this situation?
9. Which character do you relate to the most?

Activities

Discuss

- Ask students to identify the ways that Jayden's life changes with the arrival of Mitchell David. Consider the physical, environmental, emotional and relational changes he experiences. How is his life different or even better now that this has happened?

Create

- Students choose a recent change that may have occurred in their own family or classroom. Make a poster or do a role play to demonstrate the effects of these changes. Encourage children to identify the challenging and rewarding aspects of these events.

Explore

- The arrival of one person into Jayden's family initiated adjustments from everyone involved. How can communities respond to the changing population needs of society?
- Research immigration, global migration, refugee and asylum seekers. What are the reasons people move? What changes do these movements require to maintain healthy communities?

Write

- Students write a recount about a new arrival in their own family. It may be a new sibling, or a visiting grandparent. Brainstorm words about feelings before they write and ask them to include some of these in their work.

Maths

- Jayden counts his family and they all squeeze onto the couch. Experiment seeing how many people might fit on particular shapes, spaces or pieces of furniture. Students estimate first and then record their data in a table or a graph.

English

- Jayden shows kindness to Mitchell David. Discuss the ways kindness is shown in this story and how it feels when someone is kind or helps you when you are upset. Write poems using the following prompt: *Kindness is...*

HPE

- Names are important. The boys in this story have two names each. Students can make posters about their names. Include first, second, third, last and friendly nicknames too. What do our names mean? Who gives them to us? What do we prefer to be called and why?

- Families do different things to celebrate being together. Jayden's family sing in the car and go for picnics at the beach. Ask students to share some of their favourite family traditions. Draw or write about these and share why these events are so important/special.

Art

- Design 'Welcome' cards for someone new, such as a new baby, a new neighbour, a new classmate or a new teacher.
- Make 'blankies' for bed-time reading. Cut large squares of fleecy fabric. Make 10 cm cuts every 2 cm along the sides of the squares to make a fringe. Put two squares together and knot the fringes together to hold the front and back squares together. (Google 'No sew fleecy blanket' for more instructions).

Drama

- Put on a dramatic presentation of *The Other Brother*. Have confident readers take turns reading the text while actors present the story with props.

Author's note

The Other Brother is a story about a new sibling arriving in a happy family. Although most stories of this type focus on the arrival of a new baby, the new sibling in this story is a young child, Mitchell David. The reasons for his arrival are not stated in the text and are open to reader interpretation, however I wrote the story imagining a foster care family. I wanted to explore how an older foster child (perhaps one who had entered the family through care as an infant and/or had already been adopted) might respond to the arrival of a sibling. If you look closely, you may notice that Jayden James is also a non-biological member of the family.

Foster care and/or adoption are significant changes in the lives of everyone involved, whether they are biological or non-biological family members. There are many families that offer short-term or respite care to children in need, while other families take on a long-term or permanent commitment. By not stating the themes of adoption and foster care explicitly in the text, children can connect to these themes on their own if it mirrors their experience. Other children may notice their friends, extended family or neighbours in this story. As a teacher, whether you choose to draw out these subtle themes is up to you: you know your students best. My hope as an author is that children will be empowered by Jayden's story to open their hearts and welcome others into their family, friendships and lives.

Key curriculum areas

Year 1 English

ACELA1444
ACELA1787
ACELA1452
ACELT1582
ACELY1660

Year 2 English

ACELA1462
ACELA1464
ACELA1469
ACELT1589
ACELT1591
ACELY1668

Year 3 English

ACELT1596
ACELT1599
ACELY1675
ACELY1678

Year 4 English

ACELA1491
ACELA1492
ACELA1495
ACELT1605
ACELY1690

Foundation Year HPE

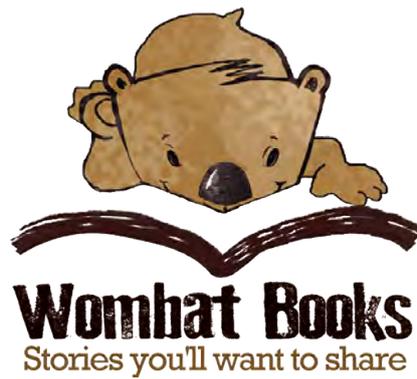
ACPPS004
ACPPS005

Years 1–2 HPE

ACPPS015
ACPPS019

Years 3–4 HPE

ACHASSI052
ACHASSI059
ACHASSK063



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