

Barkley

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These notes are for: Ages 4-7, Years F-1

Key learning areas: English

Example of: Picture book

Themes:

- Friendship
- Belonging
- Self Esteem
- Animals

Before reading

View the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:

- The title
- The author/illustrator
- The publisher
- The blurb.

What do you think the story might be about from looking at the title only? Do your ideas change after seeing the cover? Write your own story using the title *Barkley*.

Exploring the Story

Who do you think the audience for this book is? Why?

Is *Barkley* an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? How can you tell?

Barkley describes himself in certain ways, such as being big, or being fluffy. But then when he compares himself to the other dogs he decides that he is not big or fluffy at all. Do you think he is correct? If another dog is fluffier or bigger than *Barkley*, does that mean *Barkley* is no longer big or fluffy at all? Think about one of your own features or talents. If someone else has more of that feature or talent than you do, does that negate your feature or talent altogether? Another picture book to consider and discuss on this topic is *'I'm the Best'* by Lucy Cousins and discuss as a group.

When *Barkley* continues to compare himself to other dogs, how does he end up feeling? What does he end up thinking about himself? Think about a time that you might have compared yourself to someone else (i.e. Have you ever wished that you looked the same or had the same skills as someone else?). What did you compare (talents, looks, belongings?) and how did it make you feel? How did you deal with those feelings and what did you learn from the experience?

Max is very sad when he loses Barkley. Do you think he is worried that Barkley is not the biggest dog? Or the fluffiest, or the fanciest dog? Why do you think Max is sad? What do you think he cares about most when he thinks of Barkley?

Exploring the Illustrations

Choose one of the spreads and have a class discussion about the following:

- How do you think Barkley is feeling? What clues might there be in the pictures?
- Is there a main colour in this spread? How does it make you feel?
- Do the colours change from spread to spread? Why might that be?
- Do the pictures take up the whole page, or are they framed?
- Are any of the words bigger on the page than the others? Why could that be?

How do the illustrations add to the story? How would the story be different if there were no illustrations?

There are lots of wonderfully different characters in this book, both dog and human. Is there a human that looks like someone you know? Can you identify any of the different breeds of dogs? Do you have a dog at home, and do you know what kind of dog it is? Can you see a dog in the illustrations that looks like your dog? Use the library resources to find books on dog breeds to find out more about the dogs in the illustrations.

Think about all the different kinds of dogs that you have seen in the illustrations and that you looked up in the library resources. Now draw and collage a picture of your perfect dog. Have a think about what materials will help you to create your perfect dog, would she be fluffy or scruffy? Big or middle size? Spotty or fancy? Wearing a hat or carrying a stick? Use materials collected from your craft stash and from outside to give your dog lots of personality. Make sure you give your dog the perfect name as well.