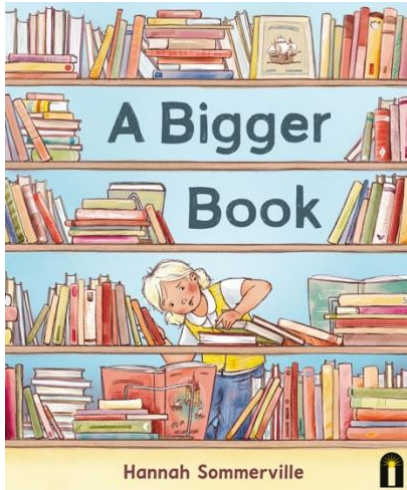


Teacher's Notes



A Bigger Book

Written and illustrated by Hannah Sommerville

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower primary readers (ages 4–8, grades Prep+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English (AC9EFLA02, AC9EFLE02, AC9EFLY06)
- General capabilities:
 - Literacy – understanding texts
 - Literacy – creating texts
 - Critical & creative thinking – develop questions

THEMES

- Reading
- Learning to read
- Dyslexia
- Confidence
- Anxiety

SYNOPSIS

Cora loves the smell of books. She loves the stories they contain and the worlds of imagination they open ...

But when it's time to read aloud in class, Cora gets stuck. Stuck on the first word. And on the second. The harder she concentrates, the foggier each word feels.

And when her friends move on to bigger books, Cora is left behind and her love of stories starts to fade ...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Hannah Sommerville is a children's picture book illustrator who lives and works on the South Coast of NSW. She began illustrating in 2010 after the arrival of her first child, who she credits with reintroducing her to the world of picture books. Since then, Hannah has enjoyed creating vivid details in hopes of capturing the imagination of children. These details are drawn from her family life and her own childhood memories. Toys and trinkets from home often hide among the pages of her books.

She has won multiple awards, including CBCA 2022 Book of the Year – Early Childhood for *Jetty Jumping* (written by Andrea Rowe).

THEMES

Cora's experiences invite readers to think about why stories are important. The book also aims to normalise dyslexia, which is a learning disorder characterised by difficulties with reading. International evidence suggests around 20 per cent of people – or one to five children in every Australian classroom – have mild, moderate, or severe dyslexia, or are struggling readers. This book offers vital representation – not only for young readers with dyslexia, but also for those struggling to connect with reading for other reasons.

Reading is a way to develop empathy and creativity, connect with others, and reduce stress. It offers escape, understanding, comfort and adventure. But, for some kids, reading can also be a real challenge, and when these experiences aren't talked about,

Invite students to reflect on how books and stories make them feel. Ask them to share their experiences. Start a conversation about some of the difficulties (including dyslexia) that some readers face. The following questions might help to shape this conversation:

- How do you feel when you walk into a library or bookstore?
- Does someone read to you? Who? What kinds of stories do you share together?
- Does reading come easily to you? What do you find hard at school?
- What are some of the reasons that kids might find reading hard?
- What makes you feel good about reading?
- Why might kids not want to read? What makes you not want to read?

As a group, brainstorm a list of strategies to make reading appealing and accessible to everyone. What are some of the ways you celebrate reading at your school? How are all readers included? What could be improved?

WRITING STYLE – writing from life

A Bigger Book is Hannah Sommerville's first solo picture book. On her website, she writes that the story reflects her early experiences at school and her own struggles with reading, which led her to a career in illustration and visual storytelling.



Which parts of the book make the story feel real? Does Cora feel like the kind of kid you'd encounter in your own classroom?

Writers often draw details from their own experiences to build trust with their readers and to make their stories believable.

Make a list of the details in *A Bigger Book* that make the story feel real. These might be specific lines of dialogue, descriptions of place, emotional responses or sensory details.

COMPREHENSION

- Cora and Auntie Erin stop at the bookshop to smell the new books. How would you describe the smell of new books?
- Which characters feature in some of the stories Auntie Erin reads to Cora?
- Why do you think library day is the best school day?
- What happens when Cora tries to read? How does it make her feel?
- How does Cora's experience change the way she feels about school? Have you ever had an experience like this?
- What makes Cora choose an atlas at the bookshop?
- What is cartography the study of? Why does Cora call her atlas 'the biggest book of all'?
- How does the atlas help Cora to build her confidence with reading?

WRITING EXERCISE

Write about a visit to your local library or favourite bookshop. Use real details to bring your writing to life.

What does your bookshop smell like? Are your favourite books big or small? Colourful or plain? Hard or soft? Do you go there on a particular day? How does it make you feel? Describe the space: are there places to hide? Is it cosy or open? Where do you sit down to read?

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

At the start of the book, when Cora feels happy and confident, the illustrations are detailed and full of colour. Here, the images show Cora imagining the worlds she's discovering through the books Auntie Erin reads to her. But when Cora becomes anxious about reading, the image is grey, and Cora is singled out by a circle of bright light that reflects how self-conscious she feels in the moment. Off to the side, a murky grey smudge shows how much she's struggling to find her way into the story. The grey tones continue, and in the next scene in the library, blurred towers of books show what an intimidating place the library has become – a contrast to the comforting and familiar scene shown in earlier pages.

When Cora discovers the atlas, we start to see the images become clear and more colourful again, as Cora discovers a way to hold the words in her mind. Discuss how the author uses colour and detail to show Cora's emotional journey. What other techniques have you seen illustrators use to reveal a character's emotions?



CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- While Cora listens to her auntie read, she draws maps. Draw a map of the world in your favourite story. Find a way to show the character's journey.
- Write about a time you felt overwhelmed or anxious about something at school. How did you overcome it? What would you tell someone who is facing a similar challenge?
- Make a list of things you love about reading. Discuss some of the ways that books are made accessible (e.g. large-print books, braille books, audiobooks). Design a 'Reading is for everyone' poster that celebrates one of these initiatives.
- What kind of reader are you? Write a short review of your favourite book and share it in your school library.

RELATED READING

Library Lion

By Michelle Knudsen and Kevin Hawkes

Wiggling Words

By Kate Rolfe

Brilliant Bea: a story for kids with dyslexia and learning differences

By Shaina Rudolph, Mary Vukadinovich and Fiona Lee

Books Make Good Friends

By Jane Mount

We Know a Place

By Maxine Beneba Clarke

