

Reena's Rainbow



Author: Dee White
Illustrator: Tracie Grimwood
Publisher: EK Books
Price: \$24.99
ISBN: 978-1-925335-49-1
Audience: Children aged 4–8

Type of Text

Picture book

Key Curriculum Areas

English	Health
Language	Humanities & Social Sciences — my personal world
Literacy	

Themes

Belonging	Acceptance
Resilience	Diversity
Tolerance	Disability

Notes prepared by

Dee White and Tracie Grimwood

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SYNOPSIS

In *Reena's Rainbow*, Reena is deaf and dog is homeless, but they are both much more than that.

At first Reena and Dog feel like they don't belong, but when they form a unique bond, and become friends with the hearing children in the park, they discover that everyone is different and special in their own way. 'We are like the colours of the rainbow. We are all different. But when we stand together we are one.'

This story isn't just about Reena fitting into the hearing world. It's also about the hearing children fitting into her world. They change the way they play so that Reena can join in, and she teaches them how to sign so they can become part of her world.

Reena's Rainbow is about friendship, diversity and acceptance. It's about sharing and being open to how others live.

Acceptance and belonging is not just about inviting someone to join your world, it's about learning how to fit into theirs.

Our perceptions are based on what we can see and hear. What if we can't hear or see? How would this change our perceptions and our ability to fit in?

How can we be more inclusive? How can we develop our understanding of someone else's world, and not just expect them to fit into ours?

AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Dee White is the author of 18 books for children and young adults.

She has a passion for creating books that introduce readers to characters, situations and concepts that might be outside their own experiences.

Dee also believes that every child should be able to see themselves and their lives reflected in books.

She is a qualified writing teacher who presents at schools, libraries and festivals throughout Australia and overseas, and runs online classes for writers of all ages at <http://www.writingclassesforkids.com>.

Reena's Rainbow is her first picture book.

Dee's website is <https://www.deescribe.com.au>

ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Tracie Grimwood is a Melbourne-based illustrator and artist. She has worked as a professional freelancer since graduating with a Bachelor of Graphic Design from Swinburne University, Melbourne, in 1991.

She has produced illustrations for a diverse range of clients, both nationally and internationally, and her many projects include designing and illustrating several stamp issues for Australia Post, designing and illustrating installations for the Children's Gallery at Melbourne Museum, illustrating greeting cards for Woodmansterne, UK, illustrating wine labels for Yalumba, providing editorial illustrations for magazines such as *Australian Doctor*, *Insight* and *Business Class*, and illustrating dozens of books and book covers for a variety of publishers including Penguin, Pearson and Macmillan.

Her personal art practice comprises private commissions and the production and exhibition of original works and fine art prints.

Tracie is also an enthusiastic educator and currently teaches illustration at MADA, Monash University, Melbourne.

Tracie's website is <http://traciegrimwood.com.au>

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

The illustration style is gently whimsical with a rich, but subtle, colour palette that is used to help show Reena's and Dog's feelings of exclusion and inclusion. The characters are stylised to not only effectively communicate their actions, but also their emotions. The settings are detailed and decorative to emphasise Reena's observant nature.

SELLING POINTS

- The world needs diverse books and in the US an entire movement has been started to make this happen.
<http://weneeddiversebooks.org>
- The messages of tolerance, acceptance and resilience are relevant to both children and adults as they try to belong, and engage with our ever-changing world
- Interactive and engaging shared reading experience.
- Within the illustrations are changes and detail for students to observe.
- Brings diversity into a children's book, representing the life of a deaf child and allowing hearing children to understand and experience their world.
- Classroom use:
 - Health**—resilience, coping with change, emotions
 - Humanities and social sciences** — diversity, acceptance and tolerance
 - Visual art**—use of colour, emotive expressions
 - English**—vocabulary, reading, discussion

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR INTERVIEW

1. What was the inspiration for the story?

We had a deaf boy at our primary school, and as I started to suffer from hearing loss in adulthood, I began to reflect on what life might have been like for the boy in my class. Dog found his way into Reena's story because I love dogs, and they seem to find their way into many of my stories. I think that's because they love unconditionally and they have the power to bring people together.

2. What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Dee: Working with amazing illustrator, Tracie Grimwood. I have loved seeing my text come to life through her extraordinary pictures. I love the different layers of meaning she has added through her interpretation of Reena's story.

Tracie: Collaborating with Dee, once again! Dee's story is simply told, yet wonderfully nuanced, and allowed for a lot of freedom in how I could create the illustrations. The pace of her storytelling, and her well-developed visual sense, made it very easy to lay out the book right from the beginning. Dee's openness and willingness to discuss all aspects of the illustration process made the whole process so enjoyable.

3. What was the most challenging part of this project?

Dee: I know what it's like to experience distorted sounds, and feel excluded because you can't hear conversations properly, but it was hard to put myself in the shoes of someone who is profoundly deaf, but has the same needs and wants of every other child.

I wanted to find a way to show that friendship and communication are two-way. There shouldn't just be the expectation that Reena fits into a hearing world. I wanted the children to fit into her world too.

I also wanted to explore the notion that there is no 'normal'. Everyone is different, but we all belong to the same group: humanity.

Tracie: The most challenging part of the project was coming up with a way to visually show what it's like to be deaf, especially for the illustration on the first page. I used texture, a monochromatic colour palette and overlapping sound waves to give the feeling of muffled and indistinct sounds.

I also made use of concentric circles, or ripples, to represent the vibrations that a deaf person might feel and I used this device later in the book to show how Reena can feel the vibrations of her own laughter. I painted her laughter ripples in rainbow colours to highlight the joy she feels.

4. What media did you use to create your illustrations? Can you briefly describe your process?

I painted the illustrations for *Reena's Rainbow* with acrylic gouache on heavy watercolour paper prepared with gesso. I begin every illustration project with rough sketches to develop the characters and general look and feel.

I had made one sample illustration very early on; however, once the manuscript was finalised and I began to work up the rough sketches for each page, I decided to stylise my characters a little more and brighten the colour palette.

I then scanned my sketches, placed them and rescaled them digitally before printing them out onto tracing paper. These became overlays for the gessoed paper so I could transfer parts of the drawings as I painted them. I also used masking fluid to mask off lighter areas before painting dark colours.

I then scanned all of the paintings and used Photoshop to combine some elements and colour correct the illustrations.

TEACHING NOTES

Whole Class Reading

Before Reading

- Show the cover to the class and ask the students what can they tell about Reena from the cover.
- Read the back cover blurb. How does this add to what they know about Reena?

During Reading

- Throughout the story look at what Dog is doing on each spread. Why is dog important to the story?
- On subsequent readings you could focus on the changes in Reena. How can you tell what she is feeling?
- How do you think she feels?
- What tells you she feels this way?
- Have you ever felt like this? Why?
- What do you notice about the colour of Reena's top?
- Why do you think it changes at the end of the story?

ENGLISH

- Discussion about language. Many different languages are spoken and Auslan is one of them.
- How can people learn to talk if they can't hear?
- Do a lip-reading activity. Get the children to write down what they think the person is saying. How different is it to what is actually being said? What might be the reasons for this? If lip reading is so hard, how can you communicate with a deaf person if you don't know sign language?
- Look at how people express likes and dislikes in Auslan. How is that different to the way they are expressed in English?
- What is Reena doing with the children on the last page of the book?
- What other games could the children play with Reena?
- Why do you think Reena might be so good at noticing things?
- Why do you think that Dog is brown in the story?

LITERACY

- Create an acrostic poem using the word Dog or Rainbow. An **acrostic poem** is a type of **poem** where the first, last or other letters in a line spell out a particular word or phrase. The most common and simple form of an **acrostic poem** is where the first letters of each line spell out the word or phrase.

Samples

Digging is what all dogs like to do.

Often they dig up things we don't want them to.

Gross things like worms and old bones.

Red is the brightest part of the rainbow.

All rainbows are beautiful.

Inside a rainbow it would be very bright.

Night skies hide rainbows.

Bending like a tree branch, the rainbow reaches across the sky.

Orange and purple are my favorite rainbow colours.

When the sun comes out, the rainbow soon disappears.

- List the verbs in the story.
- Use these verbs to create a story of your own.

HEALTH

- Why is Reena different from the other children?
- How does this make Reena feel?
- Have you ever felt like this?
- Brainstorm games that you could play if you had a friend who was deaf.
- Brainstorm situations that have made you feel sad/left out/confused. Write them on cards.
- In small groups discuss the difficult situations on the cards and decide on actions that could improve the situation.
- How could the children help Reena to play hide and seek?

VISUAL ARTS

- Discuss the use of the rainbow in the book.
- Paint a picture using all the colours of the rainbow.
- Discuss how different colours can convey emotions.
- Paint an emotion using only one colour.
- Look at Dog and Reena. How do you know they are friends?
- Draw a picture of two or more friends playing.

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

- My personal world
- How is your world different to Reena's?
- Discuss how your life might be different if you couldn't hear.
- What things couldn't you do? What would you have to do differently?

Comprehension Questions

1. What colour are Reena's eyes?
2. What is Reena good at?
3. What does Dog like to catch?
4. Who shows the children the best places to hide?
5. What does camouflaged mean
6. What is pampas?
7. Why does Reena get upset when it's her turn to hide?
8. Do you think Reena likes Dog? Why?
9. What does Mum tell Reena about rainbows?
10. How does Reena save Thomas?
11. How does Dog hurt his paw?
12. Where is Dog's new home?
13. Why is Reena happy at the end of the story?
14. What does Reena teach the children at the end of the book?

Book Review

Title:

Characters:

Setting:

What happens in the story?

Did you like the story? Give it a score out of 5 stars.

Draw a picture from the story on the back of this page.

Sequencing Activity

Cut out and order the sentences.

When she came out of hiding, Reena was all alone.

A tree branch tumbled towards Thomas.

Dog showed the children the best places to hide.

Reena didn't belong in the rainbow.

Reena screamed a warning.

Happiness bounced and bubbled up inside Reena.

Dog crept out and wagged his tail at Reena.