**Type of Text**

 Picture Book



 **Key Curriculum Area**

 English

 Drama

 Health

**Themes**

Family Relationships

Difference and Diversity

Fear and Anxiety

Imagination

Creativity

Problem Solving

**The Chalk Rainbow**

**Notes Prepared by**

Deborah Kelly and Gwyneth Jones

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**Author:** Deborah Kelly

**Illustrator:** Gwyneth Jones

**Publisher:** EK Books

**Price:** $24.99

**ISBN**: 9781925335453

**Publication Date:** July 2017

**Audience:** Children aged 4–8

**SYNOPSIS**

Zane is different to other kids. He has his own made-up language. He likes to line things up. And he is frightened of things that don’t seem to bother other people — like the colour black. His father gets frustrated and angry with Zane. His mother tries hard to explain things to him. But nothing seems to work. Zane just scrunches himself up into a ball and screams. Things are looking pretty bleak for Zane and his family; that is, until Zane’s big sister starts to draw a chalk rainbow at the top of the front steps … The Chalk Rainbow explores difference and diversity through a family living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It’s also a story of unconditional love, of trust and of learning to look at the world through the eyes of others. The story is told by Zane’s older sister in a way that young children can easily relate to. The ending is uplifting as all members of the family learn to look at things differently and find a way to move forward together.

**AUTHOR BACKGROUND**

Deborah Kelly grew up in New Zealand and Australia but has also lived in Scotland and Japan. She is the author of several popular picture books as well as a chapter book series for children. The first book in the series, *Ruby Wishfingers: Skydancer’s Escape* was a CBCA Notable 2017. She has written short stories for children and material for the educational market, too. In addition to writing for children Deborah writes Haiku poetry which has been published in various forms. She lives with her husband and two children in New South Wales, Australia. Deborah regularly speaks to children at schools, libraries and festival events and is an active member of both the CBCA and SCBWI.

Find out more by visiting Deborah’s website: <http://www.deborahkelly.com.au>

**ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND**

Gwynneth is an illustrator who likes making drawings that people smile and think about. She portrays joy and suspense, drawing on memories of childhood play and introspection. She has an ability to develop concepts into drawings of interest and perspective that add their own story to text. Gwynneth draws both animals and people and her styles extend to realism, portraiture, cartoon and scribble.

Illustrating children's books since 2014, Gwynneth’s first *Don't Think About Purple Elephants*, (Susan Whelan, EK Books) was shortlisted in the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards in 2016, and selected for the NSW Premier’s Reading Challenge in 2017. More books illustrated with EK Books include The Sugar and Spice Collection with *The Great Sock Secret* (Susan Whelan, 2016), *Patch and Ruby* (Anouska Jones, 2016) and *Dance with Me* (Penny Harrison, 2016).

Gwynneth's favourite hobby is to draw live for kids, and she has drawn at events including Newcastle Writers’ Festival, CBCA Lunch with the Stars and at school visits. She exhibits often in galleries, cafes and hospital corridors, and occasionally can be found in a pop-up shop.

Find out more by visiting Gwynneth’s website:

<gwynnejonesart.wixsite.com/illustration>

**SELLING POINTS**

* A story which explores difference and diversity.
* A story that encourages children to try to understand each other better.
* A story that encourages creative problem solving.
* A story that presents the difficulties of living with ASD in a way that is realistic for those families experiencing it, but not too confronting for those with no experience of ASD.
* An uplifting ending.

**AUTHOR INTERVIEW:**

1. **What was the inspiration for the story?**

*The Chalk Rainbow* was inspired by my experiences with children on the Autism spectrum and their families. With Autism becoming increasingly widespread there is a real need for engaging stories which help shed some light on the condition for parents, siblings, extended families and classmates as well as the children themselves.

Many books about Autism are classified as ‘Special Needs’ books and don’t make it into the mainstream picture book market. *The Chalk Rainbow* is a story about difference and acceptance, unconditional love and thinking outside of the square to solve problems –mainstream ideas that everyone can relate to.

I hope that by offering a glimpse into Zane’s family’s life, *The Chalk Rainbow* may encourage readers to step into the shoes of someone who is different, and to try to see the world from their perspective.

1. **What was the most rewarding part of this project?**

Having the opportunity to bring a topic previously categorized as ‘special needs’ into mainstream children’s literature has been very satisfying.

Seeing Zane’s world brought to life with beauty, humour and sensitivity by the wonderful artist Gwyneth Jones has also been very rewarding.

1. **What was the most challenging part of this project?**

Life can be very difficult for children on the autism spectrum and also for their parents, siblings and extended families. I wanted to portray this with honesty so that it rang true for those families who live with ASD every day. But at the same time, I had to be careful not to overwhelm or alienate mainstream audiences.

There is a saying that when you meet one person with autism, you’ve met one person with autism. The autism spectrum is just that: a spectrum. It is impossible to create a character that is representative of all children with autism. So I chose to focus on Zane’s anxiety about one particular thing — the colour black.

ILLUSTRATOR INTERVIEW

1. **What was the most rewarding part of this project?**

 To be chosen and entrusted to draw a book that meant so much to Deborah Kelly. I could see the pictures very quickly in my mind, which means I love the story, and I loved drawing rainbows!

1. **What was the most challenging part of this project?**

 Using pastels actually, trying to keep the page clean!

1. **Illustrative style / media**

 Chalk pastel pencils were used in a style to portray the imaginative aspect of the story. At times I used colour pencil and watercolour as well.

**TEACHING NOTES**

**Pre-reading activities:**

1. Look at the front cover of the book. What clues do the title and cover picture give you about the story? Who might the characters on the cover be-and what kind of relationship might they have? Who is the author? What does an author do? Who is the illustrator? What is their role? Who is the publisher?
2. Now look at the back cover of the book and read the blurb. What is the story is about?

**Read the story to the class and discuss the following points:**

1. Who are the main characters in the story and what is their relationship?
2. What makes Zane different to most other children?
3. Which part of Zane’s behavior causes a problem in the story?
4. Do Zane’s parents try to solve the problem? Is either of them successful?
5. How does Zane’s sister help him to overcome the problem?
6. How do you think Zane feels when he goes over the imaginary chalk rainbow for the first time? How can you tell?
7. How do you think each of the family members feel at the end of the story?
8. How do the colours of the illustrations change from the start of the story to the end? Why do you think the illustrator has done this?

**Discussion questions for small groups**

Families

1. Who is in your family?
2. How does this differ to other people in the group?

Fears

1. Have you ever felt afraid or anxious?
2. Who or what helps you to feel less scared?
3. How are your fears similar or different to others in the group?

**Creative problem solving**

1. Zane and his sister like playing imaginative games. Do you like to use your imagination? How?
2. In the story, Zane and his sister use their imagination to overcome Zane’s fear of the colour black in a way his parents might never have thought of. Have you ever helped to solve a problem? Has someone else ever helped you to solve a problem? Have you ever been able to solve a problem that a grownup couldn’t?

**Classroom activities**

English

1. Ask every child in the class (including the teacher) to write down one thing they are most afraid of. Make a colourful bar chart or a pie chart with the class showing the class’s biggest fears. Kids will learn that everyone is afraid of something (even teachers!) and that different people are afraid of different things.
2. In the story Zane’s sister helps him to overcome his fear of the colour black. Have you ever helped a family member or friend? Write a sentence, paragraph or story about how you helped. Draw a picture to go with it.

Drama

1. Present a problem to the class. (Or ask children for ideas about the sorts of problems they may have faced at school or at home recently). Break the class into groups. Have the children think of how they might go about solving it. Each group should put together a small skit to present to the rest of the class about how they would solve the problem. Children should be encouraged to think creatively about solving the problem and recognize that there can often be many different ways to solve a problem.

Health

1. In the story, Zane and his sister make a rainbow out of chalk. What are some other materials that you could make a rainbow from? Ideas might include balloons, fruit, paint, crayon, pompoms or buttons. Children could be asked to bring in to school cut up fruit of a particular colour. The class could then construct a fruit rainbow to share as a healthy snack for fruit break.

**Post reading activities:**

1. What was the story about?
2. Look at the endpapers, how do they relate to the story?
3. Dedication: What is a dedication? Read the author’s dedication. Why do you think the author chose to dedicate the book in this way?