



Teacher's Notes

The Box Cars

Written By Robert Vescio

Illustrated by Cara King

Published by EK Books

The Box Cars

Author: Robert Vescio

Illustrator: Cara King

Publisher: EK Books

Price: \$24.99

ISBN: 9781925335835

Publication Date: February 2019

Audience: Children aged 3–8

Teacher Notes prepared by Robert Vescio & Cara King.

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

Type of Text

Picture book

Key Curriculum Areas

English

Creative Art

Themes

Friendship

Sharing

Inclusion

Creativity

Imaginative Play

Decision-Making

Problem-Solving

Synopsis

Kai and Liam are best friends. They always play together in their box cars, exploring and sharing adventures in the park. One day, they notice a girl, Eve, watching. Kai and Liam invite Eve to play but there are only two box cars between them. Kai and Liam take turns to sit out while Eve plays. But Kai and Liam want to play as well. So

they share a box car together which ends in disaster. However, Kai and Liam come up with a clever plan that includes all three box car lovers to play together. An entertaining story about accepting someone new and the joys of giving and receiving true friendship.

Author Background

Robert Vescio lives in Sydney and is a published children's author. He writes picture books and short stories. He has won awards for his children's writing, as well as being an author on the NSW, VIC and QLD Premier's Reading Challenge list. Two of his picture books *Finn and Puss* and *Eric Finds A Way* were shortlisted in the 2018 BILBY Awards. Robert is a Books in Homes Role Model and enjoys visiting schools. His aim is to enthuse and inspire children to read and write and leave them bursting with imaginative ideas. For more information visit: www.robertvescio.com or www.facebook.com/RobertVescioAuthor

Illustrator Background

Cara King is an Illustrator and Graphic Designer. She has a background in publishing and marketing as well as travel and hospitality. On school holidays, she enjoys teaching cartoon workshops for kids. Cara illustrated her first book, *Mummy and Mumma Get Married*, by Captain Honey Publications in 2016. Her second book *Scaredy Book* was released in May 2018 through EK Books. She lives in Melbourne with her handy and delightful husband, their 2 young adventurous boys, 5 chickens, a toy poodle and a yabbie called Tim Pinchin.

Illustration Style

Soft and whimsical, touches of fun mixed with watercolour and pencils.

Selling Points

- Teamwork
- Imaginative play using something simple like a cardboard box
- Quirky illustrations complement the text
- A discussion starter about having more than one 'best friend'
- Presents a satisfying resolution by decision-making and problem-solving
- Linked to the curriculum for Creative Arts and English

Author/Illustrator Interview

1. What was the inspiration for the story?

Robert: We have always been fascinated to see how many ways we can interact and transform a cardboard box. We have all played in a cardboard box, imagining all sorts of adventures. This is the reason that children have long preferred the box to the toy that came in it. I've watched my own children be intrigued and make friends with other children. I wanted to write a story about all the possibilities that a cardboard box can bring to a child and how it can inspire hours of play and create long and lasting friendships. Cardboard can be crushed, painted, recycled and stuck back together. It can be adjusted as children grow. And help children gain skills.

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

Robert: Cara's quirky illustrations complement the story beautifully. They are positively fun and warm, capturing the setting and mood and energy of the friends and their games in the story perfectly. It's always exciting to see an illustrator bring my words to life and Cara has done an exceptional job. The quality of her images make *The Box Cars* a great book for both young and old to enjoy.

Cara: I was delighted to work on such a gorgeous story. I could draw inspiration from my own two boys who have difficulty sharing but also have a love of creating things from boxes.

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

Robert: Waiting to finally see Cara's illustrations in colour and to be able to share and show the world our book.

Cara: I think the most challenging part of the story was being able to create an illustrative narrative that the author and its readers would like portrayed. I hope I have managed to achieve this.

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

Cara: I begin by sketching in grey lead pencil then add some watercolour paint and finish it off with coloured pencils (in some parts) over the top of the watercolour. Sometimes, I'll create the backgrounds separately and then combine the images together in Photoshop.

Teaching Notes

Class Discussions

- English

- Looking at the cover what do you think the story is about?
- After reading the blurb predict what the story might be about.
- After reading the story why do you think the author may have written this story?
- What makes working together fun? What can make it not fun?
- What does the word 'teamwork' mean?
- Name some things that require teamwork?
- Have you ever felt left out? Did you do anything about it?
- What was Kai and Liam's dilemma?
- How do you feel about the choice Kai and Liam made?
- Do best friends always have to do everything together?
- Do you always have to have the same friends?
- Why are friendships so important to us?

Class Activities

- Visual Arts

- Divide the class into groups. Each group's task is to choose one group member to play the role of a new kid in class. The new kid's challenge is to try to gain acceptance into the group. After the role-plays, discuss with the class how it felt to be the new kid and how it felt to be part of the group.
- The story also highlights the importance of creativity. Bring in some recycled boxes and let the children use their imagination to create something as a group to share.
- This book is set in a park. How many different animals appear in this book? Can you name some animals that you would see at a park? Can you draw them?
- What are endpapers? Draw your own endpapers for *The Box Cars*.
- Can you design a box car that could fit 3 people?