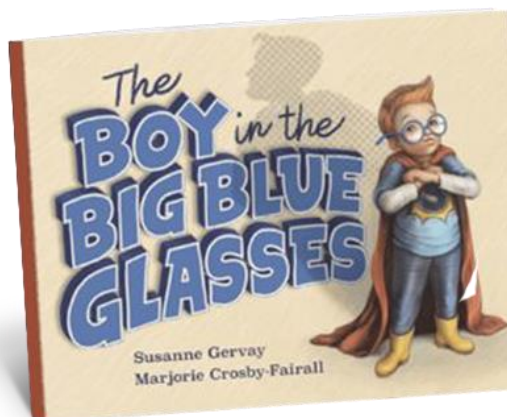


Title: The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses
Author: Susanne Gervay
Illustrator: Marjorie Crosby-Fairall
Publisher: EK Books
Price HB: 24.99 AU
ISBN: 9781925335996
Publication date: July 2019
Audience age: 3 to 8
Key Curriculum Areas: English, Humanities, Art.



SYNOPSIS:

A boy. A superhero. A brave pirate leads his crew of girls and boys. Until the day Sammy feels different. He gets glasses. His parents, teacher, family are happy for Sammy, because life is no longer blurry.

So, the great miscommunication begins. The superhero is still heroic, funny, determined as he uses clever tactics and quick thinking to stay on top. But he's losing his special powers, as he feels no-one can hear him at home or at school. Sammy's self-esteem plummets, until there's a crisis where Sammy is alone wearing his big blue glasses. Things have to change.

Through humour, self-realization and the indomitable spirit of kids, Sammy wins the challenge of change. The heroic pirate returns leading his pirate crew.

THEMES:

Sight and Glasses

The importance of glasses. They are an essential part of a child managing vision issues, so they can learn at school and access the world around them.

Children with glasses need to adopt glasses as a natural part of who they are. For other children, they need to be inclusive and accept children with glasses as part of the diversity within their classroom and society.

On a broader scale, sight impairment is serious, as evident when Sammy takes off his glasses and the world is a blur. It opens the broader discussion of the importance of sight. How eyes and vision must be cared for and how those who are sight impaired and blind adapt and meet challenges.

Self Esteem and Communication

Children are developing their sense of identity and are susceptible to outside influences. Parents, teachers, family, school and peer group impact on the personal growth and development of each child. Sammy is a confident child with supportive parents, family and teacher, yet his self-esteem is vulnerable with miscommunication.

Communicating effectively is hard at any time, for adults as well as children. Adults can believe they are communicating with a child because they have sound priorities. *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* reveals how adults can miss a child's cues. The child may not

understand the message adults are imparting. The impact is that the child feels alone, with their self-esteem diminishing.

Through story, *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* provides effective ways for adults and children to communicate.

Inclusion

While *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* is about Sammy getting glasses, it is also about difference. Sammy suddenly becomes different. He is faced with the fear of being rejected by his classmates. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy until the school, teacher, classmates and he himself embrace his 'difference'.

Difference comes in many forms, including race, disability, learning challenges, language, physical appearance, personalities — humans are all different but also all the same. *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* opens discussion and activities about this.

Heroes

Children need to be heroes in their own life to be all they can be. *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* provides a platform to explore the meaning of being a hero — confidence, persistence, perspective, sense of right and wrong, empathy, exploration.

Who is Susanne?

Susanne holds a M.Ed. (UNSW), M.A (UTS), Dip Ed, B.A. (USyd) and is an educational consultant with a focus on engaging young people in story-journey. While children and adults are entertained through story, it also opens a pathway to problem-solving and personal growth and development.

SELLING POINTS:

- All children want to be superheroes
- Importance of glasses and vision
- A book to share with children and adults
- Developing self-esteem
- A book that invites craft, imagination, inclusion
- Entertaining

WRITING STYLE:

First person Sammy is a character from his first words — ‘I don’t want glasses’ — with his arms crossed and his superhero cape draped over his shoulders. The style is character driven, getting into the emotions, fun and imagination of Sammy, until you love him. When his self-esteem is challenged, through both external and internal dialogue, you feel Sammy’s emotional turmoil. Then the joy of his success.

The descriptions are imaginative and relate to Sammy’s feelings, for example when he is attacked by the ‘googly-eyed’ turtles. There is plenty of room for the illustrator, Marjorie Crosby-Fairall, to create her imaginative interpretation of the googly-eyed turtle.

While there is the struggle by Sammy to find his heroism when faced with wearing glasses and being different, the style and tone of *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* is joyous. It celebrates children.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE:

There is a retro theme that is integral to the book from the design of the title, the colour palette, to the characters’ clothing. The characters are drawn in a realistic manner. However, there is an overlay of a comic book style in line with the retro theme. This comic book style is reflected in the Superman subtheme which is illustrated as shadows when relevant to the text.

The illustrative style is diverse with a mixture of realism, comic book characterisation and fantasy. The style is similar to pastel or pencil drawings. Marjorie expands and softens those moments when Sammy isn’t wearing his glasses. She also wanted to hint at that moment with the soft edges of the illustrations.

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

Susanne Gervay

You'll find Susanne planting 3000 mangroves in Kiribati; in Istanbul speaking to thousands of kids about NO bullying; in remote indigenous schools bringing literacy to kids; in a juvenile detention centre sharing story with girls who deserve a future; from pre-schoolers to young adults across Australia and internationally. Writing children's books has taken her to remote areas to spread the importance of story. Awarded the Lifetime Social Justice Literature Award by the International Literacy Association, a nominee for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award with an Order of Australia, Susanne Gervay is recognized for her literature on social justice. The *I Am Jack* books have become rite-of-passage on school bullying. *Butterflies* is recognized as outstanding YA literature on disability. However, she loves picture books and the privilege of working with an illustrator to bring their unique visual narrative to her story. Her peace picture book *Elephants Have Wings* illustrated by Anna Pignataro is integral to Harmony Day. Her fourth picture book *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* is a collaboration with multi-award-winning illustrator Marjorie Crosby-Fairall and celebrates kids.

Susanne is committed to the community of children's writers and illustrators and is the Regional Advisor of SCBWI Australia East & New Zealand. www.sgervay.com

Marjorie Crosby-Fairall

When Marjorie was a little girl she often escaped to the library, spending hours devouring picture books and minutely examining their illustrations. Consequently, it was a surprise to no one that she decided to become an illustrator.

Marjorie has illustrated several children's books and her magazine work includes *The School Magazine* and *Australian Geographic*. Her books appear on the Premier's Reading Challenge lists and have been shortlisted and won awards, including the CBCA Eve Pownall Award for her first picture book.

Her picture books include *Brothers from a Different Mother* (Penguin Random House), *One Christmas Eve* (Black Dog Books, an imprint of Walker), and *The Croc and the Platypus* (Walker Books).

Her collaboration with Susanne Gervay, *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses*, will be out in July 2019.

Marjorie is an assistant regional advisor for SCBWI Australia East & New Zealand.

<https://www.crosby-fairall.com>

INTERVIEW:

AUTHOR

What is the inspiration for this story?

I come from a family of glasses, so it's close and personal. I remember being upset by wearing them, but I needed to see. Every photo of me as a child, teen and young adult is without glasses. As an adult I wear my glasses with pride, but it took a long time to get there. Now I often refuse to take off my glasses for photos as it is part of me and the right to see.

However, I admit that glasses can be a trial when you lose them. Break them. Crack them. They can hurt the back of your ears. I hate it when they dig into the bridge of my nose. I admit that I've worn cotton balls under my eye pads as the glasses dug into my nose. Then there are the eye tests, which take forever and the drops sting. Swimming means I can't see someone waving at me from the shore.

Some kids can be mean about glasses and make mean jokes, and all that rough and tumble of the school yard can be focused on your glasses. It often isn't about the glasses, but just something that the mean kids can point to.

I wrote *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* because glasses are a gift to those kids with sight impairment like I have. I wrote it so other children realize there are rewards for embracing kids with glasses or other differences. As children develop their sense of self, they are vulnerable. *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* was written to empower kids, so they're not scared because they are different, because all kids are different and any difference should empower you, not undermine who you are.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

It's like an old wound that I know hurts kids. It's time to uncover the wound and get kids and adults into the conversation. By reaching young kids with *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses*, adults and children can work out their answers. So when they see another kid teasing a kids with glasses, they can say, 'Cut it out.'

I don't want Sammy to be hiding in a cardboard box because he feels no-one wants him. I want another child to go up to Sammy and say, 'Hey, let's play.'

What was the most challenging part of this project?

Authors often have worthy ideas. I wanted to write this book for a long time, but I didn't want to be worthy. So, I fiddled and failed, until I found the voice of my superhero Sammy. Then the story came, because it was a story of real kids and how they felt and reacted.

ILLUSTRATOR

What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.

The illustrations for *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* were created digitally but are designed to be reminiscent of pastel and pencil drawings. I wanted the opportunity to soften the image as needed to support moments in the story.

I start with a pencil drawing that is slowly developed to give a good indication of the darks and the lights needed in composition. Shadows and lighting were very important for the visual narrative, as was the placement of text.

Once I am happy that the values are working, I start to apply washes of colour to give a roadmap for the colour palette. After that, it's just a matter of developing and refining the colours — usually starting from the background and working forward.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

It's very satisfying when you feel that you have created illustrations that support the story and even add another dimension.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

There were quite a number of individual 'beats' in the story and it was a challenge to develop a design that allowed for those moments in the correct pacing. For me the breakthrough was when I changed the story to a horizontal format. This allowed for the involved scenes with all the children and also allowed me to indicate inclusion or isolation as needed.

TEACHER ACTIVITIES

Connecting to prior knowledge

- Before Reading

In a whole class group, look at the front and back cover of *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses*.

Focus students' attention on the body language of the character Sam on the front cover and read the blurb on the back to encourage ideas from the group.

Have students do think-pair-share-compare about their predictions. As students make predictions, record the ideas to refer back to.

Finish up by discussing why people need to wear glasses.

Who in their circle of friends wears glasses.

Discuss their favourite superheroes.

Who do they think is Sam's favourite superhero?

Read *The Boy in the Big Blue Glasses* aloud.

Begin by asking the students what they are wondering about after hearing the story.

Re-visit the class predictions about the book. Now ask the students: what do you think the theme of the book is?

Character Development Through Illustrations

Re-read the book, stopping at each page so the students can look closely at the illustrations. As students explore the illustrations, discuss how they help develop a deeper understanding of Sam.

What kind of person is Sam?

Ask what the students infer from the illustrations?

Look at the illustration of Sam in the box. Also look at the picture of Sam on the Pirate Ship.

Brainstorm words to describe how they think Sam is feeling in both illustrations

After the brainstorm, collaboratively create a Venn diagram with the students' results.

Display the chart to refer back to and add to if students discover more character traits as you continue with the activities.
(ACELT1581) (EN1-11D)

Character Development Through Language

Discuss the excuses that Sam uses to describe the way he feels with his new glasses.

For example:

‘They make the back of my ears hurt.’

‘She can’t recognize me either.’

‘I have no one to play with.’

What kind of imagery do these words evoke?

In pairs, students can select one of the illustrations as a guide to sculpt each other as Sam and show how he is feeling.

The theme of the book is about acceptance and belonging, so discuss why the author might have chosen to create Sam as a superhero.

Responding to the text

- **Sharing Feelings and Thoughts about the main character in the story**

Return to the brainstorm and add any new words. The words can be from the text or inferred in the text and illustrations.

Record the words and then draw attention to pairs of words that are antonyms.

Form small groups so students can discuss acceptance and belonging and what this means to them.

Examining text

- **Key Questions to explore the text**

How does the author describe Sam?

Think about the words and the illustrations depicting:

- what Sam does?
- how Sam acts?
- how Sam interact with others?
- how do the other characters in the story think and feel about Sam?

Extension Activities

Divide an A3 piece of paper in half and have the students do a collage on each side, one of Sam with glasses and one of Sam without glasses.

The collage should represent the person that Sam would like to be.

Before beginning, have small groups of students look carefully at the illustrations in the book noting the stance, colour, size, expression and perspective of Sam for inspiration for their artwork. Provide a variety of materials, different types of paper, small objects, etc. for them to choose from.

Surround each drawing with words that best describe Sam, inferring and using words from the text or word wall.

(ACELT1584) (EN1-7B)

Hero

What is a hero?

When you hear the word 'hero', "what other words do you think of? Write the words on the board.

- Is Sammy a hero?
- Why do you think that?

There are two kinds of heroes: famous heroes and personal heroes. A famous hero is someone that many people know, such as a president, a religious leader or an author.

A personal hero is someone that you know such as a friend, a family member or a teacher. Who are your heroes? Who do you 'look up to'? Take a minute to think. Then, write their names in the chart below.

Famous Hero	Personal Hero

Craft Activities

Make your own glasses

Find the accompanying template created by Marjorie Crosby-Fairall and get each student to colour the glasses and cut them out to wear.

Here are some songs you could sing as a group when wearing the glasses.

Songs about wearing glasses.

The Wiggles: *I've Got My Glasses On* <https://youtu.be/b-Y-AjW6MJ0>

Laure Berkner: *These Are My Glasses* <https://youtu.be/9dvl1oa5AVc>

Blindfold Games

These blindfold games will help your students explore the sense of sight while learning about the five senses. These activities help children understand their sense of sight is important, and what it's like without seeing.

Drawing and Writing Blindfolded

Give children a piece of paper. Have them either write their name blindfolded or draw a smiley face while blindfolded. This activity could be done at a small group table.

Walking Blindfolded with a Guide

Have a child put on a blindfold and walk around the classroom while holding on to a guide's arm. This activity can be done with the teacher guiding the children around the room, or you could have children partner up as long as you supervise them.

Build a Tower Blindfolded

Give children some wooden cubes or small blocks. Have them sit at the table, while wearing a blindfold, and try to build a tower with all of the blocks without it falling over. You may want to only give them 7–10 blocks.

Put One in Each Cup

Place about 6 cups on the table and 6 coloured pompom balls. While they wear a blindfold, have children attempt to place each pompom into each cup, so that each cup has only one.

Importance of eye checks — Research into Vision Australia

<https://goodvisionforlife.com.au>

- Get an optometrist to come out with a child-friendly talk

The theme of the sea has so many opportunities for craft, creative writing, imagination and story.

More activity suggestions

HOW TO MAKE A PAPER PIRATE HAT <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Pirate-Hat>

Your students may also like to create shark, fish and turtle hats. The illustrations in the book are a great guideline.

CLASS PROJECT

Create your own Pirate Ship out of cardboard boxes (this also can be used on Talk Like a Pirate Day)

Make a display of non-fiction books about the sea, sharks, turtles, boats etc.

Notes created by Jacqui Barton, Angophora House Education and Learning Consultancy.