



EK BOOKS TEACHER NOTES & RESOURCES

Title: Together Things

Subtitle: When her father feels sad, a little girl finds ways to keep the bonds of love alive

Author: Michelle Vasiliu

Illustrator: Gwynneth Jones

Publisher: EK Books

Price: ANZ \$24.99 | USA \$18.99 | CA \$24.99 | UK £10.99

ISBN: 9781925820294

Publication date: Feb 2020

Audience age: 4 - 8

Key Curriculum Areas: English Literacy, The Arts, Writing, Social Science



SYNOPSIS:

Together Things is about the conflicting feelings a young girl has towards her depressed father, and the way the two adapt their interactions so as to preserve their relationship.

THEMES:

Child-Parent Relationships, Adult Mental Health, Childhood Fears, Family, Perseverance, Emotional Pain And Resilience, Love, Hope, Coping With Change, Inner Strength.

SELLING POINTS:

There are thousands of young children around the world living with a parent who has a mental illness. Like *My Happy Sad Mummy*, the author's award winning debut picture book, *Together Things* was written not only for the children themselves, but also for the parents of these children. Both books provide a framework to help parents explain their illness. Simply put, they are tools parents can use to begin an on-going dialogue about why they sometimes behave in strange and/or distressing ways. Equally, both books can be used by parents, caregivers, teachers and other professionals as a resource to introduce understanding and de-stigmatising of mental illness.

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

Michelle Vasiliu, Author

Michelle Vasiliu is an award-winning Australian children's and YA author who writes sensitive, serious, sometimes sad stuff. She likes to help her readers understand and make sense of their world. She also writes fictitious, funny, frivolous stuff – just because she can.

Gwynneth Jones, Illustrator

Gwynneth's illustrations often portray joy, humour and suspense, with ideas and inspiration from all around her. She has an ability to develop concepts into interesting drawings which add new perspective and depth to stories. Gwynneth draws both animals and people and loves to draw live for kids.

INTERVIEW:

AUTHOR

Why did you write the book?

I am a mother, an established children's author and a person who has a mental illness. With all these labels to my name, over the years I have become extremely passionate about promoting the importance of talking to all children about mental illness, and, in particular, parents with a mental illness talking to their own children about their unique condition.

Mental illness is still very much a taboo subject. In particular, when it comes to educating children about mental illness, there is often much resistance, largely due to a fear that the topic will scare a child and/or the child won't understand the explanations given.

Like my award winning debut picture book *My Happy Sad Mummy*, *Together Things* was written with the intention of lessening this resistance and actively encouraging the relevant stakeholders to embrace the idea of exposing young children to the reality of mental illness, in much the same way mental illness organisations today are seeking ways to break down the stigma of having and/or talking about mental illness.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Despite the fact that one in five adults will experience depression at some time in their lives, there are very few children's books in the world about mental illness in general, and even less specifically about depression.

As such, *Together Things* has the potential to touch the lives of thousands of young children in profound and positive ways.

ILLUSTRATOR

Why did you illustrate this book

I find it an honour to be chosen and asked to draw a book, so if I like the story, then I'm very happy to be part of creating it, especially for important topics for children.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

The most rewarding part of the project was feeling great professional satisfaction with the illustrations I created, despite finding them to be the most difficult I have ever drawn. For the first time, I finished my hand-drawn illustrations on an iPad, so they were cleaned up and colours were consistent throughout the book.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

It was challenging for me to form the visual narrative. The book roughs didn't come first, like they did with other books I have done, so the process required a more disjointed approach. I was developing my ideas for the drawings right to the end. actually learns to see them was quite challenging.

TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

This book may be used by teachers in whole class, small group or independent learning environments, or by counsellors and other similarly qualified persons as part of an emotional psycho-educational program.

For children who have a parent or caregiver with mental health issues, one-on-one and/or small group work may be more appropriate than a whole class approach.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels, spanning from Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may also be applicable to early secondary school students. Where possible, Australian Curriculum goal codes have been included which address Foundation to Year 2 curriculum learning outcomes that apply directly to the targeted audience (4-8 year olds).

KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

Before reading (Interpreting, analysing, evaluating):

- Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
- Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
- What things do you like doing with your Dad (or a male figure in their lives)?
- Ask students to define what an emotion is.
- Ask them to name a variety of emotions and how they make them feel.
- Do they think it's important to share / show emotions? Why?
- What do they understand about fear and fears?

During Reading

- Ask students if they know of someone like the little girl in the story; someone who has a dad who has changed like this.
- What is their first impression of the little girl?
- What is their first impression of her Dad?
- What changes does she experience during the story?
- How can we help adults if they are sad?
- How can we help children if they are sad?

INFERENTIAL AND CRITICAL THINKING

After Reading (Responding to literature)

- Ask students how they think the little girl views her father at the end of the story.
- What are the students' impressions of her father?
- What are the students' impressions of the little girl?

- Do they find the ending satisfying, confusing, hopeful, predictable, a surprise, or a relief?
- Gently enquire if any of the students have ever experienced something like this before. Discuss how it made them feel.

CROSS-CURRICULAR DISCUSSION AND IDEAS

ENGLISH LITERACY SKILLS

Grammar (Expressing and developing ideas)

- Why do they think the author didn't name the main character?
- Do certain words link to the facial expressions and emotions depicted in the illustrations? If so, which ones?
- What other describing words could replace those used in the story?

Writing (Examining Literature)

- Identify whose point of view (POV) the story is written in.
- Have students choose a scene and rewrite it.
- Write a story using the activity sheets below.

Comprehension (Wellbeing)

- Research and discuss the meaning of the title.
- Explore the possible reasons the author chose this title.
- Get students to name the sequence of events in this story. Attempt this via:
 - Listing them as a group
 - Writing out key sentences from the story, cutting them out and then getting students to arrange these in order
 - Illustrating scenes in correct order of occurrence
- Discuss how it would affect the feeling and outcome of the story if it began at a different point in time.
- Do the illustrations reflect the text in the story? Do they enhance it? If so, in what way?

SOCIAL SCIENCE

- Talk about trust. Do students understand this concept and can they identify people in their lives they can trust? Who are these people?
- Discuss the meaning of the word empathy.
- Ask how students feel when they are in an unsafe or scary situation. Get them to list some of the actions or things that would help them feel safe. Explore ways to cope with bad feelings: writing/drawing them, stepping back and counting to ten, meditating, talking about them, engaging in their favourite activity, burning energy, crying, telling jokes, sharing their fears with someone they trust, etc.

HAVING FUN

Under the photos write who you would like to do these activities with.



CREATIVE WRITING

- Choose one or two of the photos below
- Look carefully at the photo
- Use your imagination and write an interesting story

Think about:

- The characters
- The relationship between the two characters
- The setting

This activity can be adapted for younger children by printing the page in A3 size (this will make the lines thicker for their writing).

*Note these images are copyright free and can be re-produced and displayed in your classroom.

Use your imagination to write a story about the people in the photo.

Name:

Date:



Use your imagination to write a story about the people in the photo.

Name:

Date:



Use your imagination to write a story about the people in the photo.

Name:

Date:



Use your imagination to write a story about the people in the photo.

Name:

Date:



ART ACTIVITIES

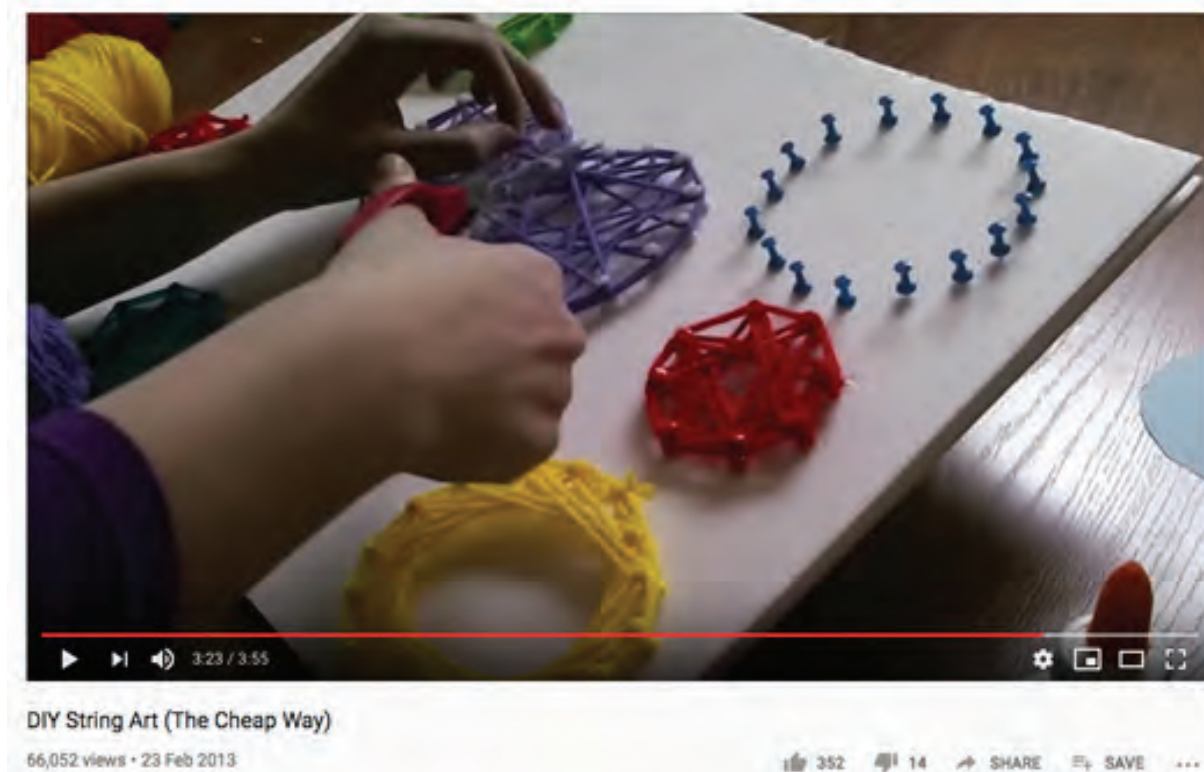
In *Together Things*, the illustrator has used lots of squiggly lines that look like string. Here are some ideas for making art with string:

Easy DIY String Art | Room Decor | Kids Crafts by Three Sisters YouTube instructional video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97ryQYxz1aM>



DIY String Art

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KG7HPWcLL84>



<https://realitydaydream.com/heart-shaped-beginner-string-art-kids-craft/>



Extension activities

26 Innovative Ways to Decorate Your Space with These Inspiring String Art Projects and Ideas

<https://homebnc.com/best-string-art-projects-ideas/>





RELATED TITLES ORDER FORM

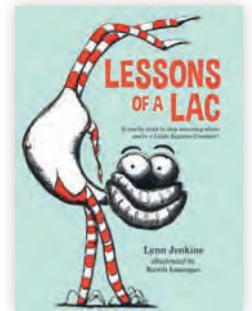
Lessons of a LAC

It Can Be Hard To Stop Worrying When You're A Little Anxious Creature!

Lynn Jenkins & Kirrili Lonergan

THEMES: ANXIETY, WORRY AND RESILIENCE

9781925335828 | Paperback | 306 x 230 mm | 12 x 9 inches | 32 pages | Colour
USA \$17.99 | CA \$23.99 | UK £9.99 | AU \$19.99 | NZ \$19.99

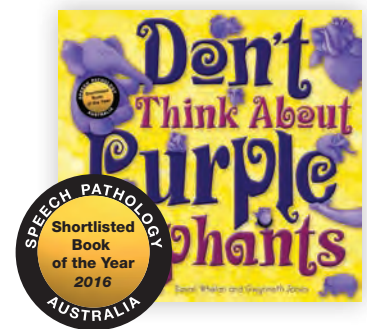


Don't Think About Purple Elephants

Susan Whelan & Gwynneth Jones

THEMES: COPING WITH ANXIETY AND WORRY

9781921966699 | Hardcover | 245 x 255 mm | 9½ x 10 inches | 32 pages | Colour
USA \$17.99 | CA \$23.99 | UK £10.99 | AU \$24.99 | NZ \$24.99

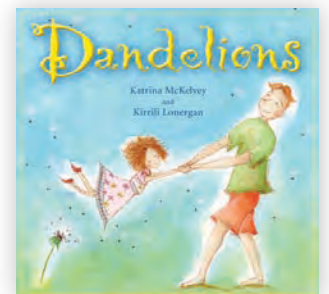


Dandelions

Katrina Mckelvey & Kirrili Lonergan

THEMES: HOPE, RESILIENCE, NATURE AND THE FATHER-DAUGHTER BOND

9781925335569 | Paperback | 245 x 255 mm | 9½ x 10 inches | 32 pages | Colour
USA \$12.99 | CA \$16.99 | UK £6.99 | AU \$14.99 | NZ \$14.99



Contact your school supplier to order.

School: Customer Number:

Contact Name: Order Ref:

Phone No: Email:

Address:

EK Books are also available from all good bookstores and

www.ekbooks.org