

## Teacher's Notes



### *The Kindness Club*

Written by Kate Bullen-Casanova

Illustrated by Dave Petzold

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary-aged readers (ages 3-6, grades Prep+)

#### KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
  - ACELA1786
  - ACELA1439
  - ACELT1783
  - ACELY1650

### THEMES

- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Starting school
- Friendship
- Celebrating difference
- Kindness

### SYNOPSIS

Welcome to the Kindness Club, a classroom where everyone is welcome, and kids are free to play and create.

This gentle rhyming book walks readers through their first day at the Kindness Club. Meet Oliver, who leads the way through the cubbies and activities. There's books to read, dancing, and plenty of healthy snacks. Best of all, at the Kindness Club, everyone is looking out for each other and ready to lend a helping hand.

*The Kindness Club* is a meditative story that encourages kindness and inclusivity and invites readers to slow down and connect with the things (and people) that make them happy.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

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**Kate Bullen-Casanova** lives in Melbourne, Australia, with her two young children. After seven years working in women's activism, including time at UN Women and the International Women's Development Agency, Kate now brings her passion for gender equality to the world of early childhood education through her online community Future Feminists.

**Dave Petzold** is an author and illustrator from Lennox Head, Australia. His illustrations, often playful and goofy, embrace the little things that go unnoticed – the things we take for granted. He uses graphite pencil, ink, oil paint and digital collage in his art. His first picture book, *Seven Seas of Fleas*, published by Starfish Bay Publishing, was shortlisted for the 2021 CBCA New Illustrator Award.

## THEMES

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*The Kindness Club* gives readers a chance to think about what kindness really means. We often simplify being kind to being nice, but this book invites us to consider kindness as acceptance, and curiosity, making space for difference, and celebrating community. The book also explores the way that spaces encourage kindness – in the story people are kind because they have space to play, to connect with nature, and to work together. Ask students what kindness means to them – they might like to share a time that someone showed them kindness, or a time they showed kindness to someone else.

## WRITING STYLE

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Kate Bullen-Casanova has written the story in the second person 'you', so the reader becomes the subject of the story. This makes their experience of the club more intimate – it is as if they are exploring the story, and the kindness club, themselves. Discuss narrative points of view (first, second and third) in class, and ask readers to think about how each changes the way they experience the story.

## COMPREHENSION

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- The first word of *The Kindness Club* is 'welcome' – how does this make you feel? What other words can be used to greet people and invite them into a space?
- What is the first thing you notice about the Kindness Club?
- What are some of the activities people do at the Kindness Club?
- What is special about the group-time mat? What are some of the things that happen there?
- What is 'all that matters' at the Kindness Club?
- The story says that it's 'brave to cry'. Why is it important to let people share their emotions?
- Find three pairs of rhyming words from the book to share with the class.
- What are some of the ways people show friendship at the Kindness Club?
- What is teddy good for in the book? Do you have something that makes you feel better when you're scared?
- Who is the Kindness Club for?



## WRITING EXERCISE

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- Think about what a day at the Kindness Club looks like. What does a regular school day look for you? Make a list of the things that happen. What are some of the similarities and differences between the Kindness Club and your own school? If you could add one thing from the Kindness Club to your classroom, what would it be?

## ILLUSTRATION STYLE

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The illustrations in the book emphasise the themes of inclusion and friendship. Look at all of the kids on each page and ask students if they recognise themselves and their friends in any of the scenes. Explore the way that the pictures show teamwork, and kids looking after each other. Perhaps think about the way that colour is used to bring out the details and capture the sense of busy play that the story describes.

Dave Petzold has created a sense of openness in the story by setting the scenes outside or allowing the indoor scenes to spread across the page rather than closing them off. Why do you think this is important?

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

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- Place is an important part of the story – all of the scenes happen in places that encourage people to work together – playing, in the garden, in the kitchen. Draw a place that's important to you and your friends.
- Make a list of the ways that we can show kindness to other people. Choose 5-10 of your favourites and make a poster to put up in the classroom to encourage others to show kindness.
- Why is teamwork such an important part of being kind. What are some of the activities shown in the book where people work as a team? Describe an activity that you enjoy working on as a team, and what your role is.
- Imagine that you've just come home from your first day at the Kindness Club. How would you describe it to your family? Write a short description.

## RELATED READING

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*All the Ways to Be Smart* by Davina Bell

*Wide Big World* by Maxine Beneba Clarke

