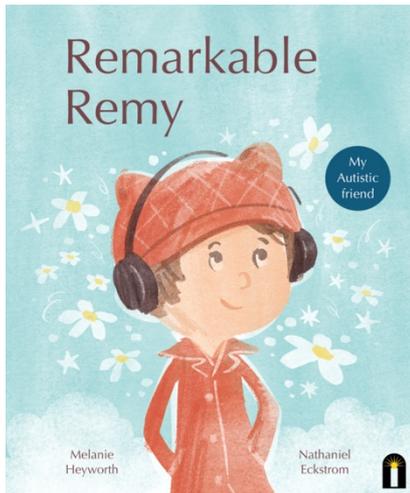


Teacher's Notes



Remarkable Remy

Written by Dr Melanie Heyworth

Illustrated by Nathaniel Eckstrom

Teacher's Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 3 and up (Pre-school+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: ACPPSO15, ACPPSO19, ACPPSO24
- General capabilities:
 - Self-awareness
 - Social awareness
 - Personal and social capability in the learning areas
 - Comprehending text through listening, reading and viewing

THEMES

- **Autism and Neurodiversity**
- **Inclusivity**
- **Gender Stereotypes or Non-Binary Gender**

SYNOPSIS

Remarkable Remy is a warm and optimistic story that introduces an Autistic character to a young audience. The story helps explain the Autistic brain – how it works a little differently and how unique it is – and how our neurodivergent friends make the world remarkable!

My best friend's name is Remy. I think Remy is remarkable. Remy is Autistic. That means Remy's brain works differently to my brain. I love that Remy is different to me, because Remy can teach me new ways to experience the world.

A picture book for both Autistic and non-Autistic readers aged 3 and up, *Remarkable Remy* illuminates the experiences and strengths of Autistic people, and the joys of having Autistic friends.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Dr Melanie Heyworth founded Reframing Autism, a company run by and for Autistic people and their families and allies. It is dedicated to creating a world in which the Autistic community is supported to achieve acceptance, inclusion and active citizenship. Reframing Autism combines capacity-building and leadership development with education, research, resource development, mentoring and support to strengthen the Autistic community. Reframing Autism has built strong online communities, with close to 40,000 followers on Facebook and 12,000 followers on Instagram, and more than 12,000 followers on LinkedIn, and 3000 Twitter followers. In addition, the company has more than 2000 website subscribers (who receive regular newsletters and EDM), a podcast (which has had more than 1500 downloads), and a YouTube channel.

<https://reframingautism.org.au/>

Nathaniel Eckstrom is an illustrator based in Sydney, Australia. He has worked on a number of children's picture books including *The Ricker Racker Club*, *Road Trip* and *Stubborn Stanley*. Nathaniel has also illustrated for a number of commercial clients including Cadbury, the ABC, SBS and King Island Dairy.

<http://www.nathanieleckstrom.com/>

THEMES

Autism and Neurodiversity

This book explores the experiences of an Autistic child and how they might interact with those around them. It is a book for parents, carers and teachers to share with both Autistic and non-Autistic children.

Discuss Autism and how that might manifest in different ways.

Autism is one form of neurodiversity and this book may encourage readers to explore this topic further.

Explain to students in simple terms what neurodiversity means.

Discuss the various forms of neurodiversity (for example Tourette syndrome) which your very young students may be aware of.

Discuss kindness and how people feel when they are not listened to or included in a group.

Read other books about Autism and neurodiversity and discuss with your students. [See **Further Reading**.]

Inclusivity

Everyone is different! Too often the word 'normal' is used to describe those with no obvious signs of difference, but we are, by our very nature as individuals, each different to each other.

Encourage students to consider this suggestion and to explore the ways in which they themselves are different from someone else.



Discuss empathy and understanding – the need to put yourself into someone else's shoes and to consider how they might look at the world differently to the way you observe the world around you.

Gender Stereotypes or Non-Binary Gender

This book also explores the intersection of Autism and gender stereotypes and non-binary gender. (Remy is referred to as 'they' denoting this.) This topic might be managed obtusely with toddlers.

Discuss favourite toys, clothes and games, and encourage students to express their individuality in the choices they make.

Why can't a boy have a doll and a girl like playing with toy trucks and tractors?

Boys and girls are often stereotyped in the style and colour of clothing that is selected for them. What are their favourite clothes? What are their favourite colours?

Games are often segregated, and sports have been as well, although recently major women's cricket and football teams are challenging that notion. Ask students what games and sports they like, or don't like to play and why?

WRITING STYLE

This story consists of a series of vignettes about Remy told by the friend/narrator, after which there is a repeated refrain: 'I love Remy's way, their Autistic way, of [...]'. This is called a cumulative tale structure. It effectively builds a story by using repetition to cement a theme leading to a resolution.

It is told in first person, present tense so that the reader feels that they are actually participating in the action and so that they are able to observe Remy's behaviour via the lens of a sympathetic understanding character.

COMPREHENSION

Invite students to answer questions on this text, for example:

How does Remy inspire the narrator when they read together? (*Answer:* With stories of the galaxy.)

When the narrator feels energy building inside, how does Remy show the narrator how to release it? (*Answer:* To 'leap it out', or in other words to enjoy movement in dance or play.)

What do they discover in nature? (*Answer:* The feathery softness of a moth's antennae.)

What form of communication has Remy taught the narrator? (*Answer:* To speak with gestures.)

When Remy swings in the trees, what does the narrator learn? (*Answer:* How to have fun.)

Remy is passionate about research into some subjects, and often is so focussed that nothing else is of interest. This means that Remy's friend/narrator has to learn to adjust and to do what? (*Answer:* To sit and wait.)



When Remy is kind to animals, what does the narrator learn? (*Answer: To have empathy and to know that life is precious.*)

The narrator is impressed to see how Remy accepts difference in others, which teaches the narrator what? (*Answer: It teaches the narrator to also accept difference.*)

The narrator is a loyal friend; when other kids ignore Remy, what do they do? (*Answer: The narrator supports Remy and makes sure that Remy doesn't feel left out.*)

WRITING EXERCISE

Note: This activity is for school-aged children.

Invite students to write a story about an Autistic friend using a cumulative structure.

Write a poem about being different.

Invite students to write a response to this picture book.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

In keeping with the topic of this book the illustrator and designer have used easy-to-read sans-serif typeface, a clear hierarchy and structure for the flow of information, with ample white space, and calm or muted low-contrast colour palette, well-suited to an Autistic reader. Visual clutter has been avoided to create a clean, quiet and clear design with little distraction from the text to avoid lack of comprehension.

Nathaniel Eckstrom's art creates a playful atmosphere peopled by captivating characters. He says that:

'The illustrations for *Remarkable Remy* were made using a combination of acrylic paint, pencil and digital media. After creating rough drawings, I hand-painted textures using acrylic paint. These were then scanned and applied digitally to form the basis of the artworks. I enjoy using both traditional and digital methods when creating art. And this technique allows me the freedom to move objects around digitally whilst maintaining a hand-drawn textural finish.'

The **front cover** features Remy wearing earphones, and the **back cover** features Remy depicted with their friend, the narrator. How would you have drawn this cover? What else might it have focussed on?

The **floral endpapers** suggest the optimism of Remy's world view. Design your own endpapers for this book based on some of the objects or ideas which feature in it.

ILLUSTRATION EXERCISE

Invite young children to draw a response to this picture book.

Invite young children to create a new cover for this book.



CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Make your own galaxy in the classroom or pre-school with stars on the ceiling and planets hanging above.

Create a medieval town like Remy and the narrator do, using found objects and materials.

Encourage students to be active; play some music in the classroom and allow them to 'leap it out' by dancing or jumping just as Remy and the narrator do.

Take students into the school grounds or a nearby park and encourage them to observe something small in nature which impresses or surprises them.

Invite students to use gestures to indicate what they want to say to another person in their class.

RELATED READING

Picture Books on Autism and Neurodiversity

Avis, Heather *Different – a Great Thing to Be!* Ill. by Sarah Mensinga. Waterbrook Press, 2021.

Brownson, Deborah *He's Not Naughty! A Children's Guide to Autism* Ill. by Ben Mason. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2019.

Ely, Lesley *Looking After Louis* Albert Whitman and Company, 2004.

Fraillon, Zana *The Curiosities* Ill. by Phil Lesnie. Hachette, 2021.

Garibal, Alexandra *A Head Full of Birds* Ill. by Sibylle Delacroix. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2022.

Peete, Holly Robinson and Peete, Ryan Elizabeth *My Brother Charlie* Ill. by Shane W. Evans. Scholastic Press, 2010.

Potter, Molly *The Same But Different* Ill. by Sarah Jennings. Bloomsbury, 2021.

Thomas, Nelly *Some Brains: A book celebrating Neurodiversity* Ill. by Cat MacInnes. Piccolo Nero, 2020.

Thomas, Pat *A First Look at Autism: I See Things Differently* Ill. by Claire Keay. Hachette Children's Books, 2022.

Walsh, Melanie *Isaac and His Amazing Asperger Superpowers* Walker Books Australia, 2017.

Worthington, Michelle *Noah Chases the Wind* Redleaf Lane, 2015.

[See also reading lists included under **Websites** below.]



Picture Books on Challenging Gender Stereotypes

Love, Jessica *Julian is a Mermaid* Walker Books, 2019.

Maclean, Andrew and Maclean, Janet *Make It I'm the Mother* Allen & Unwin, 2002.

Pearlman, Robb *Pink is for Boys* Ill. by Eda Kaban. Running Press, US, 2018.

Turner, Tracey *We are All Different* Ill. by Asa Gilland. Pan Macmillan UK, 2021.

Non-Fiction

Bleach, Fiona *Everybody is Different: A Book for Young People Who Have Brothers or Sisters with Autism* AAPC Publishing, 2002.

Cook, Katie *Thriving with Autism: 90 Activities to Encourage Your Child's Communication, Engagement, and Play* Rockridge Press, 2020.

Daniels, Natasha *Social Skills Activities for Kids: 50 Fun Exercises for Making Friends, Talking and Listening, and Understanding Social Rules* Rockridge Press, 2019.

Delaney, Tara *101 Games and Activities for Children With Autism, Asperger's and Sensory Processing Disorders* McGraw Hill, 2009.

Gooding, Laura *Wonderfully Wired Brains: An Introduction to the World of Neurodiversity* Ill. by Ruth Burrows. DK Children, 2023.

Mosca, Julia Finley *The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin* Ill. by Daniel Rieley. (Amazing Scientists) The Innovation Press, 2019.

Musgrave, Francis *The Asperger Children's Toolkit* Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2012.

Pascuas, Catherine *The Autism Activities Handbook* Edx Autism Publishing, 2016.

Pascuas, Catherine *Social Skills Handbook for Autism: Activities to Help Kids Learn Social Skills and Make Friends* Edx Autism Publishing, 2017.

Spilsbury, Louise *Autism* Franklin Watts, 2019.

Welton, Jude *Can I Tell You About Autism?* Ill. by Jane Telford. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014.

Websites

Amaze (Shaping the Future for Autism)
<https://www.amaze.org.au/about-amaze/>

Autism Awareness Australia



<https://www.autismawareness.com.au/>

'Autism Books for Children on the Spectrum' by Kim Barloso *Autism Parenting Magazine*
<https://www.autismparentingmagazine.com/autism-books-for-children-on-spectrum/>

Autism Spectrum Australia
<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/>

Autism What Next?
<https://www.autismwhatnext.com.au/>

'Picture Books About Autism and Neurodiversity' *Reading Middle Grade*
<https://readingmiddlegrade.com/picture-books-about-autism-and-neurodiversity/>

'Picture Books Featuring Characters with Autism or Asperger's' *Reading Rockets*
<https://www.readingrockets.org/booklists/picture-books-featuring-characters-autism-or-asperger-s>

'Resources: What to Read' *Autism Awareness Australia*
https://www.autismawareness.com.au/resources/read?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI8uf9jcSL-wIVQUwrCh3G6gd-EAAYASAAEgKVIPD_BwE

The Spectrum
<https://thespectrum.org.au/>

'30 Activities, Teaching Strategies, and Resources for Teaching Children with Autism' *Waterford.org*
March 10, 2021
<https://www.waterford.org/education/15-activities-teaching-strategies-and-resources-for-teaching-children-with-autism/>

'Understanding Autism' *Autism Awareness Australia*
<https://www.autismawareness.com.au/understanding-autism>

'Virtual Activities' *Autism Speaks*
<https://www.autismspeaks.org/virtual-activities-kids-autism>

