

Teacher's Notes



Oli and Basil: The Dashing Frogs of Travel

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary aged readers (ages 5+, grades prep+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - Understanding different types of texts (ACELA1463)

THEMES

- Friendship
- Teamwork
- Creativity

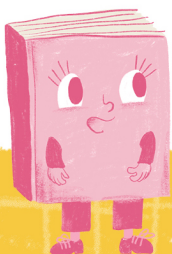
SYNOPSIS

Oli and Basil are both creative types – Oli is an inventor, and Basil is an artist. Both Oli and Basil love things that fly, but Oli lacks the imagination to get his machines off the ground and Basil is missing the skills to turn his paintings into reality.

Oli and Basil each decide to enter a contest to make a pig fly, they come up with their best creations yet, but both fail to take off.

When they see each other's creations, Oli and Basil realise what they've been missing all along – someone whose ideas will make their own even better! The two clever frogs team up and, up, up, away! By working as a team, Oli and Basil's ideas are finally able to take flight.

Oli and Basil is a story that celebrates creative thinking and discovering that two heads are often even better than one.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Megan Hess was destined to draw.

An initial career in graphic design evolved into art direction for some of the world's leading design agencies. In 2008, Hess illustrated the *New York Times* number-one selling book *Sex and the City*, written by Candace Bushnell. She has since illustrated portraits for *Vanity Fair* and *The New York Times*, created animations for Prada in Milan, and illustrated the windows of Bergdorf Goodman in New York. Megan has also illustrated live for bespoke fashion shows around the world including Fendi at Milan Fashion Week, Viktor & Rolf and Christian Dior Couture. Her other renowned clients include Givenchy, Tiffany & Co., Louis Vuitton, Montblanc, Yves Saint Laurent, *Vogue*, *Harpers Bazaar*, Prada and Cartier.

Megan is the author of eight bestselling books for adults and five books for children, including the beloved series *Claris: The Chicest Mouse in Paris*.

THEMES

Oli and Basil is a joyful celebration of friendship, creativity and teamwork. Readers will be familiar with the frustrations of having incredible ideas that don't quite work, or lacking the skills to take a project from ordinary to extraordinary. These two quirky frogs are a welcome reminder that creativity doesn't have to be a struggle, or something to undertake alone. Together, Oli and Basil show readers that working with a friend whose ideas are different to your own can inspire things that you might never have thought of otherwise. *Oli and Basil* is an uplifting, colourful story that will encourage readers to reflect on themes such as:

- Friendship
- Teamwork
- Creativity and inspiration
- Recognising and overcoming challenges

WRITING STYLE

Oli and Basil uses a rhyming narrative to engage its readers an a slightly lengthier text than they might be familiar with. Hess presents a verse or two per page, with the images wrapping around the text. The rhyming structure follows a straightforward AABB structure, in which the last sound of the first line rhymes with the last sound of the second, and this provides readers the opportunity to replicate it in their own work.

Readers who are beginning to make the transition from picture book to chapter book will rise to the challenge of this story – the verses are made up of mostly straightforward language, with a few more challenging words dotted through the book to extend vocabulary. Less advanced readers will be also be able to use the rhyming structure to give them aural clues to help them anticipate and decode words.



COMPREHENSION

- Make a list of new or difficult words from the book. Use the dictionary (or ask someone to help) to find out what they mean and write the meaning next to the word in your schoolbook.
- What holds each of the frogs back from achieving success? What do they each dream of doing? Share something that you dream of achieving and come up with at least one thing that is holding you back.
- How are Oli and Basil similar, and how are they different? Why is it important to share some similarities and some differences in a friendship?
- Why don't Oli and Basil win the pig-flying contest? Who does win and what is their invention?
- How do you think Oli and Basil feel when they lose the contest? What makes them feel better?
- What is different about the rhyme scheme on the second to last page of the book? Do any other pages follow this structure?
- After Oli and Basil become friends, what changes in their outfits? What do you think this means?
- Why do you think Oli and Basil are frogs and not people? Would the story be different if they were people?

WRITING EXERCISE

- In the story, what do Oli and Basil need to do in order to win the contest? The word **fly** is a **verb**. What is a verb? Find five other verbs from the story and use each of them in a simple sentence.
- The story (mostly) follows an AABB rhyme scheme (another word for this is rhyming couplets). In this rhyme scheme, the end of every second line rhymes with the line before it. Use highlighters or coloured pens to circle the rhyming words for each verse. Use this rhyme scheme to write your own short verse (between 4-8 lines) about an adventure that Oli and Basil might have next.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Megan Hess has said that she imagines her stories like movies in her head. The difficulty then is capturing those movies in single illustrations! Each of the illustrations in the book is colourful and complex, sprawling across the pages and wrapping around the text. The complexity of the illustrations will give readers something to come back to, along with the story itself, as there is more to find in each picture with every reread. You might talk to your students about the use of colour and black and white to draw attention to important parts of the story, or the way that colour is used first to show the differences between Oli and Basil and then to highlight their similarities. Another discussion point might be the way that Hess captures movement in her illustrations, especially since the text is all about flying (and crashing).

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- On the first page of the book, the writer mentions some of Oli's inventions. What else might he create? Write a short description of your invention and draw a picture to accompany it.
- *Oli and Basil* is all about teamwork, and how two brains can make something even better. Swap your inventions from the last activity with someone else and brainstorm a list of ways that they could be even better. Can you make a prototype of your invention?



- Oli and Basil have to get past the disappointment of losing the contest to be able to work together. Write about a time that you've felt disappointed or sad because something you've tried to do hasn't worked out. What made it better? Did you try again?
- At the end of the book, Oli and Basil are so excited about working together, that they move to a new base in a mountain, where they have even more room to create. Work with another person in class to draw a picture of your ideal base. Where would it be? What kind of rooms would it need?

