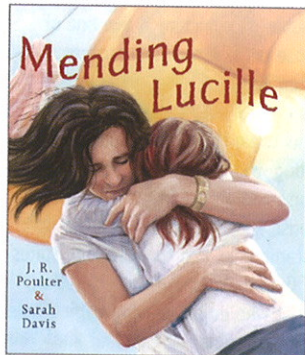
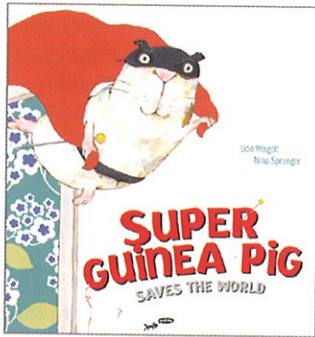


Beginner Readers

Books for young children in the process of gaining confidence in reading – approx. 5-8 years of age. 🐣 indicates an Australian book. 🌿 a New Zealand book.



Super Guinea Pig Saves the World (2008)

Udo Weigelt, ill. Nina Spranger, Black Dog Books, 28pp. 978 1 74203040 1 \$16.99 Pb

Burrito the guinea pig is not the only pet in the Connor household; he shares his home with Von Perlewitz the canary, Frieda the dog and Arthur the goldfish. He differs from the other pets in that he watches the most television; especially loving the program called *Super Guinea Pig Saves the World*.

When his friends make fun of his hero, Burrito determines to prove to them just how real and special his hero is but when his hero doesn't appear when called, ('*Maybe it's because I'm not in danger,*' thought Burrito,) he decides to stand in for the real superhero. As is usual in the best of stories, things don't go as planned, but Burrito learns the value of a real friendship compared with make-believe friends.

Illustrator Nina Spranger uses a combination of watercolour and acrylic painting in her full-page paintings and spot illustration: the effect at times, especially with the vivid red lamp, is three-dimensional.

Children will love to find the extras in the illustrations such as Burrito's green checked security blanket or the sword-wielding goldfish.

This book was first published in Dusseldorf, Germany in 2006.

Recommended.

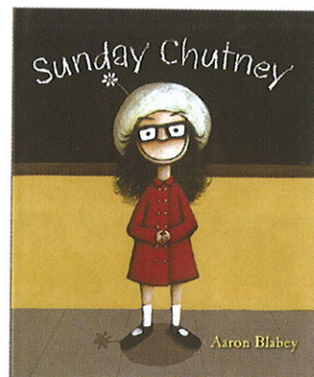
Sharon Greenaway

Mending Lucille (2008)

J.R. Poulter, ill. Sarah Davis, Lothian Children's Books, 32pp. 978 0 7344 1033 7 \$28.99 Hb

In this poignant, charming story, an unnamed little girl is left clutching her torn doll, Lucille, as she watches her mother fly away in a huge and noisy plane, never to return. Her father cares for her, but both are grieving. After a time, he takes his daughter with him on his truck-driving rounds, and during one journey, they encounter a friendly waitress at a truck-stop. With the appearance of Chrissie, life takes a new and positive turn for the family. Told from the little girl's point of view, J.R.Poulter's warm and gentle text is beautifully illustrated by new-to-picture-books artist Sarah Davis. The child's emotions are exquisitely captured throughout, and close-ups of hands are beautifully portrayed. Metaphors for healing run through the story, from the real wounded bird to the torn doll to the mending of hearts - often conveyed by images of sewing. First and last endpapers extend the story —the threatening, overshadowing bird image transformed by loving hands into simple stitches beside a now-mended, smiling Lucille. Recommended.

Chloe Mauger



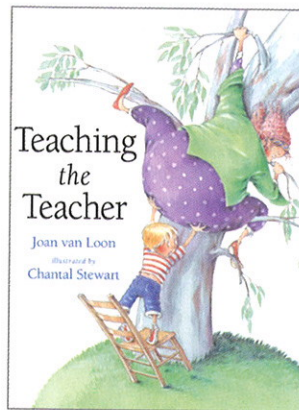
Sunday Chutney (2008)

Aaron Blabey, Penguin/Viking, 32pp. 978 0 670 07179 1 \$24.95 Hb

Blabey returns after the success of *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley*, retaining similar style in authenticity and theme, topic and delivery. Sunday Chutney is a self-professed, unusual young lady. She has lived all over the world, which she doesn't mind at all. On the other hand, Sunday does mind starting at new schools all the time and not having regular friends. Being the new kid is hard. Her 'excellent

imagination' makes up for her loneliness, for example, she is seen having tea with the Mad Hatter and Rabbit. Friendship and the importance of friends and family are significant themes in this picture book, delivered through a well flowing text. The reader is made to feel as though they are being shown Sunday's photo album of her life and dreams, as the pictures are pinned to the illustrative background of the story. I see this book as a celebration of individualism in unison with the need to belong, two contrasting viewpoints. One cannot help feeling empathy and affection for this talented and precocious character. This is a wonderful read aloud book and a great one to share with young ones of various ages.

Liz Derouet



Teaching the Teacher (2008)

Joan Van Loon, ill. Chantal Stewart, UQP, 32pp. 978 0 7022 3653 2 \$27.95Hb

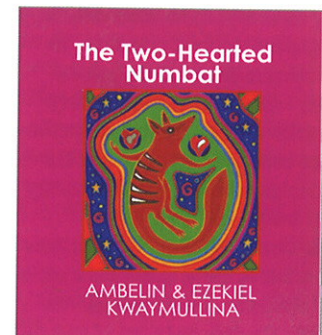
There's a lot to learn in a day, especially in the early years of school and Joan Van Loon has captured the essence of this well in this light-hearted look at how a young child envisages teaching the teacher what it is like to be in her students' shoes for a day. From sitting cross-legged on the floor with a group of wriggling classmates to trying to get changed after swimming lessons (*Get dressed. Hurry up. Be quick please. Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!*) the child describes how he and his classmates would help their teacher get through the day.

An interesting note is introduced early in the text, when the child assures the reader that he/she would teach Ms Cherry how to deal with Belinda the bully when she tries to steal Ms Cherry's recess snack. If the reader has missed observing Belinda's antics in the previous pages, she is

now within the radar and her sneaky tricks will be familiar to many a young child. Belinda only features in the text once, but her influence is felt throughout the story.

There is much to explore in this book whether one considers just the text, or whether one uses the illustrations to consider all the little power plays that take place among even quite young students. I can see this being a popular class read-aloud as well as being a book which is regularly borrowed from the Library shelves.

Annette Dale Meiklejohn



The Two-Hearted Numbat (2008)

Ambelin & Ezekiel Kwaymullina, Fremantle Press, 32pp. 978 1 92136 123 4 \$26.95 Hb

Imagine having two hearts. One is a feather—making you soft and gentle - the other is a stone—making you powerful and strong. Both endow you with qualities, but you can really only keep one. Which would you choose? This is the dilemma faced by the poor young numbat in Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina's story. Young numbat heads off to ask the old wise numbat which heart he should keep, and she sets him a task—to meet her the following day in the deep bush. Of course, it is a journey in which the young numbat learns much.

The colourful illustrations are full of movement and visual clues while invoking the feel of the West Australian bush. Young children will enjoy finding the wise old numbat hiding in the swirling designs, watching over young numbat on his quest. The final illustration includes key figures from the story hidden in the whirling texture of the tree trunk and rock—giving the picture an added depth.

This heart warming story is a joy to behold and is sure to delight readers of all ages. The illustrations complete the story in stunning fashion, making the whole package a real treat.

Tina Cavanough