

2022

WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

Virtual Author Visit

Attendee Information



Resource Package for

What is Neurodiversity?

Author Visit with Sally J. Pla

How To Use This Resource

This companion Resource Package contains a wide range of lesson ideas and activities about Autism and neurodiversity for students to complete before, during, and after the event. Below is one suggested lesson sequence - all of which can be found in the Resource Package. Select the activities and sequence that work best for your learners.



Click to Access Event

Suggested Lesson Sequence

Before

Set The Stage

Accessing Prior Knowledge

Explore student's current knowledge and beliefs about Autism & Neurodiversity.

Explore Resources

Spend time exploring the Autism and neurodiversity resources in the virtual classroom.

During

Enjoy the Event

Watch the Event

The event can be enjoyed as a whole or at your own pace via the recording. Click [here!](#)

Colouring Page

To help with focus we recommend printing at least one activity page for students to work on during the event.

After

Dive Deeper

Author Visit Activities

Choose one or more activities to unpack the main messages presented in the author visit.

Understanding Autism

Continue exploring resources, then discuss how student understanding of autism or neurodiversity has grown or changed.



This Resource Package is full of activities to engage your students before, during, and after our Author Visit with Sally J. Pla!



To help with focus, we recommend printing at least one activity for your learners to work on during the event.

What's Inside?



Understanding Autism & Neurodiversity

Lesson ideas to help guide your exploration of Autism and neurodiversity through resources designed and vetted by members of the Autistic community.



Author Visit Activities

Lessons and activities designed to help students unpack the key messages in the book *Benji, The Bad Day, and Me* and from our conversation with author Sally J. Pla.



Letter to the Author

There are always so many amazing questions and comments during our events. Your students are invited to write a letter to Sally to share their questions and thoughts about her book.



Blank Templates

A variety blank templates for you to use with any question or writing prompt. Choose the activity pages and writing prompts that best fit your goals for your learners.

How To Use This Resource

This companion Resource Package contains a wide range of lesson ideas and activities about Autism and neurodiversity for students to complete before, during, and after the event. Below is one suggested lesson sequence - all of which can be found in the Resource Package. Select the activities and sequence that work best for your learners.



Click to Download

Click to Download

Suggested Lesson Sequence

Before

Set The Stage

Accessing Prior Knowledge

Explore student's current knowledge and beliefs about Autism & Neurodiversity.

Explore Resources

Spend time exploring the Autism and neurodiversity resources in the virtual classroom.

During

Enjoy the Event

Watch the Event

The event can be enjoyed as a whole or at your own pace via the recording.

Colouring Page

To help with focus we recommend printing at least one activity page for students to work on during the event.

After

Dive Deeper

Author Visit Activities

Choose one or more activities to unpack the main messages presented in the author visit.

Understanding Autism

Continue exploring resources, then discuss how student understanding of autism or neurodiversity has grown or changed.

Virtual Classroom

Learn about Autism and neurodiversity with resources designed by Autistic creators! Our Neurodiversity Virtual Classroom is filled with informational videos, read aloud books, and more for your learners to explore at school or at home. To keep students safe and on task, YouTube videos are linked through SafeShare which removes advertisements and suggested videos.

Inside the Virtual Classroom



1 Educational Videos
(on whiteboard)

2 Read Aloud Videos

3 Printable Resources

4 Guided Drawing

5 Disability Resources

6 Welcome Message

kids.joyfullearning.net/neurodiversity

What is Neurodiversity?

These lessons and activities are intended to help students explore their current assumptions about autism and learn more through resources designed by Autistic creators.



As you learn more about Autism and share your learning with your students, it is important to ensure you are using resources that have been created by or in direct consultation with members of the Autistic community.

Lesson Ideas

→ Accessing Prior Knowledge & Assumptions

- Before participating in the author visit or exploring the virtual classroom, consider having students complete the first column of the "What is Autism?" worksheet to access prior knowledge and assumptions that students have about Autism.
- Tell students to write down what they *think they know* about Autism even if they aren't entirely certain if they are correct.
- This information will be valuable for future discussions about stereotypes, misconceptions, and the importance of integrating new learning into your belief systems and changing your actions accordingly.

→ Explore Autism & Neurodiveristy Resources

- **Understanding the Spectrum Comic** - This comic was created by Autistic artist Rebecca Burgess and provides an excellent explanation of the Autism Spectrum.
 - Read the comic together, stopping to ensure students understand the terminology and concepts being discussed. As you read, have students highlight any new information they find about the Autism Spectrum.
 - Students may wish to colour the pictures as they re-read the comic to themselves.
- **Sally J. Pla Author Visit** - Watch recording of the Author Visit with Sally J. Pla as she reads her book *Benji, The Bad Day, and Me*.
 - Access the Event Recording [here](#). (Secret code: diversity)

What is Neurodiversity?

➔ Explore Resources *continued*

- **Virtual Classroom:** The All About Autism & All About Neurodiversity virtual classrooms are filled with informational videos, read aloud books, and more for your learners to explore at school or at home. Check them out here: kids.joyfullearning.net/disability



➔ Evaluating Prior Knowledge & Questions that Remain

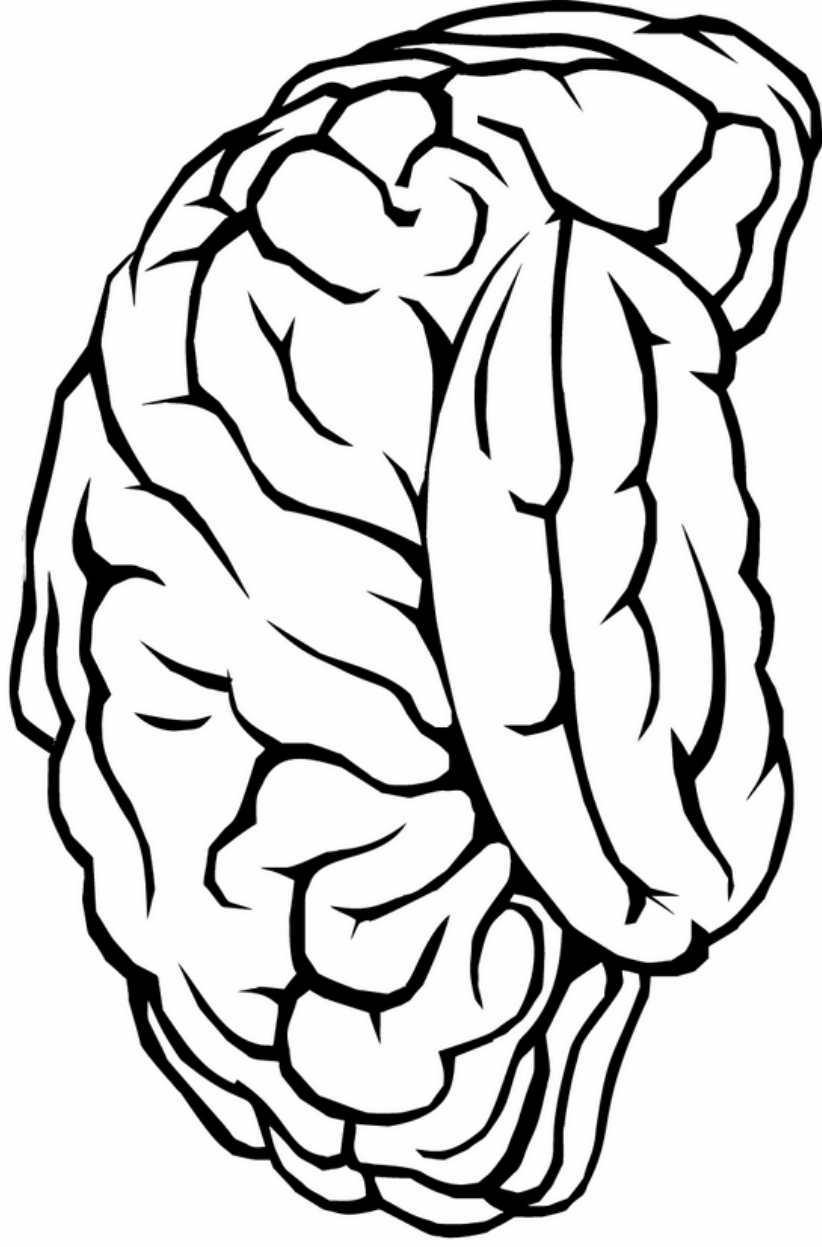
- **New Information:** As you explore some of the resources in the virtual classroom, have students write what they learn in the "New Information" column of the "What is Autism?" worksheet.
- **✓ ✗** : spend some time examining and discussing what students wrote in the Prior Knowledge column in light of their new learning. Place a checkmark beside items that were correct and an X beside misconceptions.
- **Questions I Have:** give students time to brainstorm questions they still have about Autism. Discuss ways they can continue finding answers to these questions.

➔ Beyond the Stereotypes

- Discuss how students' thinking about Autism & Neurodiversity has changed over time.
- Depending on the age of your students, this would be a good time to discuss stereotypes - what they are, why they can be harmful. Discuss the importance of integrating new learning into your belief systems and changing your actions accordingly.
- Have students complete the *Beyond the Stereotypes* page to reflect on how their understanding of Autism has been challenged and stretched through these lessons and activities.





Neurodiversity



My brain is just right for me!



What is Neurodiversity?

Prior Knowledge 		New Information	Questions I Have

Name: _____



What is Neurodiversity?

What I Think I Know	✓	What I've Learned	What I Still Wonder

Name: _____



What is Neurodiversity?

What I Think I Know	✓	New Information	Questions I Have



Name: _____





What is Autism?



Prior Knowledge 		New Information	Questions I Have





What is Autism?



What I Think I Know	✓	New Information	Questions I Have





What is Autism?



What I Think I Know	✓	What I've Learned	What I Still Wonder





Beyond the Stereotypes



I used to think...

Now I think...



Name: _____

Understanding the Spectrum

1

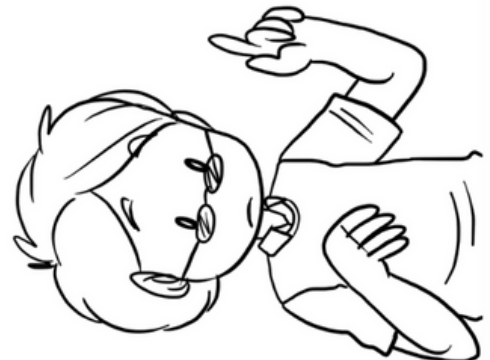


Language can be confusing for me.

It takes me longer than the average person to process conversations.

And although I am good at making conversation, it can take me longer than normal to respond.

But, neurotypical people find language confusing too. And it can lead to some people misperceiving who I am.



2



That is why I would like to explain what is meant by 'spectrum' when we talk about the 'autistic spectrum'.

Sometimes when people think of this word, they think of the autism spectrum as being like this:



A very linear looking 'spectrum', which gives the impression that people range from being 'a little autistic' to 'very autistic'.

Hm. How can you be 'a little autistic'?

It's that vague language that I always find confusing.



Understanding the Spectrum

3

The problem with thinking of the spectrum in this way, is that a perception of an autistic person also becomes linear.

You're only a little autistic, Archie.

Hm. I still don't understand, can you be less vague?

You're able to have a normal conversation with me and act pretty normal! You're not severely autistic.

Not autistic

Very autistic



...And so you see, if someone thinks you're on a 'low end' of this spectrum, this often happens:

Archie you can handle all of this just fine, you're not *that* autistic.

TOO MUCH NOISE

NEW SITUATIONS

LACK OF ROUTINE

SMART fight + cleaning

DON'T STAY loadsa call at a conversation once

DON'T FIDGET

BE MORE ORGANISED!

4

Ah. Ahh- **ACT LIKE EVERYONE ELSE!** BUT CONCERN YOURSELF IN 'XOXO' MORE HARDER! **INFORMALTY AND LOOK IT NORMAL WITH DOING IT OTHER WISE PEOPLE GET ANGRY!**

How can you be tired? everyone does this every day, you're just being lazy.

Wow you're being so over dramatic, get over it!

Wah, you're more autistic than I thought.

Not autistic

Very autistic

And if you're seen as being on the 'high end' of this spectrum-

I'm gonna re-label you on this spectrum... Since you're very autistic I don't think you should have a job, just to be safe y'know?

It can lead to some people labeling you as being incapable of doing anything at all.



Understanding the Spectrum

5

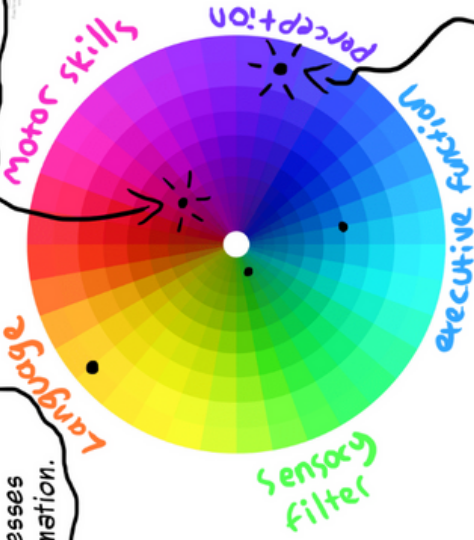
The truth is though, someone who is neurodiverse in some areas of their brain, will also be no different to your average person in other areas of their brain.



You see, the autistic spectrum looks something more like this.

6

The spectrum consists of many different 'traits', or ways in which the brain processes information.



Some traits create difficulties in every day life. (hence being diagnosed)

But also many traits are useful in every day life.



Each person with autism will have a set of traits all in different areas of the spectrum. The areas where they don't have a trait will function no differently to a neurotypical brain, but may be affected by circumstances. In example, I am good at making conversation (language). But I get sensory overload in loud and crowded spaces, which then makes conversation very hard for me.

Understanding the Spectrum

7

And so, another autistic person might be very happy in loud crowds, but find conversation hard in general.

You could say I'm just a real 'party animal'!

You can see with this spectrum than, that not every autistic person has 'savant skills'. Or that someone who can't communicate verbally might still understand what you're saying, but just need a different way to communicate, such as sign language.

It shows how not every autistic person acts the same way, and we are all capable of varying strengths and weaknesses.

8

Sometimes, if someone is diagnosed as being 'on the spectrum', and informs another person of this, it's so that they can get some understanding and respect for the things they are unable to do. **But**, it is also so that they can cooperate with the world around them- so that they can be the best in the things they **can** do.

I hope that in the future, people will better understand the term 'spectrum', and continue to respect the differences **and** similarities we all share in how we experience the world.

Author Visit Activities

These lessons and activities are designed to help students unpack the key messages in the book *Just Right For You* and from our conversation with author Sally J. Pla.



To access to the event recording visit:

kids.joyfullearning.net/vav-pla

Secret Code: diversity

Lesson Ideas



Author Visit Reflections

- After the author visit, use the Author Visit Reflections page to write or draw what they have learned or heard during the author visit.
- Also, spend some time brainstorming questions any questions students have that were not answered during the event. Discuss ways students can find answers to their questions whether individually or as a class.
 - See "What Is Autism?" section for ideas and resources to help your students learn more about autism through resources designed by autistic creators.



Write a Letter

- There are always so many amazing questions and comments during our events. Your students are invited to write a letter to Sally J. Pla to share their questions and thoughts about her book.
- Students are also welcome to write a letter to Hayley at Joyful Learning to share their experiences, thoughts, and questions about autism, neurodiversity and other disabilities



Making Connections

- As students listen to to the story, have them try to make a text-to-self connections (finding something in the book reminds them about their own life).
- Students could also look for text-to-text connection (something in the book reminds them of another book they have read) or a text-to-world connection (something in the book reminds them of something or someone they have seen or experienced).
 - **Note:** If you have Autistic students in your class, you may want to carefully consider how this conversation is approached. It may be worth discussing this lesson with your Autistic students before beginning and getting their feedback on whether or not they want to be talked about openly.



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me - Teacher's Guide

- We have included the companion Teacher's Guide for the book *Benji, The Bad Day, and Me* by Sally J. Pla. This is an excellent resource filled with lesson ideas and tips to help you unpack the messages in the book.
- Immediately following the Teacher's Guide you will find a plethora of blank *Benji, The Bad Day, and Me* templates to use with any of the questions or writing prompts found in the Teacher's Guide.
- At the end of this resource package we have also included blank templates specifically for any Neurodiversity activities or explorations you plan to do with your students.



Blank Templates

- We know that every group of students is different. That is why we have included even more blank templates for you to create your own lessons and activities.

Author Visit Reflection

What did you learn about Sally J. Pla?

What did you learn about neurodiversity?

What did you learn about being an author?

What are you still wondering?



Author Visit Reflection

What did you learn about Sally J. Pla?

What did you learn about neurodiversity?

What did you learn about being an author?

What are you still wondering?



Write A Letter

There are always so many amazing questions and comments during our events. Your students are invited to write a letter to Sally J. Pla to share their questions and thoughts about her book.

What to write...

- A connection I made to your story is...
- My favourite page in the book is... because...
- One think I learned is...
- I used to think that Autism was ____ but your author visit helped me understand that Autism is _____.
- One question I still have is...

Where to send it...

MAILING ADDRESS

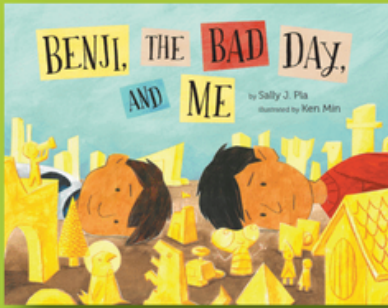
Joyful Learning
9220 214 Street
Langley, BC
V1M2C1

ELECTRONICALLY

hello@joyfullearning.net

Students are also welcome to write a letter to Hayley at Joyful Learning to share their experiences, thoughts, and questions about Autism, neurodiversity or other disabilities. We read every question and comment we get from students (and teachers) and use them to help guide our future planning for events and resources.

TEACHER'S GUIDE



Benji, the Bad Day, and Me

written by Sally J. Pla, illustrated by Ken Min

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

*Reading Level: Grade 2

Interest Level: Grades PreK–5

Guided Reading Level: L

Accelerated Reader® Level/

Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the
Spache Readability Formula

Themes: Childhood Experiences and Memories, Empathy and Compassion, Families, Identity, Self Esteem and Confidence, Emotions and Self-Regulation, Kindness and Caring, Realistic Fiction, Siblings, Conflict Resolution, Cultural Diversity, Disability and Neurodiversity (Autism), Overcoming Obstacles

SYNOPSIS

Nothing seems to be going right for Sammy today. At school, he got in trouble for kicking a fence, then the cafeteria ran out of pizza for lunch. After he walks home in the pouring rain, he finds his autistic little brother Benji is having a bad day too. On days like this, Benji has a special play-box where he goes to feel cozy and safe. Sammy doesn't have a special place, and he's convinced no one cares how he feels or even notices him. But somebody is noticing, and may just have an idea on how to help Sammy feel better.

In this tender story about siblings, author Sally J. Pla shares her experience of raising sons with different personality traits and needs. *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me* embraces the philosophy that we are all part of a wide spectrum of neurodiversity. And on those really bad, rotten days, you can always count on family to be there for you.



BACKGROUND

Author's Note from Sally J. Pla

“At our house, our autistic and non-autistic sons alike had fuzzy blankets they carried around, and they often asked—on both good days and bad—to be ‘wrapped tight into burritos.’ This can be comfy and calming. And it’s what sparked the idea for this story.

It’s important to note that no two autistic kids are alike, and their needs and behaviors will be different. Some, like Benji, are supersensitive to sensory input—the world can feel too bright, too loud, and too intense. Other kids are sensory seekers. Some may like to drum on things and clap their hands and shout out. And many kids like to ‘stim,’ to rhythmically fidget or move as a way to disperse extra energy and stress.

Certain autistic kids will visit a sensory gym or OT (occupational therapy) clinic, as in the Super-Happy Lady illustration, to help with coordination and sensory processing. But not all. Different kids have different needs, strengths, and challenges.

It’s not always easy being a brother or sister. It’s hard, at times, to be patient. We all have bad days, and it’s okay to express those feelings in appropriate ways. Despite the bad days, though, sibling bonds can be one of life’s best and most important gifts.

Thank you for reading about Benji and Sammy!”

Organizations for Autism

PBS Learning Media’s *The Story of China* offers interactive maps and timelines for further information on not only Confucius, but the different dynasties across Chinese history. Historian Michael Wood explores Chinese history through various media forms (<http://www.pbs.org/story-china/home/>).

- Love and Autism: <https://www.loveandautism.com/>
- Autistic Advocacy: <https://autisticadvocacy.org/>
- Different Brains: <https://differentbrains.org>
- ChildMind: <https://childmind.org/>

- National Autistic Society: <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

Explaining Autism to Children

The National Autistic Society defines Autism as “a lifelong developmental disability that affects how people perceive the world and interact with others. Autistic people see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. If you are autistic, you are autistic for life; autism is not an illness or disease and cannot be ‘cured’. Often people feel being autistic is a fundamental aspect of their identity. Autism is a spectrum condition. All autistic people share certain difficulties, but being autistic will affect them in different ways. Some autistic people also have learning disabilities, mental health issues, or other conditions, meaning people need different levels of support. All people on the autism spectrum learn and develop. With the right sort of support, all can be helped to live a more fulfilling life of their own choosing.”

It’s important to emphasize and recognize strengths and interests of all children, as opposed to labeling and solely focusing on the differences amongst Autistic people compared to non-Autistic people.

When speaking about Autism with young people who are or are not familiar with Autism, consider showing the video “Amazing Things Happen” by Alexander Amelines, published by the National Autistic Society. The four-minute animated film simply and concisely explains the various types of differences that people have, and that those variations are also our strengths. All brains work differently, and that’s why people are good at all sorts of things (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbwRrVw-CRo>).



VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Content Specific

tiptoe, karate, “Ka-Cha!”, clinic, waiting room, smoothie, burrito, “Ka-thunk!”

Academic

wiggles, instant, fault, downtown, blueness, wrap

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. What are some things you do when you're feeling upset or angry? How do you manage your emotions if you're feeling unhappy? What makes you feel better or helps you to calm down? Why do you do those things?
2. Describe a bad day that you've had recently. What happened on that day? What things made you feel upset or sad? Why was it a bad day for you? How did you move past it?
3. How do your family or friends help you when you need support? When you're having a bad day, how do your family and friends make you feel better? What are some things that they do, and why does this comfort you?
4. Why are differences important? What would it be like if everyone was the same? Why is it important to be unique?
5. Have you ever felt frustrated with anyone in your family or with a friend? What did it feel like? How did you let them know that you were feeling frustrated?
6. How is family important to you? What kinds of things do you like to do with your family? Do you have siblings or cousins that you enjoy spending time with? What do you like to do together? Why?
7. How do you show your family that you care about them? What are some things that you do to help your family? Why?

Note: Consider introducing Autism to students using the information provided in the Background section of this guide to help familiarize children who may not know or have encountered a child or adult with Autism. This is not necessary to engage students in the story, but may be helpful for your particular set of students or classroom.

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)



1. **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
2. **Read Sally J. Pla's Biography:** Read about Sally J. Pla on the back cover as well as on her website at <https://sallyjpla.com/>. Sally has written several books for children. Encourage students to think about how she comes up with new ideas for her books, and what could have been her possible inspiration for writing *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*.
3. **Read Ken Min's Biography:** Read about Ken Min on the back cover as well as at his website <http://kenminart.com/>. Have students look into his other illustrations and compare and contrast across books. How are his illustrations similar? How are they different? Does the subject matter influence his illustrations?
4. Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
5. Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- why Sammy is having a bad day
- who Benji is and his relationship to Sammy
- how Benji comforts Sammy when he's feeling sad
- why it's important to celebrate our differences and recognize how our differences can be assets
- how familial love helps us when we're feeling sad or frustrated

Encourage students to consider why the author, Sally J. Pla, would want to share with young people this sibling story about two brothers who comfort each other when they're in need in their own

particular ways.

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What are some of the things that happened to Sammy during his bad day? How do those things make him feel?
2. What does Mama say as he walks in the door from school? Why does she say this to Sammy?
3. Where is Benji when Sammy gets home?
4. How did Sammy, Benji, and Mama decorate Benji's box? Why does Benji have a special box?
5. What does Mama keep saying to Sammy when he's inside the house? How does he react?
6. Who is the Super-Happy Lady? What does she do? What does Sammy think of it?
7. What does Mama do to Benji when they get home from the clinic?
8. What does Sammy ask Benji to do? What does he want to teach him?
9. What happens after Sammy spills the milk? What does Benji do and say to Sammy?



★“Sally J. Pla’s straightforward, accessible text gives background in Sammy’s voice...Benji is wholly heartwarming.”

—*Shelf Awareness*

“An ordinary story is given a spark of life by the inclusion of an empathetic little brother with autism.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Pla doesn’t overtly state that Benji is autistic but emphasizes his behaviors and qualities. With a light touch, Pla offers a thoughtful reminder that all siblings need extra love and attention sometimes.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

10. What do Benji and Sammy do together at the end of the story? Who else joins them?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3; and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3; and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

- How do Sammy’s feelings change from the beginning of the story to the end of the story? What are the different events that cause frustration for Sammy, and what are the events that cause joy? How can you tell?
 - Why does Sammy get frustrated with Mama and Benji during his bad day? Do you think he feels that way on other days? Have you ever felt frustration towards your family members when you’re having a bad day? How does a bad day make you feel angry or upset about things you wouldn’t normally be mad about? Why?
 - What are some repetitive statements that Sammy mentions during the story? For example, Sammy says, “When I’ve had a bad day, no one tiptoes or speaks softly.” How do you think that makes Sammy feel? Why do you think Sammy’s mom chooses to treat the two boys’ bad days differently? What are some of the other times that Sammy mentions that he’s not allowed to do certain things when Benji is? Why is that?
 - Why do you think being wrapped in a blue blanket is comforting for both Sammy and Benji? How do you think that makes them feel?
- Why is the blue blanket an important object in the book? What do you think the blue blanket represents?
 - What is unique about the way Benji comforts Sammy? Benji doesn’t say many words throughout the book. How does he show Sammy that he cares about him without saying it in words? Why do you think he does that?
 - How do Sammy and Benji show what it’s like to have a sibling? What kinds of things do siblings like to do together? What do they fight about? Why?
 - Why do you think the word “Autism” is never mentioned in the story? Why do you think Sally J. Pla never referred to Benji as Sammy’s Autistic brother?
 - What are Benji’s strengths in the story? What are Sammy’s strengths? How do both brothers use their strengths in the book? How do they use their strengths to make themselves feel better and to comfort each other?
 - How are Benji and Sammy similar? What interests do they share? How are they also different? How do you know from reading the story? Do you think it’s important to have similarities with someone but also have differences? Why?



Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about the sibling relationship between Benji and Sammy. How and why do you think they help and comfort each other in times of need?
2. What do you think author Sally J. Pla's message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind Sally J. Pla's intentions in writing this book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Sammy's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world, such as on television or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. What does friendship mean to students after reading? After reading *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*, what does Sammy and Benji's relationship demonstrate about friendship and/or having a relationship with a sibling? Why? How did your meaning of friendship change after reading *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*?
7. How has a family member, such as a sibling or cousin, or close friend impacted your life? What are some memories that you have of someone doing something to help you in times of need? What did they do, and how was this meaningful?
8. How does author Sally Pla use her background and experience to write this story? What about her life may have contributed to or inspired her

to write this story? Do you think this makes her story more powerful or effective? Why or why not? How can writers "mine" their own lives to create stories?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what family and/or friends means to them or share a time when they helped someone who was having a bad day and needed help.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.



Social and Emotional Learning

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*:

1. How does Benji demonstrate empathy (understanding the feelings of another person) in *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*? How does he show that he cares about Sammy through his actions? What are ways that students can show empathy without saying anything to their classmates or friends? Give examples.
2. Select an illustration and describe what emotions are being conveyed. How can you tell that particular emotion is being shown in the illustration? Why?
3. What are the different ways that you can comfort someone when she or he is having a bad day? Create a chart in the classroom so that students can refer to it throughout the year. Why do students think those things are helpful? What are some situations when they have helped someone feel better during a bad day?
4. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, frustration, anger, etc. Discuss or write about what that emotion looks like in *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*.
5. Have students chart Sammy's emotions over the course of the story. How does he feel when he walks in the door from school? When Mama says to be careful around the block city? When he spills the milk? When Benji comforts him? Use the illustrations as a visual reference and way to tap into students' visual literacy skills.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

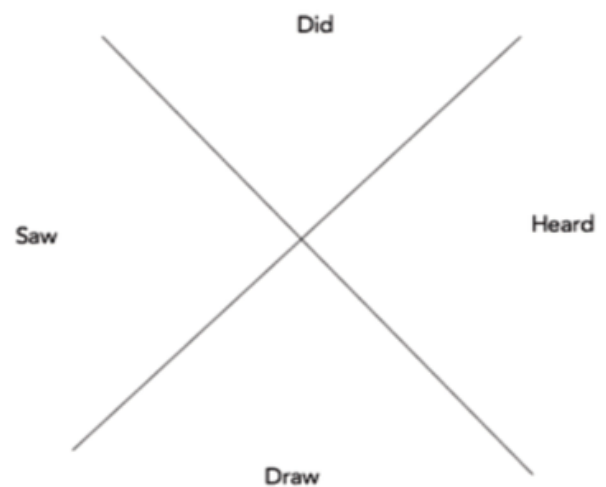
English Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9; Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3; Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

1. Complete an X chart for Sammy. Students can complete this diagram for different sections of the book, and fill out what Sammy did, what he heard, what he saw, and draw a scene. Afterwards, students can write one big thought from the details of their findings to make a conclusion about Sammy's character.



2. Compare and contrast the *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day* with *Benji, the Bad Day and Me*.



- What are some similar things that Alexander and Sammy experience on their bad days? What events are different?
 - What could Alexander learn from Sammy? Why?
 - What could Sammy learn from Alexander? Why?
 - How do both books present the bad days similarly? Differently?
 - How do both books portray emotions? How does Judith Viorst demonstrate how Alexander is feeling? How does Sally J. Pla demonstrate how Sammy is feeling?
3. Have students examine the spread with Benji looking at Sammy after he spilled the milk. There are no words on this spread. Why do you think the author chose to not have any text on these pages? Have students brainstorm the reason why Sally J. Pla omitted the words. How did this absence impact them as readers? How did it affect the way they understood both Benji and Sammy's feelings? If they were to put words on the pages, what would they write? How would that change the story?
 4. Have students select a quote or a few sentences from the book to write about Sammy's actions or feelings. Why did they choose to write about that particular quote? What are their reactions to those statements? Have students choose a quote from the beginning, middle, and end of the book. What do they notice about the change in those statements throughout the book? What does this reveal about Sammy's character?
 5. Encourage students think of ways that Sammy could help Benji when he's having a bad day. Students can work in partners or in small groups and write a response or discuss how Sammy can help Benji when he's having a hard time. Have students think about what they know about Benji from the book to help inform their decisions as to how Sammy could support Benji when he's feeling sad or frustrated. What are the kinds of supports that Benji would need? Why?
 6. Assign students the characters of Benji or Sammy and have them brainstorm about a guiding question: what and how can this character teach us? Have students share out their findings. How is this character important to the book, and what lessons did they teach us over the course of the story? How did their actions develop the story and impact what you learned about both Benji and Sammy?
 7. Envision a sequel to *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*. Have students think about what would happen in the follow-up story. Who would they choose to write about and why? What would happen in their story? Encourage students to write their own sequel with accompanying illustrations. Have students look at the way Sally J. Pla describes emotions in the book when Sammy's having a bad day (i.e. "fence-kicking, rain-dripping, milk-spilling day") to influence their own writing.
 8. Come up with questions to interview the author, Sally J. Pla. What was her process behind creating *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*? What was her inspiration for Benji and Sammy's relationship? Read the Author's Note with students and have them discuss what they learned and how it made them think about the book differently. Why did she write this book for young readers? Consider reaching out to Sally J. Pla for an author visit, either in person or virtually.
 9. Encourage students to think about Sammy and Benji's sibling relationship. Explore whether Sammy is a good role model for Benji. Have children consider why Sammy and Benji continue to play together even though Sammy feels impatient towards Benji and other times feels ignored.

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)



1. Have students learn more about Autism through the resources provided in the Background section of this guide. What did students learn about Autism from reading *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me* that they had not known previously? Have students present their findings from their research about Autism through different organizations to the class. Be cognizant of neurodiverse students in your own classroom and think about different ways to approach teaching Autism to ensure inclusivity and accuracy.
2. Encourage students to research other books with neurodiverse characters. What did they find from their search? What did they find about the books with neurodiverse characters? What do students think could be done in their schools or the publishing industry to encourage more books with neurodiverse characters? Have students brainstorm different ways to advocate for more books with neurodiverse characters, either through a letter, petition, or other ways to get involved in the community and their library. See the Imagination Soup article for more texts and as a resource for students to get started (<https://imaginationsoup.net/books-kids-characters-autism-spectrum/>).

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Come up with questions to interview the illustrator, Ken Min. What was his process behind creating the illustrations for *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*? Why did he choose a particular artistic medium to create the illustrations? What was his inspiration to depict both Sammy and Benji in the ways that he did in the book? Have students look at other works by Ken Min, including Lee & Low's *Hot Hot*

Roti for Dada-Ji (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/hot-hot-roti-for-dada-ji>). What do they notice about Ken Min's illustrations across his works?

2. Have students create a piece of art in response to a bad day that they had. How did it feel to have a bad day? What happened? Have students create their art through collage, painting, or whatever materials are available in your classroom or setting. Encourage students to do a gallery walk and examine other students' works. What do they notice about the art? What kinds of emotions are conveyed visually and not through words, similar to the spread in *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*?
3. Encourage students to select an illustration that resonated with them from *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*. Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about?

School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Have students ask caregivers how they deal with bad days. Everyone, both young people and adults, goes through difficult times or has tough days. Have students ask their caregivers or people at home what they do when they're having a bad day. What techniques help them feel better or relax? Why do these things help? How can students be helpful on days like this?
2. Provide students with the list of organizations from the Background section in this Teacher's Guide. If possible, have students and family members watch the video from the National Autistic Society and discuss what they learned about Autism together. What was it like to watch this video as a family? How do they think about Autism differently?

Book Information for *Benji, the Bad Day, and Me*



\$17.95, HARDCOVER

9781620143452

32 pages, 10-3/8 X 8-1/4

*Reading Level: Grade 2

Interest Level: Grades PreK–5

Guided Reading Level: L

Accelerated Reader® Level/
Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

THEMES: Childhood Experiences and Memories, Empathy and Compassion, Families, Identity, Self Esteem and Confidence, Emotions and Self-Regulation, Kindness and Caring, Realistic Fiction, Siblings, Conflict Resolution, Cultural Diversity, Disability and Neurodiversity (Autism), Overcoming Obstacles

RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/benji-the-bad-day-and-me>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sally J. Pla is the award-winning author of two novels for young people, *The Someday Birds* and *Stanley Will Probably Be Fine*. Many of Pla's stories are based on her experience of raising three active little boys, very close in age. When her sons were young and having a bad day, they loved being “made into burritos” — getting wrapped tightly in their blankets. The tight pressure appealed especially to Pla's autistic son. Pla lives with her family in Southern California. You can find her online at sallyjpla.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Ken Min's picture book debut *Hot, Hot Roti for Dada-Ji*, published by Lee & Low Books, received the Picture Book Honor for Literature from the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA). Ken is an illustrator and animation storyboard artist for commercials and animated TV shows such as *Futurama*, *Fairly Odd Parents*, and *New Looney Tunes*. His illustration work has been recognized numerous times by the Society of Children's Books Writers & Illustrators (SCBWI). Min lives in Los Angeles, California. You can see more of his artwork online at kenminart.com.

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, “about everyone, for everyone,” is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.

ORDERING INFORMATION

On the Web:

www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering (general order information)

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/benji-the-bad-day-and-me> (secure online ordering)

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25 | **By Fax:** 212-683-1894

By Mail: Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

Blank writing area for the story.



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

--	--



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

--	--	--

Name: _____



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

--	--	--	--

Name: _____



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

Name: _____



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
-------------------------------	-------------------------------



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me





Benji, The Bad Day, and Me



--	--	--

Name: _____



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

A large rectangular area with a diagonal line from the top-left to the bottom-right. The area is divided into two sections by this line. Each section contains ten vertical lines, providing a space for writing.



Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

Handwriting practice area with a diagonal line. The top-left section contains 6 horizontal lines, and the bottom-right section contains 6 horizontal lines.



Name: _____

Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

Handwriting practice area with a diagonal line. The top-left section contains six horizontal lines for writing. The bottom-right section contains six horizontal lines for writing.



Name: _____

Benji, The Bad Day, and Me

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a story or response.





Benji, The Bad Day, and Me







Neurodiversity



Name: _____





Neurodiversity



--	--

Name: _____





Neurodiversity



--	--	--

Name: _____





Neurodiversity



--	--	--	--

Name: _____





Neurodiversity







Neurodiversity



Name: _____





Neurodiversity







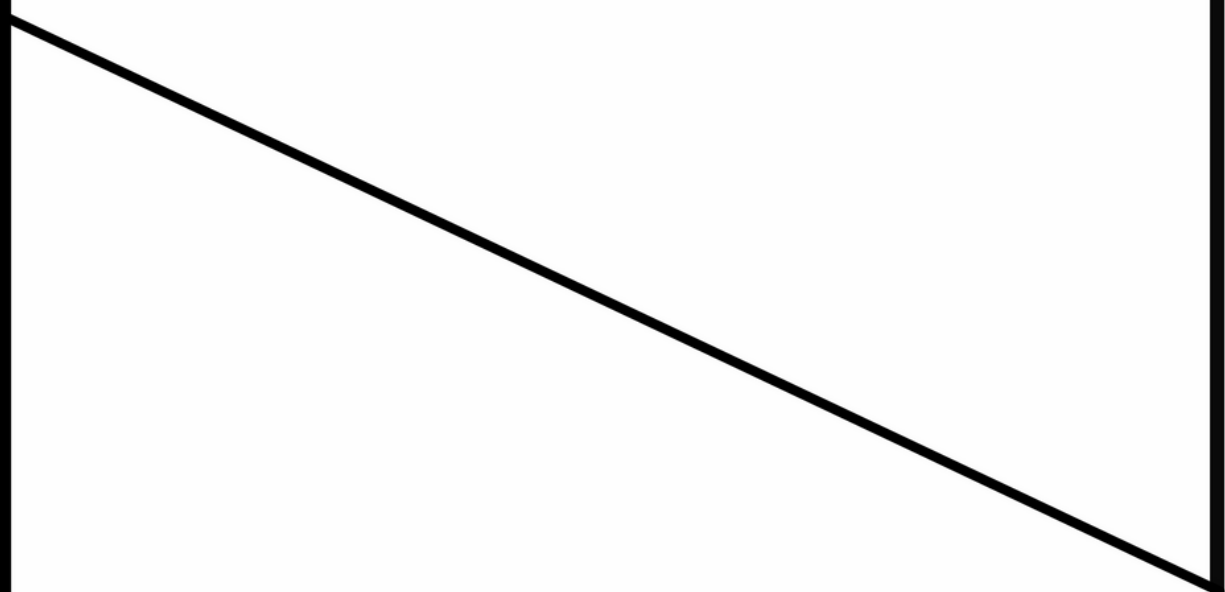
Neurodiversity







Neurodiversity





Neurodiversity



A large writing area with a diagonal line from the top-left to the bottom-right. The area is divided into two sections by this line. Each section contains ten vertical lines for writing.





Neurodiversity





Neurodiversity





About Us

Hi, I'm Mrs. Legassie!

I live in Fort Langley, BC with my husband, our two kids, and our Rhodesian Ridgeback. I have been a teacher since 2010 and have experience teaching in the private, public, and homeschool settings.

I am currently the Lead Educator at Joyful Learning where I host virtual educational events and create companion teaching resources like this!



About Joyful Learning

Joyful Learning is a project of Legassie Education Access Foundation (LEAF) a not-for-profit organization currently focusing on the development of affordable online educational experiences that spark joy, wonder and a love of learning.

Joyful Learning launched in the early days of the pandemic, bringing people together through online events, helping them to feel connected to the world outside of their classroom or home learning space, and to develop an understanding of how their attitudes and actions have an impact on the world around them. Since then, Joyful Learning has have hosted more than 150 virtual events connecting with over 75,000 children from more than 3700 classrooms across North America.

Follow us to stay updated on
new events and resources!



Terms of Use

By downloading this resource you are agreeing that the contents are the intellectual property of Joyful Learning, Hayley Legassie, or other creators where indicated; and licensed to you only for single classroom use. We retain the copyright, and reserve all rights to this product.

You May

- Use and copy resources for your own single-classroom use, or your own personal use.
- Reference this product in blog posts, at seminars, professional development workshops, or other venues, only if both credit is given to myself (Hayley Legassie) as the author, shares the cover page only and links back to our website are included in those contexts.

You May Not

- Claim this work as your own, alter the files in any way, or remove copyright/watermarks.
- Sell or share the files, or combine the files into another unit for sale or free without prior written permission.
- Post this document for commercial use elsewhere on the internet (this includes Google Doc links on blogs).
- Making copies of purchased items to share with others is strictly forbidden and is a violation of Terms of Use.

Credits

Thank you to the following people for contributing their skills and talents to this product:



Thank you for abiding by universally accepted codes of professional ethics while using this product.

Let's Connect!

Questions?

I have greatly enjoyed creating this resource and have done my best to ensure it is complete and easy to use. If you have any questions or suggestions, please email me at hayley@joyfullearning.net. I'm here to help!

Share your photos with us!

We love to see pictures and videos of students enjoying our events and resources!

EMAIL

hello@joyfullearning.net

INSTAGRAM & FACEBOOK

[@joyfullearningcanada](https://www.instagram.com/joyfullearningcanada)

*Tag us in
your photos!*



TIKTOK

[@joyful.learning](https://www.tiktok.com/@joyful.learning)

TWITTER

[@joyfullylearn](https://twitter.com/joyfullylearn)

Please note that by sharing your photos, they may be used by Joyful Learning on our website or social media. Please ensure you have the appropriate permissions from parents/ guardians to share these photos.

