

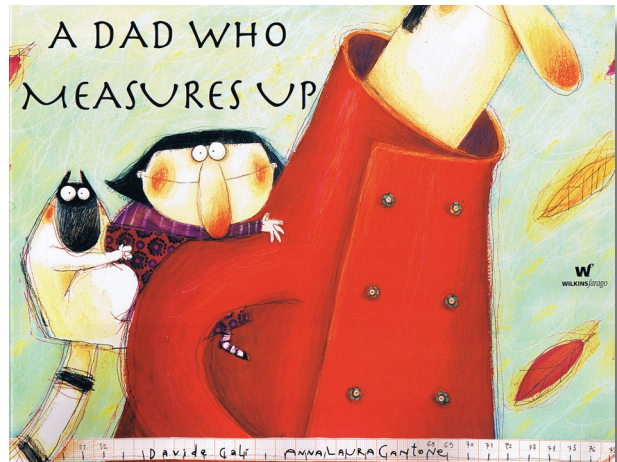
TEACHER'S NOTES

A DAD WHO MEASURES UP

by Davide Cali & Anna-Laura Cantone

ISBN 9780958557177, \$26.95 hb

Published by Wilkins Farago



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1. About the book

‘Here’s a text bursting with humour and life!’—Page Education (France)

What makes the ideal dad? Is he strong as a masked TV wrestler, or handsome as a movie star? Is he intelligent or sporty? Or is he just good at jigsaw puzzles, or have lots of hair?

One little girl is about to find out, in this funny, charming and ultimately moving picture book that tells of her search for a dad who can ‘measure up’ to the mummy she loves.

Together, she and mum draw up a list of all the things they want in a dad and place a notice in the paper, only to discover daddy-candidates lining up outside the house the very next day!

In the end, the successful candidate is a long distance from what they thought they wanted, but he’s

special too in his own way—he knows poems, can cook, and, most important, he is kind. This immensely happy and entertaining book, told from a child’s point of view in memorable rhythmic language, is for any child reflecting on what makes their dad so special.

With the lightest of touches, and without any loss of entertainment value, it also tells the story of a quirky single-parent family’s happy transition into a stepfamily.

A Dad Who Measures Up was originally published in France. Translated into many languages across the world, including Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Danish, Korean, Chinese, Polish and Finnish, it has been an international hit for its Swiss-born author. This Australian and New Zealand edition marks its first publication in English anywhere in the world.

2. Notes for teachers and parents

by Alison Lough (Chelsea Heights Primary School, Victoria)

This book could be used widely in the classroom or at home. Aside from being a humorous and thought-provoking book to read for enjoyment, it lends itself to an extensive range of activities covering a variety of topics. It is intended for children 5 to 8 years of age. However, older children could get just as much enjoyment from it. There are many ways in which the book could be adapted for use with children of all ages.

A Dad Who Measures Up is a beautiful story that offers children the perfect opportunity to explore their own metacognition—that is, becoming aware of their thoughts about parents and why it is they think that way (their thinking processes).

I have set out below, a list of ideas for activities you could use with this book. I have included a set of ‘thinker’s keys’, which may be useful as a follow-up activity to the story.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Before you open the book

The Cover:

1. Look at the cover and ask ‘What could this book be about?’
2. Who is the Author? Who is the Illustrator? What job do each of these people do when a book is created? Who else is involved in creating a book? Have you heard of a Publisher? What do they do? Show students the publishing logo and copyright symbol. Discuss.

The Title:

3. Encourage children to talk about the title. What does it mean to ‘measure up’? Have you ever heard the term before? When do think you would use a term like that? Why?
4. Why do you think the little girl is searching for a dad? What sort of dad do you think she might want?
5. Have children brainstorm a list of words or descriptions (or draw them) for what an ideal dad might look like. Encourage them to think about physical attributes, personality traits, attitudes, interests etc.
6. Have the children compare their work and in pairs or small groups, select what they decide are

the 5 or 6 most important attributes or qualities and create a poster for their ideal dad. Use labels and colour to make them stand out. They could make their poster into an advertisement.

7. Get the children to think about why their mum or dad chose their own partner. What characteristics appealed to them?

The picture:

8. Look at the picture on the cover. What do you think of it? What style has it been drawn in? How do you think it's been drawn?

9. Does the picture make you think it's a fiction or a non-fiction book? What's the difference?

Other:

10. Look at the back cover. Is there a blurb or other information? What does it tell us?

11. Does anything on the cover (the title, picture or any other information) give any indication as to who the book is written for? ie. intended audience.

The Style and Layout of the Book

1. Flip through the book (without reading) and focus on the layout and pictures. What are some of the things you notice? Can you tell the story from studying the pictures? How is this book different to other books you may have read or seen? How is it the same as other books?

2. Look at the pictures. How have they been made? Do you think they've been drawn, painted, copied, photographed? Do the pictures look real? Are they based on real life images? Are all the features in the pictures accurate?

3. After reading the story, give students a photocopy of the pictures and ask them to sequence the story. Can they retell the story from the pictures? Discuss what is happening on each page.

4. Think of some other books you know (or look through some). What other ways are illustrations sometimes made or presented in books?

5. Would the book be as interesting if photos were used instead of illustrations? Discuss the colours used throughout the book. Which colours have been used most often? Why do you think this is?

6. Have children attempt to draw a picture of their own parents using the style of drawing that Anna-Laura Cantone (the Illustrator) has used.

Building on Prior Knowledge

1. Talk about families. NB You will need to be sensitive to individual students' experiences and backgrounds. Children who wish to, can share how their family is made up.

2. You could make a chart or graph of different types of families if all students are happy to participate and share their stories (NB be sure that this is not going to single any child out or make someone in the group feel uncomfortable). This may bring the opportunity to discuss terms such as 'step parent,' 'foster parent,' 'guardian,' 'single parent,' 'same-sex parents,' 'shared care,' 'adoptive family' etc., depending on what comes out during discussion. Be sure that all of the children's families are celebrated and reinforce that they are equally important regardless of how it is made up. At all times the student's should feel that their individual family situations are valued for what they are.

3. If there are a wide variety of ways in which families are made up among your group of students, you could pair them up or put them in small groups to share their similarities and differences with each other. This can be an eye-opening experience for many students who really haven't any idea of what goes on in other children's lives and homes and they can begin to develop an understanding of life outside their own home.



Using the Content of the Book

1. Discuss the characters. How does the little girl feel about her mother? List words on the board such as 'proud', 'impressed', 'pleased' (any words you or the children can brainstorm relating to the girls' feelings toward her mother). Are they positive or negative words?
2. You could talk to the children about the difference between 'fact and opinion'. Are the attributes the girl is listing about her mother fact or are they her opinion? Make a table and list the girls' facts on one side and opinions on the other (eg. 'my mum is tall' and 'my mum is strong' may be facts, but 'no mum could beat her at an arm wrestle' and 'my mum would win first prize in a beauty contest' are opinions).
3. Have students make a simple 'fact and opinion' poster about one of their own parents. Encourage them to think about more than just physical attributes (ie what they look like). For example, they could write 'my dad plays tennis' or 'my dad bakes cookies' as facts, and 'my dad could beat Lleyton Hewitt' or 'my dad's cookies are the tastiest in the world' as opinions. Have them draw matching illustrations for their ideas.
4. Ask the students to predict what will happen in the story. Pose questions such as 'Where could the girl's daddy be?' (Once again, this would need to be approached with sensitivity). 'Why do you think she wants a daddy as well as a mummy?' 'What could she be thinking?' Brainstorm what some of her reasons could be.
5. When you get to the middle of the story, ask students what they think the outcome of their advertisement might be. 'Do you think they will find a suitable daddy?'
6. What are 'expectations' or 'standards'? What expectations does the little girl have for any future daddy? Do you think she has set her standards too high? Do you know anybody who could fit all of the expectations that she has?
7. Do you think the daddy candidates that answered the advertisement had expectations of their own? What sort of things might they have been looking for?
8. How might the daddy candidates have been feeling as they arrived for their interviews?
9. Does the girl's problem get solved in the end? Did it turn out the way she was expecting it to?
10. Ask students 'what was it about the daddy that was left over after all the other candidates had answered the advertisement unsuccessfully, that made the girl decide to take him home?' So what characteristics does that tell us the girl really thought were the most important ones?

11. Does this outcome teach us anything about expectations? Does someone have to be able to do everything in order to be a good parent – or just a good person?
12. Look at the last double page. How does the way this page is put together lead us to feel about the ending? What sort of symbols, pictures and words make this page so special? Brainstorm some words to describe the end of the story (eg. content, happy, peaceful etc)
13. Students could write a review of the story, relating their own experiences, or making suggestions. How did the story make them feel?
14. In small groups, have the children act out a dramatisation of the story. They could use various styles (eg. play, mime, puppetry). Have student's make props to support the story. Ask them to clearly show the characteristics displayed in the story by the various characters.

Specific Literacy-based Activities

1. Ask young children to pick out words in the text that they recognise. Make a list of these words on the board. Make another list of unfamiliar words from the story (just choose a few words, age appropriate). There are plenty of High Frequency words in the story, so there are countless spelling activities you could do using those words, starting with making a set of flashcards.
2. Break unfamiliar words into syllables (eg candidates), listen to the sounds that make the word. Copy some of the words onto flashcards (you could cut the words into syllables and ask children to match them up). This could be done prior to reading the book and then the children could try to find the word during the story, or do this activity after reading. This would be an appropriate activity for a small group (such as during literacy rotations).
3. List or categorise words from the book (depending on the age group using the book), e.g. list all the double letter words in the book; find as many two/three/four letter words as you can, identify nouns, adjectives, verbs etc.
4. Discuss the punctuation used in the story. Ask 'what do these [...] mean?' How many times are they used in the book? Why do you think they are used? Why wouldn't the author just use commas? Children could write some experimental sentences of their own in the same format.

Expanding on the Book

1. I have created a set of 'Thinker's Keys'* based around the story (downloadable from www.wilkinsfarago.com.au/books.shtml#dad). These would be a good follow up to the book. You could adapt the topic and questions to suit your current unit of work. Students each get a copy of the activities sheet and colour the boxes as they complete each one.

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* If you are not familiar with Tony Ryan's 'Thinker's Keys,' they are twenty thinking strategies designed to enhance students' critical thinking skills and questioning techniques. Each 'key' encourages student's to challenge and develop their thinking, thereby extending their learning. I encourage you to explore what the keys mean if you're not sure. There are many fabulous websites to assist.

3. About the author and illustrator

THE AUTHOR

Swiss-born Davide Cali is one of Europe's most innovative and acclaimed writers for children. He is the author of 12 illustrated books, including *I Can't Wait* (illustrated by Serge Bloch), which won France's prestigious *Le Monde* newspaper Baobab Prize for the most innovative book of 2005. *I Can't Wait* was also named Honour Book in the American Library Association's annual Batchelder Award, for the best children's book translated into English.



His books have now been published in 15 countries. Davide lives in Genoa, Italy but writes in French. *A Dad Who Measures Up* is the first of his books to be published in Australia and New Zealand. Wilkins Farago is publishing a second Cali book, another collaboration with Serge Bloch entitled *The Enemy*, in October 2007 (see below).

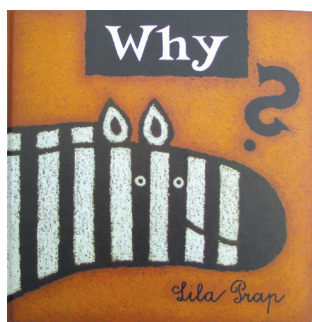
THE ILLUSTRATOR

About my working methods, I can tell you that I use different techniques such as paint (mainly acrylic colors), collage, colored pencils, and, of course a twist of fantasy and creativity. My inspiration comes from the detailed observation of reality. In my works I use different materials from everyday life: a candy paper could become a dress, a map becomes a puzzle, a candy box becomes a frame and so on.



Illustrator Anna Laura Cantone is an award-winning young Italian illustrator who already has more than thirty books to her name, including many published in English. She has twice been selected for the Bologna Book Fair illustration competition. Her distinctively playful and innovative style of illustration involves the employment of several artistic techniques, include painting, drawing and collage. Anna lives in Milan, Italy.

4. Also available in this series



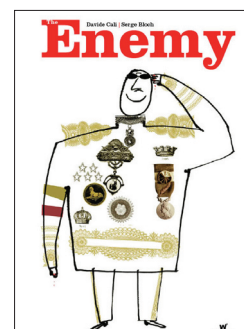
Why? by Hans Christian Andersen Award nominee Lila Prap is a delightfully playful and informative picture book that celebrates and explores the many wierd and wonderful creatures in our world.

ISBN 9780958557153, RRP A\$16.95 pb



Book of the Year in Korea, this timeless story of patience rewarded is now an international hit. A child waits stoically and patiently for his mother at a tram-stop, even as a snowstorm gathers.

ISBN 9780958557146, RRP A\$26.95hb



The Enemy is a profound, moving and poignant fable for our time about two lonely soldiers facing each other across a barren desert battlefield. From the award-winning author of *A Dad Who Measures Up*.

ISBN 9780958557184, RRP A\$29.95hb