

Teachers' Notes

WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED LOVE?

Author: Davide Cali
Illustrator: Anna Laura Cantone
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Most of the activities are designed to motivate student's thinking. They are also largely literacy based. This book also lends itself perfectly to being used for social/emotional development or self-esteem building activities and discussions.

1. About the book

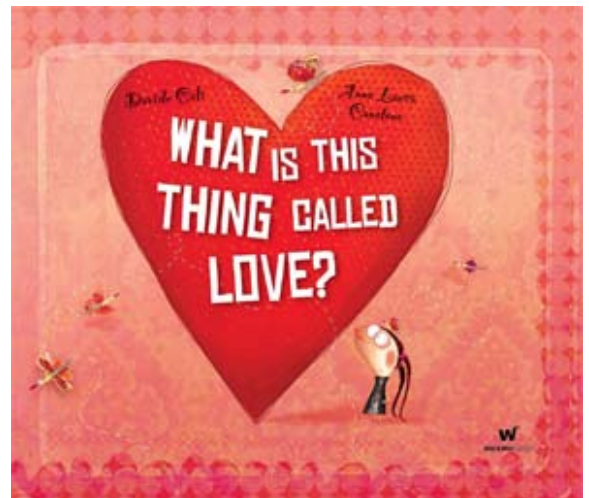
What is this thing called love? What colour is it and what shape? Is it sweet or savoury? Is it big or small? Like a lot of kids, Emma would really like to know.

The problem is: everyone Emma asks—Mum, Dad, Grandma and Grandad—seems to have a different idea of what love is.

Can love really be in a piece of cake or a game of football?

It seems there's a lot more to this love thing than Emma ever imagined!

In this entertaining and ultimately touching tale of questions and answers, Davide Cali and Anna Laura Cantone (creators of the acclaimed *A Dad Who Measures Up*) remind us that, for a child, the most important love is that which lies at the heart of your own family.



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PRE-READING

Look at the cover and ask:

- What could this book be about?
- Does anything on the cover give us a clue? Explain.
- What is the book called?
- Is the title a statement, or a question? How can you tell?
- Have the students ever wondered about the concept of love? Where it comes from, who invented it, what it means, how you find it, etc?



- Why would someone ask this question? Why would you want/need to know about what love is?

- Pose the title question to the class. Brainstorm together and write student's ideas on the board. Keep a copy of

their answers somewhere so they can be compared with new ideas after reading the book or doing some research.

- Who is the Author?
- Who is the Illustrator?
- What is the job of each of these people in creating a book?
- Who do you think the intended audience for this book could be? What makes you think that?
- Why is it important to have an intended audience in mind when creating a book/movie/song etc.?
- Who else is involved in creating a book?
- Have you heard of a Publisher? What do they do? Show students the publishing logo.

- Show students the copyright symbol, what is it for? Why do authors need to copyright/protect their work?
- Hold the book up and brainstorm a list of all the detail on the cover.
- What pictures appear on the cover? (Butterflies, flowers, girl) How do the illustrations relate to the concept (of love)?
- What are the images/pictures that come to your mind when you think of the word love?
- Choose your top three images to create your own cover for a book about love. Re-visit your ideas later after exploring the concept further and decide whether you'd keep the same pictures or change them.
- What kind of expression does the girl on the cover have? Do you think she's in love? Is she the one asking the title question?
- Do pictures on the front cover of a book always give away the storyline of a book?
- Do you think these pictures give anything away? How does looking at the pictures make you feel?
- How have the pictures been created? Can you tell whether the book is fiction or non-fiction by the pictures? What makes you think that?
- What do these terms (fiction/non-fiction) mean?
- Look at the back cover. Is there a blurb or other information? What does it tell us? Does it give any more away about what love could be?

EXPLORING THE BOOK

- 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?
- Discuss the style of the illustrations? What is the illustrator trying to achieve? Do you like these illustrations? What do you like/dislike about them?
- What is interesting or humorous about the illustrations? Are the features of the characters/pets accurate?
- Before reading the text, discuss who the characters throughout the story could be. What are they all doing? How do you think their activities relate to the question of what is love? Do they seem happy?

Page 1

- Why do you think Emma wants to know what love is? What could have put that question into her mind?
- Have you ever had a burning question that you just wanted to know the answer to? How did you go about finding the answer? Did you in fact find the answer to your question? Share stories.
- In small groups, you could come up with one question that you really want answers for and decide on strategies for solving the question.
- Anita says 'it's a thing for grown ups'. Do you think this is true?
- What do you think makes Anita think that it's only for grown ups? What could she be thinking of?

- Emma decides that she needs to ask her mother. Who do you think you could ask about love? Why do you think that person/people would know?



Page 3

- When Emma's mum answers the question, what do you think makes her answer with an analogy?
- Discuss what an analogy is. Provide students with some examples and have them suggest their own. Could also use the word comparison rather than analogy.
- You could provide students with a selection of 3 or 4 analogies, cut up and ask them to try and match the two different parts of each.
- Why does Emma's mum say 'like the flowers in spring'? What are flowers in spring like? Why are they more special than flowers at any other time of year?
- Do you think Emma is satisfied with her mum's answer?
- Possibilities arise with this page to discuss stereotypes – dad is in front of the TV eating sandwiches and mum is working in the garden. Discuss what stereotypes are and why they exist, what causes them and what stereotypes the student's own families fit.
- Do you like Dad's soccer analogy/comparison?
- Which idea do you prefer – Emma's mum's or dad's explanation of love?
- What do you think your own parents might say if you asked them the same question?

Page 5

- Grandma's idea of love includes being fragrant. What does fragrant mean?
- The idea of love having a scent/smell is interesting – discuss.
- So far mum has compared love with something you can touch (flowers), dad with something you can see/hear (soccer) and Grandma with something you can taste/smell (cake). What are these things? (Senses).
- Come up with ideas about love and categorise them into the five senses.
- Consider Grandad's car collection. Why would he have rearranged them so many times?
- Do you have a collection of something that you love? How often do you study/play/count/rearrange it?

Page 7

- Look at Emma's facial expression. What do you think she might be thinking?
- Have you ever been confused by answers you were given to a question.
- Why do you think there have been so many different answers given to Emma by her family to the question of what love is?
- Why isn't there one single and simple answer to this question?
- Consider all the new questions now arising in Emma's mind (about the colour, shape, size etc.)



- Have you ever asked a question which only lead you to asking further questions?
- What do you think Emma will discover about the shape, colour, taste and size of love? Brainstorm your own ideas (could group in 4 groups and give each group one of these sub-topics to discuss and list a few ideas for, then share with the rest of the grade).
- Notice how Emma's family's answers to these questions are very much related to their initial comparisons of love to something they are passionate about.
- Before reading these two pages, list the four answers on the board: "it is big! It is huge", "Love is round", "Love is sweet" & "Love is every single colour" and ask students to match these answers to one of the characters according to the information they already know from the story.
- Grandad thinks love is round like a soccer ball. What other shapes can you think of to represent love and why?

Page 9

- Emma is astounded by the things she's finding out about love, but she still wants to know more. She wants to picture it in her mind. Is love something you can picture?
- What images come to mind when you close your eyes and think of love?
- Can you draw a picture for Emma, of something that could represent love that is every single colour, is round, is sweet and is big? Complete this task before reading any further into the book.

Page 11

- Consider the new question Emma is asking. What does it mean to be in love?
- Are you in love?
- Who do you know that is in love? How do you know when people are in love?

- How many people can you be in love with?
How many people can be in love with you?
- Is being in love different to loving someone?
How?
- Do we need love? Why?
- Is it as important to give/show love to others as it is to get it for ourselves?
- Photocopy the page with the answers given by Emma's family about being in love. Cut up the sentences and have students match the sentences with the correct characters.
- Discuss the answers – do you agree? Which character's answers appeal to you the most? Why?
- Do you think that all of the answers are true of all people? Perhaps you think none of them are true. Explain why or why not. (Eg. do all boys who are in love in fact take their girlfriends to soccer matches? Do all people in love actually always share their cake?)

- Consider the difference between loving a person and loving a 'thing' (such as flowers). Which do you consider is more important?

Page 15

- What do you think Emma expects to see or feel while she's waiting for love to appear?
- Have you ever been waiting for something to happen and then fallen asleep because it's taking so long?
- Before you turn the page ask if the student's think that love will have arrived during the night for Emma. If so how and what will it be/look like?
- Ask "do you think Emma is going to finally find out exactly what love is by the end of the book?"



Page 17 & 18

- Emma must be feeling quite frustrated about there being no sign of love the next morning so she's obviously excited when she thinks it's arrived. How do you know she's excited? (Discuss the layout of the text as well as what the students can see in the illustration).

- What could be causing her cheeks to go red and making her feel hot?
- Have you ever felt that way? What caused it? Was it love or something else?

Page 13

- What does complicated mean? Why does Emma think that being in love is complicated?
- What do you think mum means by 'love will come all on its own'?
- Have you ever done the things in the story that Emma is doing – sharing cake with grandma, picking flowers for mum, watching footy with dad, drawing a picture for grandpa etc.?
- Do you think doing all these things means Emma is in love or will find love more quickly?

Page 19

- What does 'running a temperature' mean?
- Have you ever been ill and had friends or family wait on you and show you their love with gifts and gestures? Share stories.
- Have you ever shared your favourite thing with someone that you love in order to try and cheer them up or make them feel better?

Page 21

- Why do you think Emma's friend Matt has come over?
- Why has the illustrator drawn the final picture this way (in a love heart)?
- Do you think Matt and Emma are in love?
- Do you think Matt OR Emma are in love without the other person knowing?
- Can someone be in love without the person they love knowing it?
- Why is Emma so happy in this picture?
- Do you think Emma finally got her question answered?

AFTER THE BOOK

- 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 only? Discuss what is happening on each page.
- Create a profile for one (or all) the characters in the story. Make sure you list not only their physical attributes, but talk about their personalities. Use as many descriptive words as you can.
- In small groups, have the children practise and present 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.
- Ask students to retell the story in their own words.
- Take your own survey posing the title question to a chosen group – could be the class, neighbours, teachers, friends, family etc. Present and compare your results with class-

mate's results. You could categorise the answers or create a graph.

- Create a 'Y-Chart' for love. (Draw a large Y on a whole page, one section for "looks like...", another for "sounds like..." and one for "feels like...") and ask students to consider the term "love" and write or draw their ideas in each section.
- Create a 'mind map' for the term "love". Love is the central word on the page and branches are drawn off it where students write ideas related to love and then sub branches can be drawn of secondary ideas etc... Just let students minds take them where they will with the mind map.
- Use Bloom's 6 thinking hats to explore the question. This will help students focus on one idea at a time.
- Talk about student's own families. You will need to be sensitive to individual students' experiences and backgrounds. Are there people in love in your family? How do you know? What sort of things do they do to show they're in love?



LITERACY BASED ACTIVITIES (not specific to the text)

- Ask students 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 word study activities you could do.
- Break unfamiliar words into syllables (eg complicated, incredible), 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).
- 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.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Davide Cali



Davide Cali is one of Europe's most innovative and acclaimed writers for children. He is the author of several illustrated books, including *I Can't Wait* (illustrated by Serge Bloch), which won France's prestigious Baobab Prize for the most innovative book of 2005 (the Baobab Prize is run by the French Booksellers Association and *Le Monde* newspaper.) *I Can't Wait* was also named honour book in the American Library Association's Batchelder

Award (for the best children's book translated into English each year). His books have now been translated and published in 15 countries, Davide lives in Genoa, Italy but writes in French. *What is this thing called love?* is the eighth of his books to be published in Australia and New Zealand by Wilkins Farago.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Anna Laura Cantone



I await each new publication from her with impatience.' *Citrouille* (Pumpkin magazine, France)

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, including painting, drawing and collage. Anna lives in Milan, Italy.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Wilkins Farago

Founded in 1998, Wilkins Farago is an independent book publishing company based in Melbourne, Australia. We don't publish a lot of books, so we care about the ones we do publish. In recent years, we have developed a reputation for publishing acclaimed and award-winning children's books from around the world, many of them translated into English for the first time.

Through publishing the finest international children's books, we hope to expose children in Australia and New Zealand (and their parents and teachers) to new cultures, new perspectives, and new styles of illustration. More of our titles can be seen at www.wilkinsfarago.com.au, we hope you enjoy reading and learning with our books.

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