



Louisa May Pickett, The Most Boring Person In Class

Rod Clement

Teaching Notes written by Christine Sarandis

SYNOPSIS:

Louisa May Pickett's one and only talent is Show and Tell. At her old school, she was voted 'The Most Interesting Person' three years in a row. But little does she know that the kids at Dobroyd Point Primary have a few interesting items of their own for Show and Tell!

When Louisa May Pickett arrives at her new school, all she has to offer for Show and Tell is ... a juggling mouse, meat-eating plants, a parachute, a singing chair, a painting squid, and an extremely rare pink polar bear that walks the highwire upside down while singing 'We all Live in a Yellow Submarine' *backwards*.

But when her classmates appear unimpressed and constantly outdo her attempts with their own amazing stories, she feels like 'The Most Boring Person in Class'. Poor Louisa May! How can she ever compete? She finally abandons all pretence to amaze her potential new friends and gives up; but then she is rewarded and relieved to find that in order to impress, she need do nothing other than be herself.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Rod Clement is one of Australia's leading picture book author/illustrators and his acclaimed books include *Counting on Frank*, *Just Another Ordinary Day*, *Olga the Brolga*, *Edward the Emu*, and *Edwina the Emu*. *Grandad's Teeth* was shortlisted for the CBC Awards in 1998.

Rod works as a daily cartoonist for the *Australian Financial Review* and lives in Haberfield, Sydney, with his wife and three children.

BEFORE READING:

Generate a class discussion after initially sharing the cover of the book and asking the children to give their opinions on what it might be about.

Look at the front cover of the book and ask the children:

What might this story be about?

Compare the title of the story with the cover illustration?

Describe Louisa May Pickett?

What sort of person do you think she might be?

How might the book have got its title?

Story Themes

Several key themes flow through this story. They include:

Self-esteem

Self-confidence or lack of confidence

Consideration for the feelings of others

Acceptance of self

Understanding

Compassion

Humour

Personal development

Maturity

READING TOGETHER:

Consider the following points during class discussions about this story:

For teachers:

The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools provides nine values for Australian Schooling, guiding principles and key elements and approaches to values education. The National Framework has been endorsed by all state and territory Ministers of Education.

The nine values highlighted include:

care and compassion

doing your best

fair go

freedom

honesty and trustworthiness

integrity

respect

responsibility

understanding, tolerance and inclusion

These nine values are worth considering when discussing the book, *Louisa May Pickett, The Most Boring Person in Class*, in relation to the characters in the story; in particular, Louisa May Pickett's sense of self, her initial need to impress her new friends and her eventual contentment in finally just being true to herself.

Please refer to the following web link for more information on values education for Australian schools.

<http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/>

Further to this, the religious education sector has additional information focussing on values education.

Please refer to the following web link for further information.

<http://www.dialogueaustralasia.org/>

AFTER READING:

Immediate Responses

After sharing the story a number of times together, children could respond through discussion, art, drama, poetry and music.

What emotions are invoked by the story? For example, pathos, humour and so on.

Explore the contrast between the amazing things in the story – such as the portrait-painting squid – and the reactions or lack of reaction from Louisa May's classmates.

Talk about the potential problems with Show and Tell and the need to come up with something interesting or special each week.

Discussion Questions:

Why do you think Louisa May says she has only one talent? Is this true? Explain.

At her old school, do you think Louisa May would have been voted the 'Most Interesting Person In Class' three years in a row? Discuss.

How important is it to have interesting Show and Tell?

What makes Show and Tell interesting, exciting, boring etc?

How do you feel when someone's Show and Tell seems more exciting than yours?

What makes a person interesting to others? Discuss.

Why do you think Louisa May felt that she had to collect incredibly interesting things or have amazing experiences to share? Do you feel like this when you have Show and Tell? Explain.

When Louisa May started at her new school she sounded confident when she said, '*Look out, Dobroyd Point Primary, here I come!*' How do you think she really felt?

Discuss what it's like to start at a new school. Consider the other changes involved such as moving house, parents changing jobs etc.

What makes storytelling interesting or otherwise?

Discuss the role of the storyteller. Can a good storyteller make a boring story come alive?

In the beginning of the story, why didn't Louisa May want to look like a show-off?

Why do you think the other children always outdid Louisa May?

What was it that made the other children's news more interesting than Louisa May's?

Why did Louisa May begin to have serious doubts about her ideas for Show and Tell?

What sort of things do you like to share with the class and why?

Does the teacher ever give you a topic for Show and Tell? If so, why do you think this might be? If not, do you think this is a good idea? Explain

Why do you think Louisa May decided she didn't want to go to school? Discuss.

What things might make you feel like missing school?

How did Louisa May feel after she decided to give up all attempts to amaze her classmates? Discuss.

On May 9, Louisa May's Show and Tell was different. Discuss.

How did the class react? Describe what happened.

FUN ACTIVITIES:

Writing

Brainstorm a list of words that represent things that would make Show and Tell interesting. For example, live animals, computerised gadgets, a well-told story, etc.

Write down five things about yourself that you think make you an interesting person.

Write five things about a close friend that you find interesting or amazing. Read the list to the class and see if they can guess who you are describing.

Drama

Ask different children to retell the story.

Act out the scene where ... (ask the children to choose).

Pretend you are Louisa May Pickett on the first day of school. How might you be feeling? Show these feelings in your face and body.

Vocabulary

What is another word for *amazing*?

What is a *samurai*?

Make as many words as possible from the words, *balloons* and *armadillo*.

Look up the dictionary meanings of *warrior*, *parachute* and *portrait*.

Find another word for *acrobatic*.

Make a list of words that describe each of the following: Louisa May, a talking chair, the illustrations.

Put the names of all the children in the story into alphabetical order.

Story Mapping

A story map reveals the main features of a story. It includes labels to indicate events that have occurred throughout the story, highlighting the sequence of events in the story, and the relationship between these events and the structure of the story.

Ask the children to work in small groups to draw an ongoing map of the story as it unfolds. Brainstorm the main features of the story before sending children off in their groups to work on large sheets of paper.

This could also lead to a collage activity in which the setting of the story is recreated using a variety of mixed media including torn paper, cloth, found objects and so on.

Art and Craft

Look carefully at the illustrations in the story and ask the children to discuss the style, the colours, the characterisation etc.

What do the pictures tell us that the words don't?

Draw some things that you would like to collect and describe what it is that makes them interesting.

Draw yourself doing an activity that you'd like to do but have never done before. Compare your activity with the rest of the class.

Choose one of the animals or items Louisa May or one of her classmates brought to Show and Tell. Create a small project about that animal or item and present it to the class in the form of a drawing, a painting or a sculpture.

Design some useful appliances that do special things like Bethany's singing fridge or Megan's mechanical maid.

Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE)

Discuss why people feel that their Show and Tell should be interesting.

Competitiveness is said to be part of human nature. Talk about how it makes you feel when other people are always trying to be better than you.

Personal happiness is very important. Discuss.

Make a list of things that make you unique and special.

Discuss the things that you remember and discuss what it is that makes these things memorable?

Find the name of a meat-eating plant? Where might you find one and what does it really eat?

What is the role of friendship and family in making you feel good about yourself?

Draw up a grid using three columns to compare all the things Louisa May brought for Show and Tell with those of her classmates. (See example below.)

Feb 8

Louisa May:

skull of a Sabre-tooth Tiger

Other classmates:

Jake – head of a Tyrannosaurus Rex

Feb 15

Louisa May:

juggling mouse

Other classmates:

Ruby – tap-dancing and singing rat

Feb 22

Louisa May:

a trip across the bay on a home-made raft

Other classmates:

Christopher – a film of his trip down the Amazon

Feb 29

Louisa May:

Louisa May dressed as a samurai

Other classmates:

Anthony dressed as a warrior troll

TEACHER REFERENCES:

RAVE – Religious and Values Education

<http://www.dialogueaustralasia.org/>

Self-esteem in childhood

http://www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Self_Esteem_in_Childhood

Fiction titles covering the topic of self-esteem in children

http://www.headroom.net.au/family/framejamming.html?books_family.html~family

Values Education in Australian Schools

<http://www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/>

OTHER TITLES BY THE AUTHOR:

Just Another Ordinary Day

Grandad's Teeth

Counting on Frank

Frank in Time

Edward the Emu (illustrator)

Edwina the Emu (illustrator)

OTHER TITLES (Self-esteem):

No-one Quite Like Me, M. Diestel-Feddersen

Wombat Divine, M. Fox

Why Do You Love Me? M. Baynton

Willy the Wimp A. Browne.

Arthur, A. Graham & D. Gynell

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