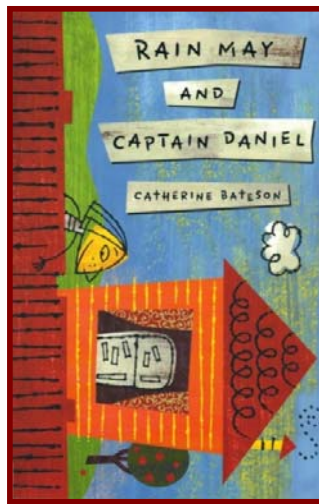


UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS

# RAIN MAY AND CAPTAIN DANIEL

## Catherine Bateson



### Teachers' Notes

### Written by Catherine Bateson

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**SYNOPSIS**

Rain (not named after the weather by 'dippy hippy parents' but with reference to an E.E. Cummings poem) and her mother are shedding their old life to begin anew in the country. Dad leaving to live with Julia is the catalyst but Mum also has yearnings for a simpler more naturally fulfilling life. Rain May is not convinced. Starting a new school mid-year will not be easy and what on earth does one do in the country anyway? Country life however turns out to be surprisingly full of things to do, school is another matter. Before school resumes after the holidays, Rain May makes friends with her neighbour, Daniel, a non-athletic younger boy whose head is full of fascinating ideas, who loves chess and is a Trekkie. Daniel is tormented at school and expects Rain May to shun him once term begins. She doesn't, sticking by him at the expense of joining the 'in' crowd. Then everything comes to a head when Daniel is taken to hospital, his cardiac problem reactivated by growth spurt.

**THEMES**

Relationships between family and friends are explored in a very positive manner. Gradually Rain May, her mother, father and Julia come to realise that relationships change and new alliances need to be accommodated without inflicting damage to the old, that friendships are to be treasured, loyalty is a desirable commodity. The story also celebrates a simpler life, one more in tune with nature and that allows space for reflection.

**PREVIEWING**

This is a clever cover. Either before reading look closely at the cover for clues as to what the book may be about (include both front and back covers). Guess:

- main characters: relationships — e.g. what does the spine of the book represent? Gender, hints to their interests (check inside the houses). Do they appear friendly towards each other
- setting-country or city

Or, after reading assess how successful the cover is in depicting the story.

**STORY CONSTRUCTION**

The story is told by Rain May in the first person. Interspersed throughout her narrative are entries from Daniel's logbook (diary) and the poems that Rain May and her Mum, Maggie, make up using fridge magnets. Construct a story line. At the end of each chapter summarise the events contained in it. Across the top detail Rain May's feelings, across the bottom add Daniel's. The story line could start like:

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<b>Rain</b>	unhappy		starting to fit in	
<b>Story</b>	Maggie and Rain move to country	Daniel introduced to story	Renovations Incident with possum	Daniel describes first Platypus watch
<b>Daniel</b>		reporting, not involved		starts off as report ends up hoping for friendship

Note the change in Daniel's logbook changes from the impersonal to the personal. What in the storyline does this coincide with?

**SCIENCE**

Research platypuses and produce a wall chart depicting a platypus with arrows pointing to special features. Also depict habitat and burrow. Write a brief description of the animal's normal behaviour and add to the chart.

**HEALTH AND SOCIETY****Perceptions and prejudices**

Re-read p.55 from "I am the most unpopular kid..." to the end of the chapter.

As a class discuss:

- Would Daniel have been treated the same way if the class had known of his medical problem? Should it make a difference to his treatment by the other kids? Why do you think Daniel did not want it generally known?

For another view re-read pp.94-96 beginning "How are you going D1 and D2" ending "And he's cool too."

- How true is Tom's comment, "He doesn't want friends otherwise he'd make more of an effort. He's a snob."
- Do you think some of Daniel's problems could have been caused by his own behaviour? Or is some of his behaviour a reaction to bullying?

**Friendship**

Discuss

- What friendship means: e.g. friends do... friends don't...
- What civilised behaviour should be like. e.g. behaviour towards kids in school that may not be close friends.

**Family**

Family units come in different configurations. Daniel's is typical nuclear family. Rain May finds herself in a disrupted family situation. Both of these families have positive aspects.

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In groups discuss the things various members of the two families do and list three things for each family which are, in their opinion, examples of valued family behaviour.

Gather all the ideas together in one list of positive family behaviour

**Individual interests**

Discuss specific interests of members of the class. Ask each student to deliver a short speech outlining an interest or hobby of their own and tell what it is about that draws them to it.

**WRITING EXERCISES**

- Rain May and her mother communicate well, the poetry they write to each other is a heightened form of expressing their feelings. Write a poem using a similar system. Make a list of the words from the poems that appear in the book. Write each one on a separate card (include additional cards for duplicated words). Working in pairs, each student produces a poem, or a short narrative—a sentence or two—on the theme of either families or friendship. Before beginning, each pair of students can, after discussion, add an additional 10 words to their group of words. Remember Maggie's advice that poetry doesn't have to rhyme.

- Write a short essay explaining why it would be so exciting to see a platypus in the wild.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Catherine Bateson's books have received much acclaim. Commendations for her books include:

*Rain May and Captain Daniel*

Winner CBCA Book of the Year Awards Younger Readers 2003

Winner Queensland Premier's Literary Awards Best Children's Book 2003

Shortlisted NSW Premier's Awards – Patricia Wrightson

Recommended Reading List for Australian Family Therapists Award for Children's Literature

*Millie & the Night Herron*

Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Notable Australian Book 2005

*Painted Love Letters*

Winner Australian Family Therapists Award for Children's Literature 2003

Honour Book CBCA Book of the Year Awards Older Readers 2003

Shortlisted NSW Premier's Literary Awards – Ethel Turner Prize 2003

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*The Year It All Happened*

Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Notable Australian Book 2002

**Catherine Bateson** grew up in a second-hand bookshop in Brisbane frequented by leading Australian writers including Tom Shapcott and Bill Jones. This, she says, gave her 'the incredibly false view of the world that everybody reads and writes'. The daughter of a journalist mother and father who was for many years Editor of The Australian Journal, Catherine's passion for writing is a lifelong one.