

This is a Ball

Beck & Matt Stanton

Book Summary

For the Grown-Ups:

You know how you're right all the time?

All. the. time.

Yes, well, it's time to give the kids a turn.

Which is why everything you read in this book is going to be wrong.

But that's okay, because the kids are going to correct you.

And they're going to love it!

Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes

ACELA1786, ACELA1438, ACELA1439,
ACELT1577, ACELY1648, ACELT1581

Appropriate Ages:

4+

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Introduction

This is a Ball looks like a simple picture book, except that everything you read in this book is going to be wrong. You'll need to be ready to call a block a ball and a ball a block, confuse a monster with a princess, muddle up your beach with your city and your elephant with your dog. When the kids correct you, you're going to smile and say you think they are the ones who are confused and perhaps they are in a muddle. You'll be so wrong you won't even realise when you've reached the end of the book.

Beck and Matt Stanton created *This is a Ball* because they thought that perhaps grown-ups were already right all of the time and that maybe it was time to give the kids a turn. Let your students enjoy correcting you along this warm and funny journey that will frustrate and delight young children in equal measure.

This book is appropriate for preschool-aged groups but could also be used in primary school (kindergarten) and the activities have been designed with this in mind. You may wish to modify them for your own group.

About the Creators

Beck Stanton is a primary school teacher and the creative director/owner of mybabymoments.com. She has worked

extensively with children throughout her teaching career and in roles that include before- and after-school care centre director, a nanny and youth and children's worker.

Matt Stanton is the co-creator of the bestselling Fart Monster picture book series (with more than 90,000 copies of his books in print) and the art director of HarperCollins Publishers Australia & New Zealand.

They live by the beach in Sydney with their daughter Bonnie and irritating but adorable cat.

Beck and Matt's Inspiration

When a grown-up engages with a child by reading a book with them, they open up a world of imagination and fun together. *This is a Ball* takes that to a whole new level.

Based on a game we play with our four-year-old god-daughter, *This is a Ball* facilitates interactive play between grown-ups and children. Kids know how to play... but sometimes adults need to relearn. This book provides tools for adults to let loose and play with their kids. Our vision is to use picture books to support face-to-face play and provide parents with the confidence that if their child only has them for the day ... they are more than enough.



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Study notes on Themes and Curriculum Areas

a) Themes and Key Discussion Points

Knowledge

In the story, the grown-up reading this book (the person you expect to get everything right) was getting everything wrong and you had to correct them. When we get something right we can say we know the answer; we have *knowledge* about the topic. When you learn new things (at school or at home) you are gaining more knowledge.

Key discussion points:

- Who do we learn from? (Teachers, parents, friends ...)
- Can we teach ourselves things?
- Why do we ask questions?
- Does every question have an answer?
- Can there be more than one answer to a question?
- Could there be someone in the world who knows everything?
- Is there something only you know the answer to?

- Can there be an answer without a question?
- Where does knowledge live? Is knowledge the same as memory or something different?

Age and Wisdom

Often as we get older we get *wiser*; we know more things because we have been in the world for a longer amount of time. Grandparents are often very wise because they have lived for a very long time and they have seen, heard, done and learnt a lot of different things. But 'grown-ups' (teachers, parents and grandparents) were once kids too and they had to learn from somebody else and we learn by passing knowledge along each generation. It's also important to remember that older is *not always* *wiser*, and that kids can be very wise as well.

Key discussion points:

- Do grown-ups stop learning new things?
- Should we ever stop learning new things?
- Who do think your parents and teachers learn from?
- How do we know when we have 'grown up'?
- Can we ever 'grow down'?
- Are your parents always right?
- Are there some things you know more about than your parents and teachers? What are they?
- Can you think of a time that you felt wise?



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Key learning outcomes:

- Identification with key ideas in the book.
- Ability to discuss and argue key concepts.

b) Classroom questions and activities (linked with themes)

During reading: questions for discussion

These questions can be discussed after the story has been read through once, or upon a second reading. They are designed to support students' engagement with the text and develop their visual literacy and comprehension skills.

- How do we know the shape on page 5 is *not* a ball?

(Balls do not have edges or corners)

- What is the difference between a ball and a circle?

(A ball is 3-dimensional and a circle is 2-dimensional/flat)

- What does the word 'definitely' mean? Can you think of another word (synonym) that also means 'definitely'?

(Certainly, absolutely)

- Look at the symbol on page 10 after the sentence 'You think it's yellow'. What is the symbol?

(A question mark)

- What makes a question different from a statement?

(A question usually needs an answer)

- On page 14 the word 'this' is underlined. Why has the author done this? What might it tell the reader about the way they are supposed to read that sentence?

(Emphasis on the word 'this')

- What do you think the 'blue' tomato on page 10 might taste like? Would you like one on your sandwich?

After reading: oral language and drama activities

'This is not the end of the book' ... This day is very confusing!

The class forms an audience and one student at a time stands up to tell the class about their day so far (from the moment they woke up). Except ... they are a bit confused. So if a student walked to school they actually 'got the bus' and if they saw their friend Eliza they think her name is 'Alice' and what about their teacher's name? They forgot that too! Let students take turns muddling up their stories in under 1 minute.

What makes a question different from a statement?

After identifying the different statements and questions in the book, students can work in



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pairs to think of 2 different sentences that could be a question *and* a statement depending on how they are expressed (the tone).

Examples include:

- You like swimming. / You like swimming?
- It's cold. / It's cold?
- Cake is bad for you. / Cake is bad for you?
- Salad is good for you. / Salad is good for you?
- You went on a walk. / You went on a walk?

Students can then 'perform' their examples to the class. If this is too challenging, then students can be given the above examples to create 2 short dramatic scenes using each of the sentences. The aim here is to demonstrate that the same words can change meaning when a full stop is replaced with a question mark.

Eyes, legs and a tail don't make it a dog!

What other animals can students think of that have eyes, legs and a tail and are *not* dogs? In a standing circle, students list animals in turn. They should start with animals that have eyes, then narrow it down to only animals with eyes and legs, and then finally make it more challenging by only listing animals with eyes, legs and a tail. This is a thinking game that should be played with speed and any student who breaks the 'rhythm' will have to sit down.

Story starters. 'Once there was a princess who chased a monster ...'

In a circle begin a round of story building for students by saying a story starter inspired by the book.

Examples include:

- Once there was a princess who chased a monster ...
- Today I took my pet elephant for a walk ...

The starter can be simple. The person to the left says, 'Yes and ...' before adding something new to the story. For example: 'Once there was a princess who chased a monster ...' 'Yes and then the monster got very tired legs ...' See how far you can take the story. Everyone should have a turn at adding something.

Passing down knowledge. Make sure you listen! Students should form a line. Whisper a sentence inspired by *This is a Ball* to the first child in the line and ask them to pass the secret whisper to the back of the line one by one. This activity encourages students to fine-tune their listening and observation skills.

Some ideas include:

- My pet elephant likes to eat blue cars on rainy days. He chews them up and spits them out on the road!



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- Blue tomatoes taste like mould but I like the purple ones, they taste like strawberries.
- This is a monster telling a story about a princess flying her kite at the beach with her pet dog, while standing on a block. (page 30)

Definitely ... not sure ... If you are definite about something, you are very certain, there is no 'maybe' about it. Find a space and divide it in two. One side is for 'definitely' and one side is for 'maybe'. Read students a series of fun facts and let them decide where they stand on the matter. Is the fact 'definitely' true or are they 'not sure'? Students have 10 seconds to make up their minds and stand on the corresponding side. **Worksheet 3** has some great fun facts sourced from the National Geographic Kids website. (http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/content/kids/en_US/fun-facts/)

Visual Arts Activities

Illustrate the book.

Let students re-draw the illustrations in their own version of this book so they can correct any 'mistakes'. **Worksheet 1** contains text from the first few pages of the book for students to cut and paste onto their own book pages.

Make a tiny flip book.

Students can select a moment of action from the story (or inspired by the story) and create their own 'flip book' inspired by this action.

Some ideas include:

- The 'blue' car driving across the page.
- A 'monster' scaring a 'princess' (and what happens afterwards).
- A 'princess' flying a 'kite' across a windy sky.
- A pet 'dog' on a walk in the neighbourhood.

Flip books are easy to make. Small (business card-sized) pieces of paper can be stapled or held together with a bulldog clip before adding the drawings. A Google search of 'how to make a flip book' will give students lots of examples of how to make one.

A recommended video link is the YouTube clip 'How to make a flip book animation' located at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Njl-uqnmBGA>

A blog that is also worth looking at is 'Paper movies: flip book', which has a great introduction for young people. Visit: <http://www.marthastewart.com/265876/paper-movies>

And for some inspiration, show students Eadweard Muybridge's 1887 flip book in motion at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auu5nA4AL6s>



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Blue tomatoes.

On page 10 the grown-up reading the story is convinced that the yellow car is blue — like a *tomato*. Tomatoes aren't really blue, but what if they were? Students can create some blue tomato graphics with simple stamps that they make themselves. Teachers will need to help with the cutting but students should create their own drawing. Stamps are easy to make and a Google search of 'kids stamps' will give you lots of examples.

One recommended link worth looking at is 'How to make foam stamps' (Step 5: Making your own shapes): <http://www.instructables.com/id/how-to-make-foam-stamps/>

Once students have their unique stamp and some blue paint, they can create artworks for the classroom walls. Encourage students to try different tones of blue, apply the paint nice and flat and create repeating patterns of multiple blue tomatoes. Students may like to work with a friend to alternate stamp prints.

Let's go fly a kite.

On page 22 a balloon is mistaken for a kite. Students can create their own kite-balloons with muddled sentences inspired by the book. Provide the balloon template (**Worksheet**

2) printed on card and coloured streamers for students to choose from. Students should decorate their balloon and attach its string before copying the text 'This is a _____' onto their balloon. They then choose a colour and an object to mistake it for. For example, an orange balloon may read:

- o This is a purple cake.
- o This is a yellow apple.
- o This is a green bag.

Balloons can be hung from the classroom ceiling or wall.

Create a wise old owl sitting in a tree of knowledge.

A classroom is a place of knowledge and learning. Devote one classroom wall to creating a tree of knowledge for the class and at the centre of it have a wise old owl! Start with a simple tree trunk and branches (drawn, painted or collaged on a large sheet of cardboard) and an owl sitting in the centre. Encourage students to think of some questions they would like to know the answers to (these can be any questions at all). Throughout the week questions can be written on 'leaves' and stuck to the tree. Each week review the questions as a class. Maybe someone in class has the answer to a student's question already or maybe the class can brainstorm a way to find out. This is an ongoing project that can spur on small research or reading tasks both at home or school and is great for free-time research activities. Select specific library books about relevant topics to keep underneath the tree.



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Homework activity

Students can try this as a take-home task.

Ask a grown-up (a parent, grandparent, babysitter or family friend) if there is something that you can teach *them*. Perhaps they want to know the rules to a particular game you play, how to do 'looming' or the lyrics and dance moves to your favourite song. It can be anything that *you know* and they *don't know*. Think carefully through all the steps you will need to teach them properly and then give them a lesson.

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About the Author of the Notes

Simone Evans attended Newtown High School of the Performing Arts before completing a Bachelor of Media and Communications at Charles Sturt University and later, a Graduate Diploma of Learning and Teaching with the University of Southern Queensland. She has helped produce theatre and festivals in Australia and England, taught primary school classes in sunny Byron Bay and is now the Education Coordinator at Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney.



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Worksheet 1

This is a ball.

This is a dog.

This is a bike.

This is a blue bike.

This is a happy princess.

This is a scary monster.

This is a monster scaring a princess.

This is a monster scaring a princess and her pet dog.

This is a beach.

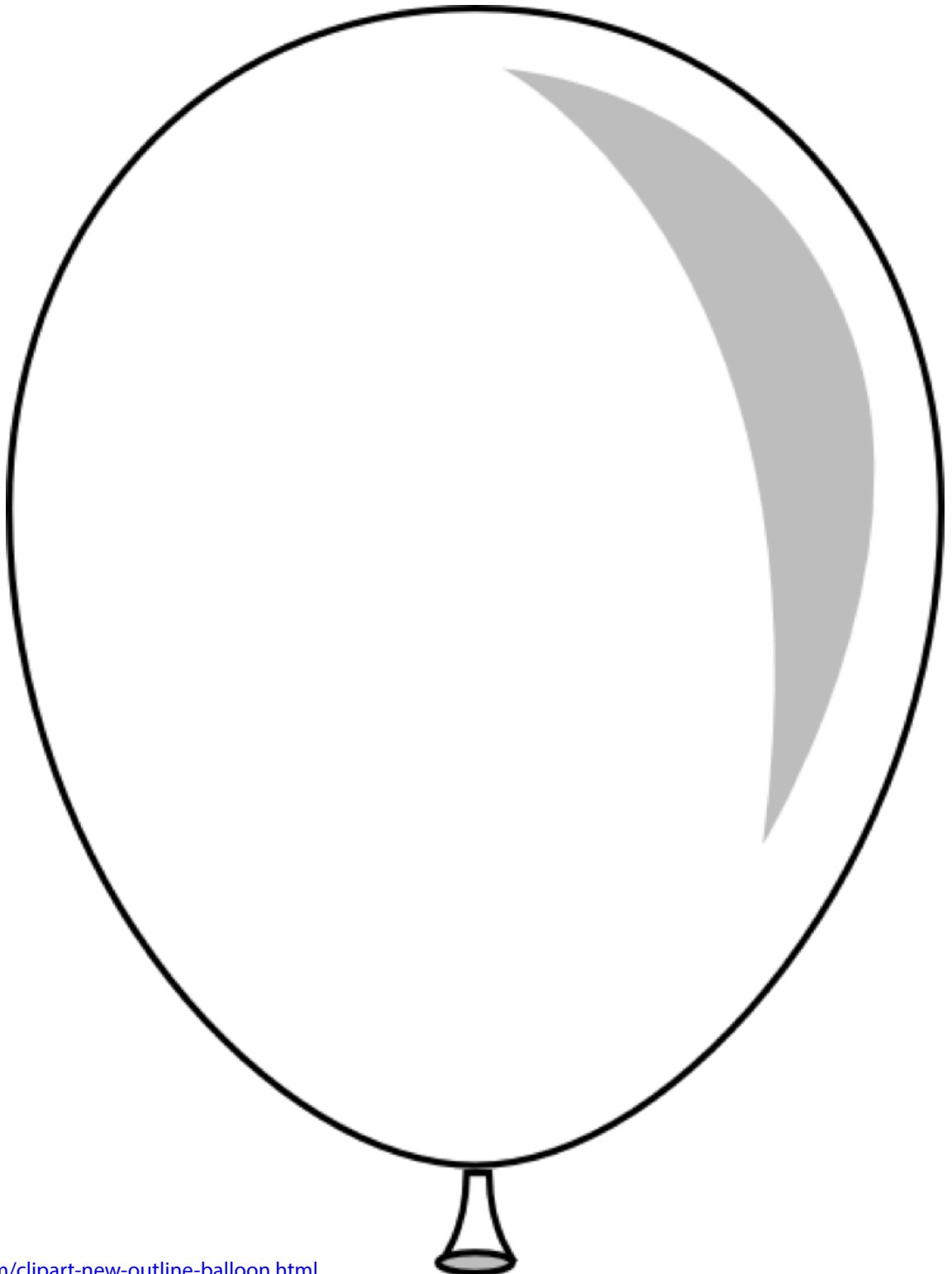
This is a kite.

This is a princess flying a kite at the beach.



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Worksheet 2

Source: <http://www.clker.com/clipart-new-outline-balloon.html>

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Decide where you stand!

1. Winter lasts for 21 years on the planet Uranus.
2. A speck of blood contains about 5 million red blood cells.
3. Almost 6000 people participated in the world's biggest snowball fight.
4. During hibernation a black bear's heart rate can drop from 40 to 50 beats per minute to just 8 beats per minute.
5. In North Cape, in Norway, the sun doesn't set in winter for one whole month.
6. You can tell lions apart by the spots on their whiskers.
7. Catfish use their entire bodies to taste things.
8. Cats can't taste sweets.
9. Lions spend about 20 hours a day resting.
10. Mother elephants use their trunks to lift newborn elephants to their feet.
11. Young giraffes sometimes moo.
12. There is a type of wildflower in America that tastes like chocolate.
13. Rhinos can't see well so they sometimes charge objects like trees and rocks, mistaking them as threats.
14. At a fashion show in China, models wore dresses, hats and even wigs made of chocolate.
15. The blue whale is the largest mammal in the world.
16. The human body contains a tiny amount of gold.
17. Bubble wrap was originally invented as wallpaper.

All these facts are true! They are sourced from the National Geographic Kids website (http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/content/kids/en_US/fun-facts/)