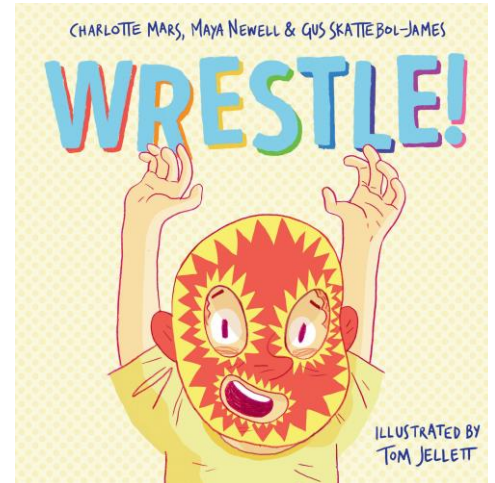


Wrestle!

By Maya Newell, Charlotte Mars and Gus Skattebol-James
Illustrated by Tom Jellett



February 2019 ISBN 9781760296810

Hardback picture book

Recommended for 4-8-year-olds

Summary

Gus wants to be a wrestler, but his mums don't like fighting. When his mums ban wrestling in the home, Gus knows it's up to him to show his mums that there is more to wrestling than violence, scary faces, pinfalls, bumps and finishers. Luckily, it's coming up to Mardi Gras, and with the help of his sister Rory, he concocts an ingenious plan to win over their mums.



Wrestle! is a fun look at the way young children explore identity with dressing up and make-believe, but like all the best picture books, the story is multilayered. Underneath Gus's humorous passion for wrestling, the book examines the important concepts of masculinity, role models and diversity. It also shows a family where mutual respect is important and conflict is overcome through talking, listening and negotiating.

Tom Jellett's vibrant illustrations complement and extend the themes explored in the text. Each page is saturated with the colours of the rainbow—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet—creating a sense of warmth and joy, as well as paying a subtle homage to the LGBTQIA+ community.

Themes

- Gender stereotypes and the many ways to be a boy/man
- Kids exploring gender identity
- Role models in the media
- Diversity and representation
- Negotiation and communication within families
- Sydney's Mardi Gras Parade and the affirmation of LGBTQIA+ families
- Costumes, festivals and celebration
- Imaginative play and dreams

Use in the curriculum

- *Wrestle!* is suitable for use in the English primary curriculum, including for developing empathy and visual literacy skills.

Visit <https://www.allenandunwin.com/resources/for-teachers> for free downloadable teachers notes, reviews by teachers, extracts and more. And sign up to the Allen & Unwin e-newsletter to receive monthly updates on new resources!

Contact Carolyn Walsh, Education Marketing Manager,
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- *Wrestle!* is suitable for use in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) primary curriculum, particularly in the focus in the first four years of school on family, significant events and social change. It relates to the key concepts of significance; continuity and change; cause and effect; place and space; interconnections; roles, rights and responsibilities; perspectives and action

| | Foundation | Year 2 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| HASS Inquiry questions | <p>Who am I, where do I live and who came before me?</p> <p>Why are some places and events special and how do we know? <i>Sydney's Mardi Gras; activities shown in family photos.</i></p> | <p>How has family life and the place we live in changed over time? <i>Note the toys and streetscapes in the illustrations.</i></p> <p>What events, activities and places do I care about? Why? <i>Favourite TV shows; Sydney's Mardi Gras; activities shown in family photos.</i></p> | <p>How has technology affected daily life over time and the connections between people in different places? <i>Gus is finding role models on TV – not possible in the past; the family take selfies.</i></p> | <p>How do symbols, events, individuals and places in my community make it unique? <i>Sydney's Mardi Gras</i></p> <p>How do people contribute to their communities, past and present?</p> <p>What events do different people and groups celebrate and commemorate and what does this tell us about our communities? <i>The family at Mardi Gras; the birth of the children; holidays etc..</i></p> |
| HASS knowledge and understanding | <p><i>Diverse family structures are not explicitly explored, but teachers should be aware they will probably be represented in their own students' backgrounds.</i></p> <p><i>Note: for guidance on moderating discussions about LGBTQIA+ families, please see FAQ pages of the Gayby Baby School Action Toolkit and other relevant sections listed in resources below.</i></p> | <p>Differences in family structures and roles today, and how these have changed or remained the same over time.</p> <p>Differences and similarities between students' daily lives and life during their parents' and grandparents' childhoods. <i>Two mums, no dad. Historically, small family size of two kids etc.</i></p> <p><i>Note: the Family Diversity poster at the end of this resource is a great visual tool for this discussion.</i></p> | <p>How changing technology affected people's lives (at home and in the ways they worked, travelled, communicated and played in the past) <i>Gus's play with wrestling dolls is modelled on a television show; photos feature in the story.</i></p> | <p>How the community has changed and remained the same over time and the role that people of diverse backgrounds have played in the development and character of the local community.</p> <p>Days and weeks celebrated or commemorated in Australia and the importance of symbols and emblems. <i>Changing laws about homosexuality. The recent legislative change on Marriage Equality. Symbol of rainbow.</i></p> |



Resources

Gayby Baby

'Wrestle!' was inspired by the 2015 documentary Gayby Baby, which featured the stories of four incredible kids, each being raised in LGBTQIA+ families. There is a **free downloadable primary schools kit** here <http://thegaybyproject.com/schools/>. We refer teachers to the following sections in particular: 'Background Info and Statistics' pp. 11 & 12; 'Gayby Baby and the Curriculum' pp. 22-24 and pp. 31-34; Appendix 1 'Glossary' p. 45 and Appendix 2 'Frequently Asked Questions' pp 46-48.

- Examples from this resource appear in the 'Activities' section below.
- The double-sided Gayby Baby Family Diversity poster is reproduced at the end of these notes, to be enlarged on a photocopier.

Welcoming Schools: A Project of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation

USA website with downloadable classroom resources and teacher tips:
<http://www.welcomingschools.org/resources/>

Exploring Family: activities from the Gayby Baby School Action Toolkit

1. What is family?

FAMILY FRUIT SALAD

Explain that you will play "FAMILY FRUIT SALAD".

1. Students arrange themselves on chairs in a circle and the teacher stands in the middle. There should be no spare chairs in the circle.
Explain that you will call out a question, and anyone who it applies to needs to get up and (safely) find a chair that has become empty.
The last student remaining calls out the next question.
2. Model a few of the suggestions below and then let students come up with their own, OR cut the table below up for students to draw from a hat
3. Invite students to turn to the person next to them (they should have new neighbours now!) and find two similarities and one difference they had in the game.
4. Discuss: What does this game tell us about what families are like?

| "Who is a ...?" | | |
|------------------|-----------------|---|
| Daughter | Nephew or niece | Grandchild |
| Step child | Adopted child | Aunt or uncle |
| Cousin | Sibling | God child |
| Second cousin | Brother | Sister |
| Great grandchild | --- | Foster child or sibling of foster child |



2. What do families do?

FAMILY BUILDING BLOCKS

Explain that in this activity students will focus on the question, WHAT DO FAMILIES DO? They will be using verbs to describe the different actions that people in families do for each other and with each other.

1. Distribute each group a set of FAMILY BUILDING BLOCKS. *See table below.*
2. Invite the group to build a wall, with the MOST IMPORTANT blocks down the bottom, and the LEAST IMPORTANT blocks up the top (you can specify that students make a 6 by 4 wall, or you can leave the arrangement up to the students. *TIP: to simplify, select 5 - 8 blocks only.*) Invite them to create/add to the blank blocks.
3. Assign a head builder from each group to stay with their wall. Remaining group members move as a group to another wall.
4. Invite groups to compare/discuss the new wall to their own, finding:
 - one similarity
 - one difference
 - one 'wondering' (e.g. Why did they put LAUGH TOGETHER at the top?)
5. Invite groups to share their findings, and facilitate a discussion:
 - What are the most/least important blocks that build a family? Why?
 - How many people does a family need to do all the things on the blocks? Could you do them all with two people in a family? With three?
 - What else does a family do? Could we add another block?

Enlarge this table on a photocopier and cut up to create blocks, or use the full-page version on page 25 of the Gayby Baby School Action Toolkit (primary):

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| LOVE EACH OTHER | LAUGH TOGETHER | SUPPORT EACH OTHER | LOOK "NORMAL" TOGETHER |
| TALK ABOUT FEELINGS | TAKE SELFIES TOGETHER | TALK ABOUT PROBLEMS | TEASE EACH OTHER |
| PLAY GAMES TOGETHER | EAT TOGETHER | CHALLENGE EACH OTHER | DEFEND EACH OTHER |
| FORGIVE EACH OTHER | EMBARRASS EACH OTHER | CELEBRATE TOGETHER | HELP EACH OTHER THROUGH HARD TIMES |
| GO ON HOLIDAYS TOGETHER | LISTEN TO EACH OTHER | GO FISHING TOGETHER | LIVE TOGETHER |
| SHARE A LAST NAME | LOOK ALIKE | DRESS THE SAME | SHARE THE SAME BLOOD OR DNA |
| | | | |

WRESTLE! discussion questions

1. Before showing the book's cover, ask your class whether anyone has ever seen a wrestling match. If someone answers yes, ask them what typically happens and how wrestlers behave with each other when they are in the ring. What sort of costumes do they wear and why might they choose to look that way?

Ask students to close their eyes and try to picture a wrestler. With their eyes still closed, ask them to put their hand up if their wrestler is a man. Ask them to open their eyes and see how many people have their hands up. Depending on the age of the group, try to draw them out to discuss why they think wrestlers are more likely to be men. Is it because they like fighting, being macho and wearing tough, scary masks?

Now turn the question around and ask them, 'Do you have to like fighting and being macho and tough to be a man?' and see how they respond.

2. After showing the book's cover, ask students for ideas about what might happen in this story. How do they think the character is feeling? Are they likely to be really tough or just pretending to be tough? What elements in the cover make them think this. [*Hint: The bright colours, the type of font used in the title, the exclamation mark at the end of the word 'Wrestle', and/or the character's facial expression and the positioning of their arms?*]
3. Read the book through once slowly, then return to the first double-page spread. Read that section and ask the class to look very closely at the images of family photos to describe each of the people in Gus's family and whether they look happy to be together. What did they find in the photos to tell them that?

What do they think Gus means when he says that the Mardi Gras is 'a big parade all about celebrating families like mine'?

4. Turn the page, read the text and look closely at the image. Ask students to describe the sort of imaginative games Gus is playing with his wrestlers. Does he imagine his wrestlers fighting together in the ring, and one eventually being thrown to the floor by the other? What three things about wrestlers does Gus want to be when he grows up?
5. Gus describes how much he loves wrestling in a very descriptive way but how are the words I LOVE WRESTLING presented on the page to emphasise how he feels? [*Hint: different colour and use of upper-case.*]
6. Turn the page and ask students to explain in their own words why they think Gus's mums don't like wrestling. What does Jen mean when she says she's worried Gus thinks that's 'the way to be a GOOD man, a POPULAR man or a SMART man'? As with the previous page, which words are emphasised on the right-hand page, how are they emphasised, and why might they be emphasised?
7. Turn the page and look at Gus's face when his mums suggest he goes as a unicorn or pop star. What is it in both images of him that show us he is not happy with either suggestion?
8. Do students understand why Gus's mums banned wrestling in their home?
9. Look closely at the wrestler Gus dreams about fighting. The words on the page tell us he is big and hairy and demands a fight. What techniques has the illustrator used to make this particular wrestler look super-scary? [*Hint: pen lines around the eyes, use of perspective makes him look huge and Gus small, the mean scowl around his mouth.*]

10. Compare the previous image with that of the wrestler crying on the next double-page spread. What has the illustrator changed in this second image to make us feel he is not scary after all, and quite a different person?
11. Turn the page and ask the whole class to guess what they think Gus means when he says that 'Maybe there are lots of DIFFERENT KINDS of wrestlers'? Before proceeding, ask students to come up with some of the different kinds that Gus might be thinking of here. [*Hint: nice wrestlers, funny wrestlers, playful wrestlers, dancing wrestlers etc.*]

At this point in the story, explain to your class that picture books often tell a story in the images not told in the words. Now turn the page and ask students to work out from the images what Gus might be saying to his mums, and what idea Rory might be suggesting. [*For a hint, look closely at the wrestlers in Rory's hands and see how they differ from those on previous pages.*]

Look closely at the images of Rory's family at the Mardi Gras Parade to find out if students were right about Gus and Rory's plan to go as DIFFERENT KINDS of wrestlers.

12. What kinds of skills did Gus draw on to win his mothers over about wrestling? [*Hint: starts to see mums' point of view—realises he's not interested in hurting people either; negotiates and talks with the whole family; puts forward an alternative solution.*]
13. Ask students to compare the wrestlers on the front yellow and orange endpapers with the wrestlers on the back blue and pink endpapers. [*Note the sticky tape shows that the wrestlers have been 'dressed up' by Rory and Gus. How does the dressing up change their appearance?*]
14. Ask students to explain in their own words what made this Mardi Gras Parade special for Gus.
15. Turn to the last page in the book and encourage students to describe how this kind of wrestling is different to the kind that Gus previously thought he loved.
16. Establish the iconography of the rainbow as a symbol of the LGBTQIA+ community. Ask students to study all aspects of the design and illustrations to see how often the rainbow is used. Look for other symbols in the Mardi Gras parade pages. There is the Trans symbol (blue and pink) and the Aboriginal flag. Explain these are all images to show respect for others who are different to ourselves. [*Hint: as well as the actual illustrations, the background colour varies from page to page.*]

In the authors' own words

'What makes a family? Is it biology? Living together? A surname? Community? Or is it something you feel? Whatever shape your family takes, we believe you should see it celebrated and reflected in the world. We hope this book is another step forward in reaching that goal.

'*Wrestle!* was inspired by the 2015 documentary *Gayby Baby*, which featured the stories of four incredible kids, each being raised in LGBTQIA+ families. One of those kids was Gus. He's now 17.

'The book comes after a decade of fighting for same-sex marriage in Australia and the world. But the work of expanding the conversation around family, sexuality and gender is by no means over. It's a time to tell even more complex stories about who we are and how we live. These stories are the connective thread between major legislative change and the everyday behaviours that make our society more accepting. They are a gateway to new ideas and new ways of seeing. To fighting less. To loving more.'

— Maya Newell & Charlotte Mars.

The authors

Maya Newell

Maya is an Australian filmmaker with a focus on social impact documentary. Her short *TWO* (2011) screened AFI Docs and Slamdance Film Festival and won best emerging talent at AIDC in Australia. In collaboration with Charlotte Mars, she directed *Growing Up Gayby* (35 mins, ABC, 2013) and *Gayby Baby* (feature documentary, 2015). *Gayby Baby* raised over \$110,000 in crowdfunding, was selected for GoodPitch² Australia 2014, premiered at Hot Docs 2016, broke cinema-on-demand records in Australia and was nominated for an ACCTA award. *Gayby Baby* famously triggered a national conversation in Australia about the validity of 'Gayby' children when the PG-rated film was banned from being screened in NSW schools by the State Premier. Since the film's release, every State and Territory has passed legislation for adoption equality and Australia has won Marriage Equality – two issues at the heart of the impact campaign. *Wrestle!* is her first published work as co-author.



Maya Newell and Charlotte Mars

Charlotte Mars

Charlotte makes screen works with a focus on stories that explore gender politics and notions of womanhood. Together with Maya, she was a 2016 WIFTS (Women's International Film and Television Society) honouree for their film and social impact work with AACTA & AWGIE-nominated feature-doc *Gayby Baby*. In 2017, Charlotte produced the 35 minute, four-screen video artwork *Evanescence*, by genderqueer artist Amos Gebhardt, which premiered at the Art Gallery of SA. Before this, she was the Development Manager of Matchbox Pictures, where she worked with acclaimed writers and directors on shows like *The Family Law*, *Secret City*, *Glitch* and *Nowhere Boys*. In 2013, she produced ABC-doc *Growing Up Gayby* by Maya Newell, and in 2012 was selected as an ArtStart mentee to director Cate Shortland for her first short, the award-winning drama *Awake*. Originally from the Blue Mountains, today Charlotte can be found at her home in Sydney's inner west, where she is writing her first scripted feature, with support from Screen Australia.

Gus Skattebol-James

Gus was one of the children who appeared in *Gayby Baby*. He has now finished school. These days, Gus isn't obsessed with wrestling, but he is a black belt in Aikido (a Japanese martial art) and is mad about skateboarding. In 2016, he and another of the *Gayby Baby* kids, Ebony, teamed up with the Gayby Project and The *Guardian* newspaper to produce their own film, interviewing the next generation of gaybies about love and family, and what it felt like to have the whole of Australia talking about you during the same-sex marriage postal survey.

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/video/2017/oct/16/gayby-baby-vote-for-love-video>



Photo Credit Jez Smith

The illustrator

Tom Jellett

I hope readers will recognise a real family in this book, and possibly one not dissimilar to their own. A lot of stories describe children learning something, but it's nice to read a story where the children's parents also learn a little something also. We try and do the best for our children and teach them what they will need, but sometimes we impress upon them our own tastes and views and I think now and then we need to listen to them and what they like and need at that time in their life. We can always meet halfway. Listening and compromise.

As well as the themes of love, respect, acceptance and diversity, I hope that there may be families that are generally under-represented in children's books that may see themselves or something similar and recognisable in this book.



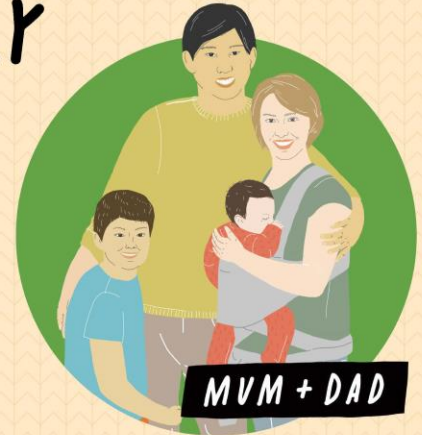
THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO MAKE A FAMILY



CO-PARENTS



TWO MUMS



MUM + DAD

With a global rise in the demographic of children with non-traditional families, it's time to celebrate the diversity of the modern family unit. At Gayby Baby, we think that every child has the right to see their family reflected in their education.

International research says that it is the quality of parenting that determines a child's wellbeing, not the structure of their family or the sexuality or gender of their parents or carers.¹



ONE DAD



ONE MUM



FOSTER FAMILY

The GAYBY BABY School Action Toolkit is the first comprehensive education resource to represent same-sex parented families and explore family diversity, providing educators with the tools to support students from all kinds of families.



STEP-FAMILIES



TWO DADS



KINSHIP FAMILY

Download the free School Action Toolkit today at:
www.thegaybyproject.com/schools



WHAT IS GAYBY BABY?

GAYBY BABY is an award-winning documentary by Maya Newell and Charlotte Mars, which follows four children navigating the usual challenges of growing up: school, sport, friendship, and making their first decisions about their futures. They do so within loving homes and with caring parents – who all happen to be gay or lesbian. Visit: thegaybyproject.com for more information.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the 2011 Census there were:

 **33,714** same-sex couple households in Australia, and

 **6,120** children living in these households.

That's double the number of children since the 2001 census, meaning children with same-sex attracted parents are a rapidly growing demographic in our schools.

DID YOU KNOW?

 As many as **29%** of all Australian children are being raised outside heterosexual, biologically-parented households.²

UNDERSTANDING FAMILY DIVERSITY

A young person's family is central to their understanding of their own identity. When students see a family like theirs reflected in their school environment, it increases feelings of validation, safety and acceptance. This positively impacts their academic motivation and social wellbeing.¹

HOW CAN I MAKE MY SCHOOL MORE INCLUSIVE?

- **Watch GAYBY BABY and download the *School Action Toolkit***
With content mapped to the National and NSW PDHPE curriculum for years 5-10, the *School Action Toolkit* explores diverse family structures in a fun and insightful way, using stories drawn from the film, GAYBY BABY. Beyond the classroom, it provides educators with strategies to make their school community a safe and inclusive space for all students and their families.
- **Make diverse families visible**
Consider using images of different types of families (such as this poster) in your school office, classrooms, library and website.
- **Use inclusive language**
Check that your correspondence home uses non-gendered language and consider how you can incorporate a range of parenting structures and gender roles into everyday lessons, for example: if you're writing sentences for literacy exercises, include phrases such as "her dads," or "his guardian", or just use "parents".
- **Know your community**
Talk to the families in your school so you are informed about each student's family and how they like to be addressed or spoken about.

Download the free *School Action Toolkit* and purchase the *Supplementary Video Kit* today:
www.thegaybyproject.com/schools

¹ See 'An Introduction to Welcoming Schools' (URL below) or read the toolkit for a list of academic papers which detail the social, educational and emotional benefits of inclusive classrooms;
http://www.hrc.org/files/images/general/An_Introduction_to_Welcoming_Schools.pdf

² Australian Census, 2011

Photo credit: Amanda James