



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Pre-prep and lower-middle primary (ages 3-8)

CONTENTS

1. Plot summary	1
2. About the author	2
3. Author's inspiration	2
4. Pre-reading questions	2
5. Writing and drawing style	2
6. For older students	3
7. Key study topics (includes a section for older students)	3
8. Further reading	4

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, The Arts and SEL
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others
- Recognise the importance of supporting diversity and engaging with different perspectives
- Support themselves and others to face personal and social challenges with resilience
- Explore concepts such as right, wrong, fairness, equality and respect
- Cultivate open-mindedness and reasonableness.
- Explore ideas, experiences, observations and imagination to create visual artworks

THEMES

- Family, sporting culture, fan culture, personal choices, difference, identity, self-esteem and acceptance, respect

PREPARED BY

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My Big Secret Felice Arena

PLOT SUMMARY

A fun, funny story about love and acceptance, no matter what team your heart belongs to!

Everyone in my family goes for the RED team. My dad goes for the RED team. My mum goes for the RED team . . . EVERYONE goes for the RED team. But . . . I go for the BLUE team!

Will this little pig ever have the courage to tell everyone his big secret?
And will that be okay?

A perfect book to share from the creator who bought us the much-loved Sporty Kids and Besties series, the Specky Magee series, his historical adventure series and many more.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Felice Arena is one of Australia's best-loved children's writers. He is the author and creator of many popular and award-winning children's books for all ages, including the acclaimed historical adventures *The Boy and the Spy*, *Fearless Frederic*, *The Great Escape* and *The Unstoppable Flying Flanagan*, which

was longlisted for the ARA Historical Novel Prize. His series include the bestselling Specky Magee books and the popular Besties and Sporty Kids series with Tom Jellett. He is the author and illustrator of *My Big Secret*.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

When I was a child, I decided *not* to barrack for the same football team everyone in my family supported. Shock! Horror! How could I? The pressure was intense. Peer pressure and family pressure can be overwhelming. Everyone wants to fit in, to be accepted. But what if your heart tells you what you like is not the same as what those close to you like. Then fear creeps in. Fear of rejection and being excluded. No one wants to feel left out.

This memory was the idea behind *My Big Secret*. But it's more than a story about supporting the 'wrong' sports team. It's about compassion, understanding, love and acceptance.

Sometimes we don't share the same interests, or even feelings, that our friends, family members and colleagues have, but we shouldn't be judged unfairly or ostracised because of it. We should be accepted for who we are. Shouldn't it be enough to be kind, thoughtful, and civil? It seems that's what the world needs of these days.

While I hoped to create something that would make for a perfect read-aloud text, I also wanted to introduce an element of fun and surprise. I hope that this story will amuse the kids (and maybe even the adults) in your life and spark robust conversation with your class. I would absolutely love to hear from you about how your read-aloud of *My Big Secret* is received. Please feel free to contact me directly via [Instagram.com/felicearenabooks](https://www.instagram.com/felicearenabooks)

Happy reading!

Questions

1. Do you follow a sporting team? Or is there a fan-based activity that you enjoy? What do you love about it that makes you follow that team, player, performer or group so passionately? Do you wear or own gear that identifies you as a fan? Do you have chants, songs or sayings? How does celebrating your fandom make you feel?
2. Why do you think it feels good to be part of a group? Think about how it feels to fit in and what it might feel like to feel different or left out.
3. What emotions might go through your mind if you had to tell someone about being different? Why might it take courage to let people know? How would you hope your family or friends would react to make you feel accepted and loved?

Activities

1. Draw a picture of you and your family or friends celebrating a shared fan experience. Include any gear, behaviours or elements of the experience that make it special.
2. Look up with your teacher the different ways that people celebrate their sporting teams or favourite performers around the world or across different sports and cultures. What are the similarities/differences in how people celebrate?
3. Can you tell a story or draw a comic or piece of art to show us your favourite ways to be a fan?
4. The little pig has a 'blue' moment when they want to tell their family but feels too worried. Write a diary entry for them that night, expanding on why they want their family to know and how they feel.
5. Draw a comic of how you might want your family and friends to react if you ever had to tell them something important. How do your family and friends usually show care and love to each other?

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Read the writing on the back of the book (the blurb). What do you expect the book will be about? Do you have any questions? Are those questions answered in the story?
2. What can you tell about the book when you look at the cover? 'Characters' are the important people, animals or things in the story, 'setting' is the place where it happens and a 'theme' is the idea or subject. Can you guess at the characters, setting and theme?

WRITING AND DRAWING STYLE

1. How do the images in this book help you to understand what's happening in the text? How has the text left room for the pictures to tell the emotional parts of the story?

For example, on the swing, what do facial expressions tell you about how the little pig is feeling? And what does their body language tell you about how they are feeling on Wear Your Colours Day or shopping with Mum?
2. There is so much humour in Felice's text and illustrations. What did you find funny? Was there anything you thought was sad?



3. Sometimes it takes a little while for people to get used to new information. Mum and Dad are immediately accepting, but it takes the rest of the family a little bit longer. Look at the facial expressions and body language when the little pig reveals their secret. Compare to the expressions and body language in the boat scene. What are the differences? How can you tell that it really is 'all right'?

FOR OLDER STUDENTS

1. The story in the text is from the little pig's point of view and in their voice. This is called 'first person narration' (you will see words like 'we', 'I', 'ours').

Choose a section of the book and see if you can re-write in the 'third person' – that's when the narrator is not someone in the story and is telling us about what happens (you will use words like 'they', 'he', 'her', 'their').

2. All writing has a 'tone'. Some ways to describe tone might be 'formal' or 'informal', 'humorous' or 'serious', 'enthusiastic' or 'matter-of-fact'. How would you describe the little pig's tone?

What give you clues to the tone (look at word choice and sentence structure, and in written language sometimes we use punctuation)?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Social Emotional Learning

1. Name a happy and a sad emotion that you think the little pig is feeling. Can you make an infographic with those emotions at the centre and surround them with ten things that make you feel that way?
2. Throughout this story the little pig is very strong and 'resilient' – that means to deal with setbacks and bounce back. In dealing with the disappointment of not being able to meet the Blue player or show that they follow the Blue team, they are being resilient. But another important part of resilience is having the confidence to show your true self, even if that feels risky. Imagine you are explaining the story to someone who hasn't read it. Can you explain to them how the little pig shows strength and resilience throughout?
3. One of the twins also has a Big Secret. Do you think they were inspired to reveal theirs because of the little pig's courage? How are they feeling about their own hidden identity? How does that change when they see Mum and Dad's reaction? Can you write some internal dialogue for the cousin as they watch the little pig reveal their Big Secret?

4. Some books aim to leave you with a message as well as enjoy the story. What is the 'moral of the story' or the message here? If you wrote a book, what would be your message?

FOR OLDER STUDENTS

5. Can you think how this story might relate to someone who feels different in another way? Think about aspects of core identity – draw one of the pigs from the book and around the drawing write the elements that you imagine might make them 'them'. Think of things like gender identity, sex, religion, sexuality, neurodiversity. How might someone feel different to the people around them for each of these elements of self? Discuss your thoughts with the class.
6. If the little pig wasn't accepted for who they are, how might that have impacted them? Think about the possible effect on self-esteem, future resilience, confidence and trust, for example. How might that affect their ability to fully express themselves later in life?

English

1. In Australia, lots of kids follow sports. Do you have a photo of you in your fan gear? Write an imaginative text about the most exciting thing that could happen if your team won the big game and you were there.
2. Think about the different ways that people behave as fans around the world and across different activities. Are there some ways to celebrate that you wish you could follow? Think about things like the 'Mexican wave' at the soccer, the singing of songs at rugby games, putting scarves out the window of the car after the AFL, creating fan art to bring along to a show or swapping bracelets at a Taylor Swift concert. Write a persuasive text convincing other fans that they should start following one of those traditions.
3. The little pig tells us that even the family guinea pig follows the Red team. What team, player or performer do you think your family pet would be a big fan of? Write an imaginative story from their point of view about why. And would they keep it a secret from the rest of the family?

The Arts

1. Make your own fan art that you might take to a game or a concert. It could be a poster or a crepe pom pom or a giant picture of your favourite player or performer, or a friendship bracelet if you're a Swiftie. Explain to the class why you made it and how it shows that you're a mega fan!



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Sporty Kids series
Get sporty with these great books for beginner readers!

FWOOOOMP!
It was a killer kick, straight through goals. Abby did a victory dance and skipped around Joe and Lizzie. Abby always wins at soccer. So why won't Pete join her team?

Time was running out. Jessica looked up at the ring. With an almighty toss, she took a shot at the basket. Everyone held their breath . . . Jessica is a basketball all-star. So why does she need lucky shoes?

'Yes!' yelled Stefan. He threw his arms up in the air. 'Game, set and match to me!' But there was no one else to cheer him on. Stefan has winning racquet skills. But will he ever play a real game of tennis?

Joe marked the footy. He ran with it as fast as he could. Then he handballed to Angus. 'Dropping the ball!' shouted the umpire. Joe is awesome at footy. So why is handballing so hard?

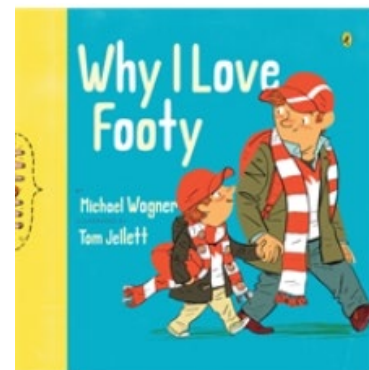
Find the rest of the series at:
<https://www.penguin.com.au/au>



Business Chickens

A funny and fabulous picture book as wild and wonderful as Fran herself – for anyone who's not your average chook and has the courage to follow their dreams!

Most chickens make good business chickens. They're neat, arrive on time and they take everything very seriously. Fran is *not* a good business chicken . . . But maybe, just maybe, that's okay.



Why I Love Footy

Notable - CBCA Picture Book of the Year

There are a bazillion reasons to love footy! These are just my biggest ones . . .

There's the big tackles and amazing marks. There's wearing the scarf and singing the song. But whether your team wins or loses, from the opening bounce to the final siren, the very best thing about footy is that we do it together.

An ode to a uniquely Australian experience and the joy of family and friends.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	AGE	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
My Big Secret	Felice Arena	9781761349706	3+	\$19.99		
Sporty Kids Soccer	Felice Arena	9780143308430	5+	\$12.99		
Sporty Kids Basketball	Felice Arena	9780143308898	5+	\$12.99		
Sporty Kids Tennis	Felice Arena	9780143308447	5+	\$12.99		
Sporty Kids Footy	Felice Arena	9780143308409	5+	\$12.99		
Business Chickens	Jess McGeachin	9780143779179	3+	\$24.99		
Why I Love Footy	Michael Wagner Tom Jellett	9780143506003	3+	\$24.99		
TOTAL						

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