

My Big FANTASTIC Family

Discussion notes and classroom activities for KS1



Hardback 978 1 83994 347 8 • £11.99

Paperback 978 1 83994 348 5 • £6.99

Suitable for 3+ years

My Big Fantastic Family is a funny and moving story about Lily-May, a little girl coping with change after her parents separate. This reassuring celebration of non-nuclear families will help children to understand that they will always be loved, even if their parents separate or divorce. Beautifully written in rhyme by **Adam and Charlotte Guillain** and with vibrant illustrations by **Ali Pye**, this uplifting story with a diverse cast of characters embraces all the positive aspects of becoming part of a blended family.



About this resource pack

Stories can be a really good way to help children explore and manage difficult experiences and feelings. Stories are safe and unthreatening – they distance children from a situation, allowing them to ‘experience’ it safely while it’s happening to someone else. This distancing can then help them manage their own experiences, or to develop empathy for others.

My Big Fantastic Family is a picture book about parents separating, families changing and growing, and what this can be like for a young child. Lily-May has to deal with a lot of different feelings when her parents separate, but she also gains a bigger, loving family as a result. The story shows that change can be positive as well as challenging, that ‘family’ means different things, and that people can love and care for one another and be part of a family even if they don’t live together.

This resource uses *My Big Fantastic Family* to help explore learning around families, feelings and change. The book can be used within a school’s PSHE or RHE scheme of work for Key stage 1 as part of a focus on different types of families, relationships within families, and our feelings when families change.

These activity and discussion ideas are for use with a whole class or groups within a class; however, it may be appropriate to use the book with individual children and explore some of the issues it raises in more depth, or to suggest to parents for their own use at home.

As the book is about the sensitive subject of parents separating, please read the story along with the safe teaching and learning approaches given on the next page before using in class.

Creating a safe teaching and learning environment

Ways to do this for this age group include:

★ **Agreeing and reinforcing ground rules** for the lesson so that children feel that anything they share is valued and not judged. Children can come up with these themselves, but examples could include:

- we show people we are listening to them
- we can ask questions if we are not sure
- we never say unkind things about other people, their families or homes
- only one person speaks at a time (*as a reminder, use an object such as a teddy for children to hold when they speak*)
- you can tell someone if you feel worried or unhappy in a lesson

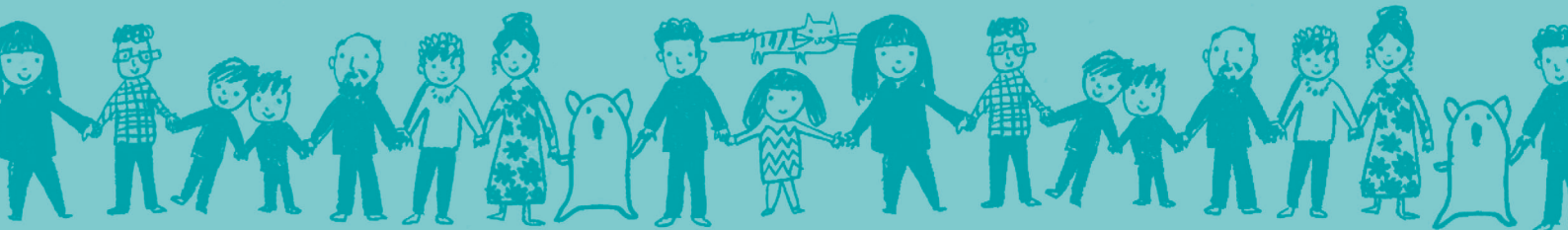
★ **Considering children** in challenging family situations or in local authority care, or who have experienced or are experiencing family separation. Assume that at least one child in the class is affected directly in some way, to ensure sensitivity in delivery.

★ **Distancing** by using the book to reflect on and discuss Lily-May's feelings and situation, not individual children's – no one should feel they must share their own experiences.

★ **Enabling and valuing questions.** Encourage questions, but also provide a way (e.g. writing or drawing for a post-it wall or question box) for children to ask questions or share something privately, and be available to pupils if they want to talk about the story separately. Ensure children know who in school can support them if they need it, and emphasise whole-school messages about safe networks of trusted adults.



If a child says anything which causes concern, or makes a disclosure, you must follow your school's safeguarding and confidentiality policies and procedures. If you are unsure of these, speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead, or contact the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000.



Questions and discussion ideas



The questions given here are examples to begin, prompt or extend discussion before, during and after reading the book. They can be adapted and developed to fit with your teaching methods, and with class and individual needs, or used to create lesson plans. Other questions might also arise, depending on children's responses and reactions. Choose or adapt questions that work best for you and your class – this is not an exhaustive or compulsory list!

Before reading

Look at the cover together with the title and description covered up.

Ask questions such as:

Who do you think all these people are?

Why do you think that?

What are they doing?

Why are they all together?

Do you think they are happy?

How can you tell?

What do you think this book will be about?

Uncover the title but leave the description covered up.

Who do you think these people are now?

Whose family do you think it is?

How do we know they are a family?

Do they look like a family?

Why do you think they are all smiling?



Finally, uncover the book's description at the bottom of the cover.

You could explain that the book is about Lily-May who lives in a family where the mummy and daddy are separated.

Who do you think Lily-May's mummy and daddy are?

Who do you think the other people might be?

Are you surprised that this is a book about parents separating? Why?

During/after the story

Read the whole story once through first, showing children the pictures, before using the discussion prompts and questions. Encourage children to use the illustrations as well as the words to help with their thinking and responses.

Family love and care

Who cares for Lily-May at the beginning/by the end of the story? (Show that lots of different people care for and love Lily-May as well as her mum and dad, and draw children's attention to Blue Bear too, as children will often feel that favourite toys 'look after' them).

How do Mum and Dad show that they both love and care for Lily-May?

Who else is in Lily-May's family?

How do we know that these people love and care for Lily-May? (Help draw out things people say and do to show love and care).

What are the difficult things about the changes in Lily-May's family?

What are the good things about the changes in Lily-May's family?

What other kinds of changes happen in families?

Feelings

How did Lily-May feel when her parents separated? (Draw attention to clues such as the things she says or does, her facial expressions, and words and phrases to describe feelings e.g. 'all upside-down inside').

Does she feel like that all the time?

How does she feel by the end of the story?

What helped her to feel better?

How do the different people in her family make her feel? (Highlight that different people bring different things into her life).

How do we know how Lily-May is feeling? (Draw attention to emotions being felt in the body as well as the mind).

How does Lily-May feel when she can't find Blue Bear?

Why do you think she feels like that?

What helps her to feel better?

Families

What is a family? (Use this question to challenge stereotypes e.g. mum, dad, two kids).

What can a family look like/who can be in a family? (Focus on diversity and all the different ways a family might look, including people who are not related but are considered family and why this might be).

Do people have to live with each other to be part of a family? (e.g. Lily-May's dad doesn't live with her and Mum, but is still her dad).

Are there people in a family who don't live in someone's home?

How do we know that these people are also part of someone's family?

Why is it important to show people in our families that we love and care about them?

How can we show people in our family that we love and care about them?

(Encourage children to think of words as well as behaviours).

How can families make one another feel? (Discuss positives and negatives; include sensitive discussion of times when siblings might annoy each other or argue etc.)

How can families help and support one another?

After reading

Do all families look the same?

How does your family look similar to/different from Lily-May's family?

Are there people in your family who don't live with you in your home?

(e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins etc.)

What different things do you do with the different people in your family?

If you are feeling worried or sad, what helps you to feel better?



Activity ideas: Families and Change

★ Discuss the front cover of the book, and the illustrated 'photos' on the last page that show everyone who is part of Lily-May's family. Ask children to draw themselves on a piece of paper and draw people who are part of their family around them, or alternatively to draw a 'photo' of themselves with someone else in their family. They could show how different family members are joined together (e.g. using string). Note: be sensitive to children who may be looked after or in local authority care, and encourage children to think about people beyond their homes who they consider part of their family.

★ Ask if all families look the same. Show the class a variety of images of different families and ask them to discuss the images in small groups, then compare and describe differences (e.g. 'this family has two mummies; this family has lots of children in it; this family is a mummy, daddy and one child; this family has a daddy, two children and a dog'). Ask them to spot a family where there are similarities to their own, and a family where there are differences.

★ Ask children to make a trophy or medal for someone in their family who doesn't live with them. They could write things on the award which demonstrates how that person shows them love and care.

★ When Lily-May's parents separated, her family changed. Ask children to think of some other changes that might happen to a family (e.g. a new baby, getting a pet, moving house, a grandparent moving in). Ask them to draw a timeline for themselves. At the top they should draw or write changes that have happened to them between being a baby and now. At the bottom they can write changes that have happened to their family in that time.



Activity ideas: Feelings

★ Together, come up with some 'feelings words' (e.g. scared, excited, worried, happy, upset). See how many different words children can think of to encourage them to widen their vocabulary. Discuss what might make people experience these different emotions, and differences between them (e.g. glad vs. delighted). Group similar emotions together (e.g. happy, excited, pleased, worried, anxious, scared), and match opposite emotions (e.g. happy and sad; nervous and relaxed; pleased and upset).

★ Ask children to choose an emotion, and draw someone feeling that emotion. How would they look? What would they be doing? Ask them to show where or how on the body they might feel the emotion (e.g. with arrows, labels, drawings, words etc.).

★ Ask children to act out given emotions (e.g. 'What does someone look like when they feel excited?': they might jump up and down with a big smile; 'What does someone look like when they are disappointed?': they might slump and walk away slowly, or stamp their foot and say 'not fair!'). Play emotions charades, where a child picks a word and acts it out silently for others to guess. Encourage others to look out for all the clues to how someone is feeling that go beyond being told.

★ Make a class list of things which might make people feel good or not so good. Discuss some of the things that can happen to someone that cause not so good feelings (e.g. unkind words; losing a favourite toy; something special being cancelled). Remind them of what happened to Lily-May that made her feel not so good. What were the clues that told us how she was feeling?

★ Tell the class that change can cause good and not so good feelings for people and remind them of the changes to Lily-May's family, and the different ways it made her feel. Ask them to think of other changes that might happen to someone of their age, and whether these would cause good or not so good feelings.

★ Discuss what Peter did to help Lily-May feel better when she was missing Mum, and the things that Dad did to help Lily-May when she lost Blue Bear. Ask children about all the ways people in families can show love and care when someone is upset. What could they do to show love and care to someone in their family who was upset?



Thank you for downloading these resources!
Share your thoughts with us marketing@nosycrow.com
#MyBigFantasticFamily

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Curriculum links

The resource links to the following statutory and non-statutory areas of learning in the primary curriculum:

Relationships and health education: statutory guidance

General primary guidance

- ...the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to... family relationships...
- ...the features of healthy friendships, family relationships and other relationships which young children are likely to encounter.
- ...Families of many forms provide a nurturing environment for children. (Families can include for example, single parent families, LGBT parents, families headed by grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents/carers amongst other structures.)



Area of learning	Core area	Detail
Relationships education	<i>Families and people who care for me</i>	<p>Pupils should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability. • the characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members... • that others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but they should all respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care. • that stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are all at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up.
Physical and mental health	<i>Mental wellbeing</i>	<p>Pupils should know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that there is a normal range of emotions (e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, nervousness) and scale of emotions that all humans experience in relation to different experiences and situations. • how to recognise and talk about their emotions... • simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family and the benefits of hobbies and interests. • isolation and loneliness can affect children and that it is very important for children to discuss their feelings with an adult and seek support.

Non-statutory PSHE programme of study (KS1)

Core theme	Sub-section	Learning opportunities
1. Health and wellbeing	<i>Families and people who care for me</i>	<p>H12. how to recognise and name different feelings H14. how to recognise what others might be feeling H17. about things that help people feel good (e.g. playing outside, doing things they enjoy, spending time with family, getting enough sleep) H19. to recognise when they need help with feelings; that it is important to ask for help with feelings; and how to ask for it H20. about change and loss...; to identify feelings associated with this; to recognise what helps people to feel better</p>
2. Relationships	<i>Families and close positive relationships</i>	<p>R2. to identify the people who love and care for them and what they do to help them feel cared for R3. about different types of families including those that may be different to their own R4. to identify common features of family life</p>