



EK BOOKS

TEACHER NOTES & RESOURCES

Title: Saying Goodbye to Barkley

Subtitle:

Author: Devon Sillett

Illustrator: Nicky Johnston

Publisher: EK Books

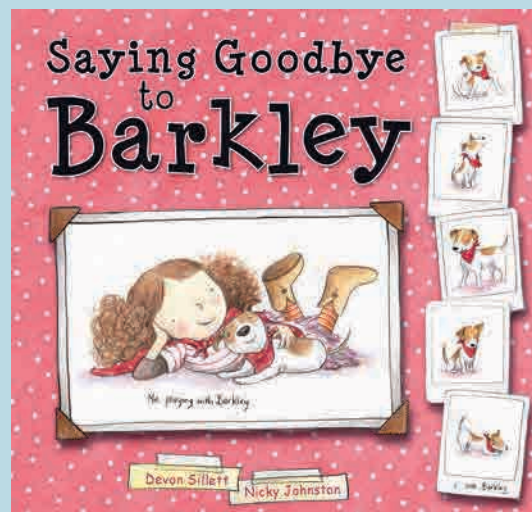
Price: \$24.99

ISBN: 978-1-925335-96-5

Publication date: 1 March 2019

Audience age: 4-7 years

Key Curriculum Areas: English, Health,
The Arts, Writing



SYNOPSIS:

Olivia and her dog Barkley are inseparable.

He's her sidekick, her partner in crime-fighting – they're the perfect pair.

But then, one day, Barkley isn't there anymore.

Can Olivia find a way to get her happiness back?

THEMES:

Friendship, grief, loss, resilience, recovery, family, love, pets, animals, coping.

SELLING POINTS:

- Empathetic story about loss and love.
- Classroom activities provided across curriculum areas of English and Writing.
- Encourages children to explore grief and loss in a safe environment.
- Gently depicts an experience which aligns with many childrens' first encounters with losing a loved one.
- Illustrations are evocative, fun, imaginative, emotive and reassuring.
- Highlights the benefits of adopting from shelters
- Draws attention to various aspects of the grieving process.
- Encourages dialogue around potentially traumatic events.



TEACHER NOTES: Saying Goodbye to Barkley

WRITING STYLE:

Simple, straight-forward, clear and gentle.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE:

Nicky's illustration style can be described as whimsical, emotive, nostalgic and moving – perfect when combined with Devon's text.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION:

For many children, the loss of a pet is the first experience with death they will have. At a young age, Devon lost a pet of her own and did not know how to process that grief. This story aims to build a bridge between the experience and possible solutions, or at least aims to stimulate and promote dialogue about the experience between children and parents/caretakers. It also demonstrates some emotions which accompany impactful loss. In turn, this allows children to relate and/or understand that which is on the page and to not feel alone, isolated or so confused in their grief.

Finally, for those who do not have a pet or are not going through this experience, the depiction of this experience encourages the development of empathy and an empathetic reaction and understanding for those around them who are experiencing grief.

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

Devon Sillett, Author

Devon Sillett is a former radio producer, turned writer, reviewer, creative academic and English teacher. Born in the US, Devon has had the pleasure of calling Australia home for the past 24 years, even though she still gets asked about her 'American' accent daily.

Currently, Devon is completing her PhD on children's picture books at the University of Canberra. In 2013, Devon was awarded the Australian Postgraduate Award for her research into YA speculative fiction.

In her spare time, Devon can be found building Lego superheroes and playing with trains alongside the tiny lights of her life, sons Aaron and Jay.

Nicky Johnston, Illustrator

Nicky Johnston is an educator, speaker and children's book author and illustrator. She is a mum to four boys and lives in Melbourne, Victoria. She works at home in her art studio and is fulfilling her lifetime goal of being an artist. She is passionate about promoting emotional resilience in children and her love of teaching (and all things creative) sees her visiting lots of schools inspiring young writers and artists.



INTERVIEW:

AUTHOR

What is the inspiration for this story?

My very first pooch, Goldilocks! She passed away when I was still a child, and to this day I have dreams about her. It was such a significant and impactful experience that I wanted to explore in a gentle, encouraging, and realistic way. In considering writing this story, I realised that the loss of a pet is one of the most common first encounters with loss for children. In Barkley, I aimed to create a resource that would stimulate discussion around grief, loss and model some useful coping mechanisms.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Being able to share my experience with others in a productive and helpful way! And, of course, Nicky's amazing illustrations which have breathed life into the characters. She has created her own magnificent elements to the narrative through her visual story-telling.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

Creating a story which is delicate, yet realistic and which centres on such a serious theme. Additionally, creating a story which is engaging and readable despite the themes of loss, grief and death.

ILLUSTRATOR

What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.

I always begin a book with dozens and dozens of pencil sketches to really get to know the characters, and for this book I spent a lot of time practicing drawing dogs. I took some time working out the colour palate to use throughout the entire book, this is where I decided on outfits and other little things that feature throughout the book. To create the final artwork, I used watercolour, coloured pencils as well as pastels, applying layers upon layers using all three different mediums.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

I thoroughly enjoyed studying playful dogs! I spent time at parks watching different breeds of dogs playing together to help me develop the personalities for both Barkley and Spud.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

This story has a special place in my heart. When I first read it, my own beloved dog Mia had just passed away. Olivia's raw emotions reflected my own and I found it challenging at times to ensure that there were still lots of joyful moments shining through my illustrations of Olivia. I channelled Mia's cheeky personality while drawing Barkley!



TEACHER NOTES: Saying Goodbye to Barkley

TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

- **Prior to reading:** Examine the cover of the book. Based on this, predict what *Saying Goodbye to Barkley* is about. What about the cover leads you to think this?
After reading: Who was right?
- What sorts of words might describe how Olivia feels in the beginning of the story? (eg. Safe, loved, loving, happy, joyful, playful).
- How might she feel when Barkley becomes unwell and is no longer able to accompany her on her crime-fighting adventures? (Sad, lonely, scared, confused, disappointed.)
- How does Olivia feel at the conclusion of the story? (Happy, loved, loving, comfort, excited.)
- What do you think happened to Barkley? Why does he stop playing with Olivia?
- Why can't Olivia eat or sleep?
- Have you ever experienced grief or loss like Olivia?
- If yes, what sorts of feelings did you have? Did your feelings change the way you behaved? Did they make some things harder to do?
- Did someone or some people help you to cope? If yes, who helped you and how did they help to make you feel better?
- Imagine that you are Olivia's mum. What do you think she is feeling when she sees the effect Barkley's situation has on Olivia?
- What does Olivia's mum mean when she tells Olivia that she should 'get on with things'?
- Is Spud a replacement dog for Barkley? Why or why not?
- *Saying Goodbye to Barkley* is a picture book – a type of story which has both words and pictures; each tell important parts of the story. What sorts of things do we learn from the pictures in *Saying Goodbye to Barkley* that the words don't tell us?
- Do you have a favourite character in *Saying Goodbye to Barkley*? If so, which one? What do you like about them?
- Do you like how the story ends? Why or why not?
- If not, what would you change about the ending?
- Why do you think Olivia and her mother chose to adopt a pet from a shelter instead of a puppy from a pet shop? Can you think of some of the benefits that accompany this decision?



TEACHER NOTES: Saying Goodbye to Barkley

ACTIVITIES:

- Write a book review. Consider: Did you like the story? Why or why not? What would you change? [Activity Sheet 1](#)
- Imagine that Olivia had a different pet. For example, a cat or fish or maybe even a lizard, snake or spider! How would this change the story? What sorts of things might they do differently together? Write your new story! [Activity Sheet 2](#)
- Imagine that Olivia had a different pet. For example, a cat or fish or maybe even a lizard, snake or spider! How would this change the story? What sorts of things might they do differently together? Write your new story! [Activity Sheet 2](#)

DIARY AND JOURNAL WRITING:

- Even though Barkley is no longer able to chase the bad guys with Olivia, he is still with her in other ways. Imagine that you are Olivia. Write Barkley a letter and tell him all about what has happened since he has been gone. Think about the sorts of emotions Olivia feels, and the sorts of things she would like to tell her old friend, Barkley.

Begin your letter with, “Dear Barkley, I miss you lots and I have so much I want you to know...” [Activity Sheet 3](#)

- Imagine you are Spud and you have just been adopted by Olivia and her family. Write her a letter and tell her what it means to you to be welcome into her family home. Consider including what it felt like inside the shelter. Perhaps you could also include details about the day you were adopted, and how much your life has changed now.
Begin your letter with: “Dear Olivia, I want to tell you what it means to be to be adopted into a forever home...”
- Imagine you are Olivia. Write three separate diary entries. The first is from a typical day with Barkley before he gets sick. Next, write a diary entry dated just after Barkley has passed away. Finally, write a diary entry dated the day you find and adopt Spud.

DRAMA / DIALOGUE:

- Either by yourself or with a partner, imagine a conversation between Olivia and her mother. As Olivia’s mother, try and console Olivia. As Olivia, tell your mother about how you are feeling and why. Either write this dialogue on paper, or act this out with a partner.



TEACHER NOTES: Saying Goodbye to Barkley

HEALTH

- Olivia feels heartbroken when Spud can no longer play with her. Why?
- Discuss with students if they have ever experienced this sort of sadness. Not necessarily with the loss of a pet or loved one, but with an event that made them sad or distressed. For example, moving away from friends and/or family, or a friendship that ended. Ask the children: how did the children cope? Is there something they wish they knew that they know now that they can share to help others in a similar situation, or who are experiencing similar feelings?

THE ARTS

- Olivia is full of spunk, and we see this through her outfit. If you got to design a new outfit for Olivia that is suited to her personality, what items would you choose and why? Draw your new Olivia. [Activity Sheet 4](#)
- What are Endpapers? Draw your own endpapers for Saying Goodbye to Barkley.
- There are three parts to a narrative: Beginning, middle and end. These are sometimes called orientation, complication and resolution. Pick colours which represent each part of the story, and create an abstract piece of art that represents how each section made you feel using the colours you have chosen to correspond with each. Explain your choice.
- Olivia experiences different emotions throughout the story. If we ignore the words, and pay attention only to her body language, what can we learn? What does she do that shows us she is happy? Upset? Sad? Excited?
- Utilising your observations from above, create a character of your own!
 - Name your character.
 - Paint your character in three different postures; happy, sad and excited. Consider how these emotions differ and ensure to show these differences through your character's body language.

BOOK REVIEW

by -----



Devon Sillett & Nicky Johnston

Did you enjoy the book?
Score it out of 5 dogs.



What happened in the story?

Who are the characters?

What are the settings?

Draw Barkley



ALTERNATE STORY

by -----



Devon Sillett & Nicky Johnston

Did you enjoy the book?
Score it out of 5 dogs.



Imagine Olivia had a different pet. What would pet would you choose?

Blank writing area for the pet choice question.

What things would they do together?

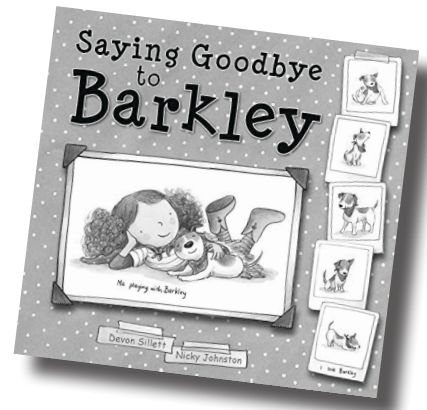
Blank writing area for the activities question.

What would the settings be?

Blank writing area for the settings question.

Draw Olivia's different pet

Saying Goodbye to Barkley

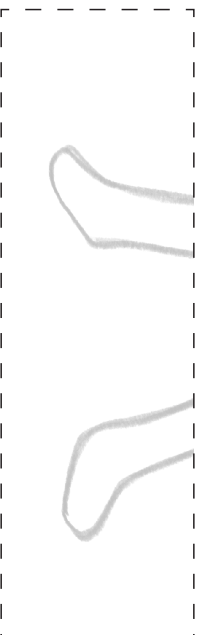
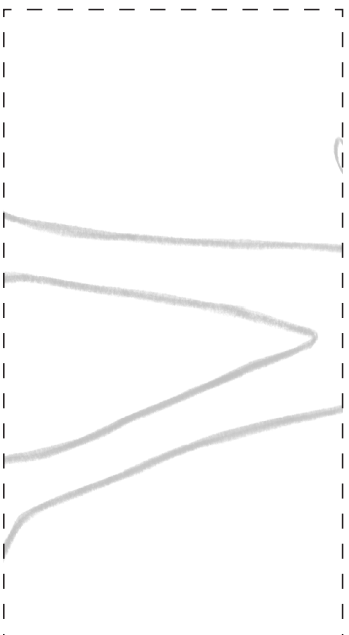
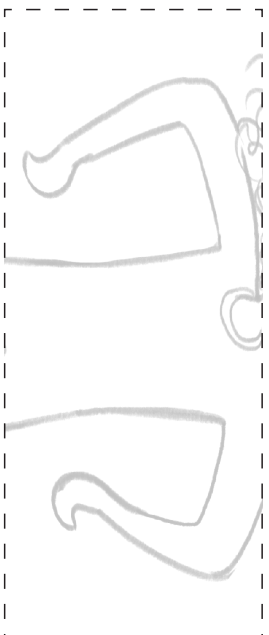
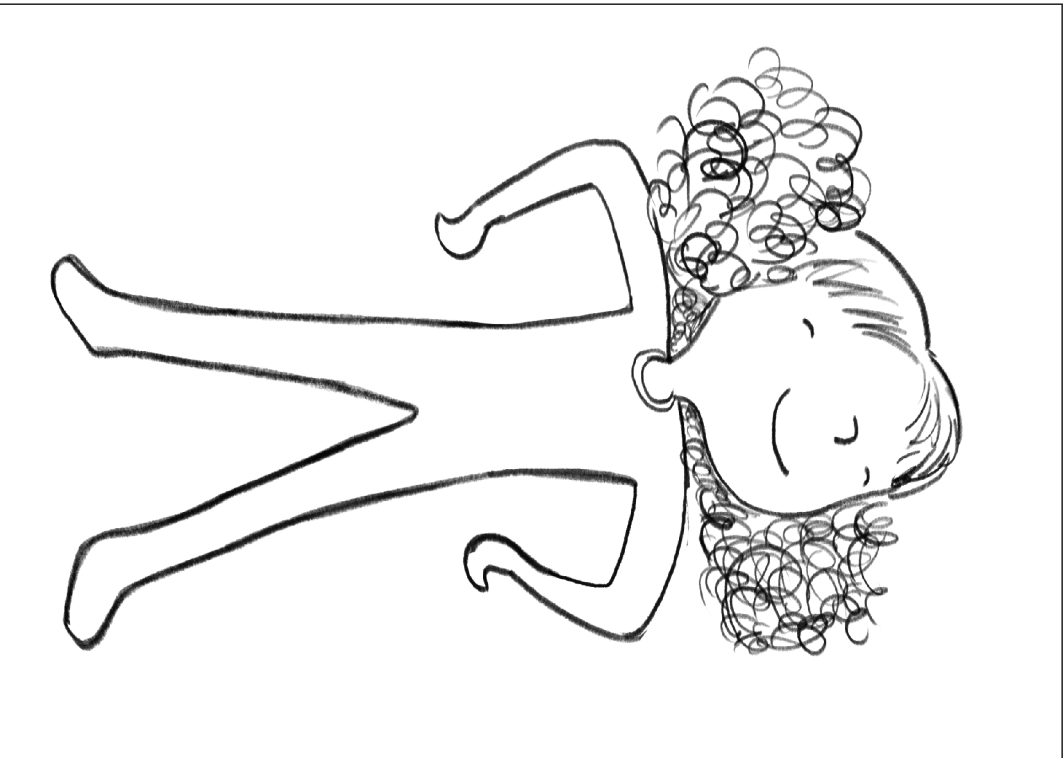


Write a Letter to Barkley

A large, hand-drawn rectangular frame with a jagged top edge, intended for writing a letter to Barkley.

Saying Goodbye to Barkley

Devon Sillett & Nicky Johnston



Design a new outfit
for Olivia.

What would you
choose and why?

Draw Olivia in her
new outfit, cut it out
and stick it on.

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Paul Russell & Nicky Johnston

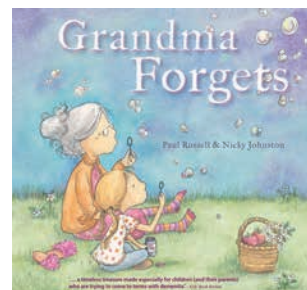
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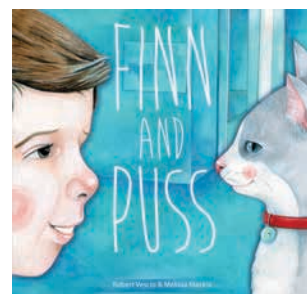
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