



**Wombat Books**  
Stories you'll want to share

# Teachers' Notes

## Heavy

Dannika Patterson / Davilyn Lynch

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Reading level: Ages 4 to 8 Picture Book

### Book Summary

The incredibly strong women in Nina's family do amazing things.

They piggyback polar bears and carry boa constrictors.

Every day, they pick up more and more.

The trouble is, they never put anything down!



Wombat Books, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413  
admin@wombatrhiza.com.au

Light the Dark Pty Ltd, Trading as Wombat Books

[www.wombatrhiza.com.au](http://www.wombatrhiza.com.au)

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## Reasons to Study

A light-hearted story about carrying heavy load and the strength in women and girls lifting each other up. *Heavy* is an anti-multitasking story for 4-8 year olds that advocates for lighter living and focusing on just one important thing at a time.

At the wild animal rescue centre run by her family of incredibly strong women, Nina watches as her older female relatives piggyback polar bears and carry boa constrictors.

Every day, they pick up more and more. But none of them will ever put anything down.

Seeing her family struggle, Nina is determined to find a way to show them that just because they can carry heavy things around all the time, doesn't mean they have to.

Will Nina's inventions help lighten their loads?

*Heavy* is an empowering picture book about the value of rest and the lovely lightness one family discovers when the youngest, Nina, suggests they could all do things a little bit differently.

## Themes

Family Thinking	Animal Care and Creative Problem solving	STEM (Engineering and Invention) solving	Multi-tasking	Critical Equity
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## About the Author:



Dannika Patterson is a Brisbane-based author of more than 12 books for children. She is also a workshop presenter, Mum and copywriter with degrees in Psychology and Journalism.

After a successful international career where she used her wordsmithing skills to help businesses tell their stories more effectively, Dannika discovered her heart's delight in writing stories and creating related workshops for children.

Dannika's writing & workshops aim to uplift, educate, empower and spark wonder for children. She hopes her picture books, like *Heavy*, are enjoyed by readers as fun stories to share in but may also serve as conversation starters for introducing bigger themes, helping to foster social and self-awareness and drive positive change in a gentle, joyful way.

Dannika's range of custom-created workshops for schools, libraries and writers festivals have stories at the centre and are enhanced by highly interactive STEAM (Science, Technology, English, Art and Math) elements, to help students make real-world and curriculum connections with themes and ideas in the text, bringing her books to life in meaningful ways.

Things Dannika can't get enough of include coffee, dogs, seashells and conversations with kids - they say the most inspiring, important and true things!

## Author Notes:

I have a daughter. Her name is Olivia. She is strong and curious and inventive. Quite a bit like the character of Nina in this book. Quite a bit like so many of the young girls I meet when I visit primary schools and kindergartens to share my books and workshops.

When I first started writing the story of *Heavy*, Olivia was 2. On publication (2023) she has just turned 8. All her life, I know that she has been watching me. Watching her aunts. Her grandmothers. Her teachers. And all the other women in her life. She has watched us all. Looking. Learning. Growing up and into all the different parts of herself. Moulding herself (mostly unconsciously, so far) through our modelling. Learning how to be a girl, and then a woman, in our world. As women, we pass so many things down through generations. Strengths and weaknesses, wisdom and superstitions, courage and fears, good habits and bad. We pass down countless lessons, from mother to daughter to granddaughter, not only through language and story, through showing and telling, but in other powerful and unspoken ways. Deep generational and societal patterns tend to be passed down through action. Or, inaction. Our daughters are always watching what we DO.

Young girls today are watching the women in their families take on a vast range and volume of physical tasks across home, social and/or workplace environments, as well as ever-increasing and often invisible mental loads.

Knowing this, I feel a deep responsibility to empower not only my daughter, but all the daughters of the world, from a very young age to know that they can BE whatever change they wish to see in our world. I want them to know that just because things have been done (or not done) a certain way in their family, or in wider society, that they do not have to follow and repeat...just because. If they can see a different, better, healthier way, I want young girls to have the confidence to apply their unique set of skills and strengths to make change and impact their lives and the lives of others, for the better. To deeply know that soft skills, like empathy and kindness, can and do exist alongside critical thinking, problem-solving and invention. To believe that though they may yet be physically small, their ideas are worthy and their impact can be mighty.

Since I was a young girl, one of my strengths has been storytelling. And this is still my tool of choice to create change and impact hearts and minds.

So, I set out to write a light-hearted story about carrying heavy loads and the strength to be found when women and girls find ways to lift each other up. An anti-multitasking story for 4-8 year olds that advocates for lighter living and focusing on just one important thing at a time. A story that shows that one young girl can use her powers of observation, critical thinking, problem-solving and inventiveness to create change, imagine a better way for things to be done, and execute her plan so that its ripple effects benefit many.

## About the Illustrator



Davilyn was born and raised in Melbourne, Australia, where she would spend most days drawing, escaping into a world of creativity and wonder. She grew up in an inspiring household surrounded by her father's abstract canvasses on every wall.

After the distractions of life, it wasn't until her first child came along that she rediscovered her love of drawing and decided to make it a major part of her life.

With the help and support of her husband and close friends she was able to make her dream a reality and became a full-time illustrator.

Davilyn is self-taught, letting her passion and creativity be her guide in the picture books she works on.

## Key Curriculum Areas:

### CURRICULUM AREAS AND KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### Foundation (Kindergarten/Prep)

##### English, Science, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

ACELT1575	ACELA1429	ACELA1434	ACELY1653
ACELT1577	ACELA1430	ACELA1786	ACELY1646
ACELT1783	ACELA1432	ACELY1651	
ACELT1578	ACELA1435	ACELY1652	
ACSSU004	ACSIS012	ACSIS233	
ACAVAN107	ACAVAM108		
ACHASSIO05			

#### Year One

##### English, Science, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1444	ACELA1451	ACELT1582	ACELY1656
ACELA1787	ACELA1452	ACELT1584	ACELY1788
ACELA1447	ACELA1458	ACELT1586	ACELY1660
ACELA1449	ACELT1581	ACELT1832	ACELT1581
ACSSU019	ACSIS213	ACHASSIO22	
ACAVAN107	ACAVAM108		

#### Year Two

##### English, Science, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1461	ACELA1463	ACELT1833	
ACELA1462	ACELT1591	ACELY1665	
ACSHE035	ACSIS041	ACHASSIO38	
ACAVAN107	ACAVAM108		

## Teaching Points and Activities

This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

### Knowledge and Literal Understanding

#### Pre-reading Questions

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask students if they can recognize the setting of this story from the cover image.

#### After-reading Questions

4. Ask students if Nina reminds them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
5. How does Nina change over the course of the story?
6. Ask students what they think of the story outcome. Do they agree with the ending?

## Discussion Questions

### STEM Concepts

- How do Nina's inventions help lighten the load her family carry? What could you invent to make a task in your daily life easier?

### Family

- There are different roles in families with different responsibilities. A mum has to do things differently to a child, a big brother has different responsibilities to a little brother. What role do you play in your family? Is there different roles depending on how old you are or who you are? How are some roles different from others?
- What's the difference between a grandma and a mum? Does being from an older generation change how you think and feel, and how you act? Is there expectations on roles like grandmas that are different from the expectations for a mum or an aunty?

### Animal Care

- Just like the animals in the story we all have special needs to keep us going. Besides food, water, and shelter, what are your special needs? Can you do them for yourself or do you need help?
- What do the animals in the Rescue Centre really need to be well cared for? Are they better off, worse off or just the same when you compare the care they receive at the beginning and end of this story?
- If you've taken in an animal out of the wild are you now responsible for caring for it? Why or why not?

### Critical Thinking and Creative Problem-Solving

- Partner up, together recap the story to each other and write down the shorter version. What bits of the story were so important you couldn't forget them?
- What is one time you have found a better way to do something? What skills did you use to observe the problem and then make changes?

### Equity

- No matter what kind of animal Nina is helping she makes sure they all have solutions and are cared for in their own specific ways based on their particular needs. This equality between the species is important. Why might it be important? Why would it be unfair if Nina treated

them differently based on species?

### Differentiation of concepts

- Need versus want - What do each of the animals in the story really need to be well looked after? Do you think the women in the story are doing more than fulfilling each of the animals true needs? Why? Write and discuss your answers to these questions in small groups or as a class.

### Multi-tasking versus Single task focus

- What do you think might happen if Nina's Mum, Aunt Penelope and Gran keep picking up, "more and more" responsibilities at the Animal Rescue Centre where they work, but don't ever put anything down? Think about the "loads" you carry and activities you do each day, between school and home and other hobbies. What would happen if you tried to do them ALL at once.
- Nina's sister is really good at ballet and is practicing all the time. Sometimes she tries to practice even when she should be focusing her attention on other important things, like eating and drinking. When was there a time you were practicing something and it got in the way? Is there a specific time for practicing? Is it more helpful to separate your skills and your tasks?
- Do you feel like you sometimes don't put anything down? Make a list of the 'things' you are carrying right now. They can be physical - like a backpack - or mental - like a big fight with mum, or forgetting to do your homework. Do you think you have too much on your plate? How can you put some of these things down?

### Vocabulary

- Find a word you aren't familiar with and look up the meaning. Try to use it in a sentence with a classmate or friend.
- In the book there are examples of alliteration. Things like 'piggybacking Pete the polar bear or 'keep Bob the baboon so beautifully balanced'. What is alliteration? Can you come up with some sentences that use alliteration too?



# Activities

## STEM Concepts

Collect a range of common household objects (think recyclables: milk bottle lids, empty cardboard boxes, shoelaces and paper towel rolls, etc). Plan/draw and label a sketch of your invention. Then, construct a model of an invention that would “lighten a load” (yours or someone else’s), using these recycled/upcycled materials. Explain how this invention could make someone’s load less “Heavy”, by saving time, energy, attention, etc.

Nina likes to use things like pulleys, levers, and catapults in her inventions. Think about these different types of mechanisms for use in your own inventions. What kinds of ways could you use them and how could they make things easier?

## Multi-tasking versus Single task focus

Make a list of 5 things that you’ll do today (e.g. eat breakfast, play sport, learn an instrument, walk your dog, learn math, write a story, dance lessons, etc...)

Draw a line that divides a blank page in half. Draw 2 pictures, once of each side. In the first picture, draw yourself doing these 5 things ALL at the same time. In the second picture, pick your favourite of the 5 activities and draw yourself just doing this activity. Look at your 2 pictures. Write down 3 describing words (adjectives) about how each picture makes you feel.

## Vocabulary

Read (or re-read) this story and identify 1 word you aren’t familiar with. It might be a word you have never heard before, or it might be a word you aren’t sure how to spell.

Write the word down 5 times. Look at the spelling. Think about or discuss the meaning with a partner, your teacher or a family member. Try to use the word as often as you can for the rest of the week, both written down in a sentence and in conversation. Make it FUN! E.g. “I am as hungry as a BOA CONSTRICTOR!” or “I want to roll around in a muddy puddle like a wild BOAR.” or “My coach finds it hard to WRANGLE my rugby team at training.”



Dannika Patterson is available for author talks and workshops. Contact Wombat Books for more information.

*Heavy Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.*

## Connect with Wombat Books

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# HEAVY

A CREATIVE WORKSHOP WITH  
AUTHOR DANNIKA PATTERSON

- U8 WEEK
- ITL'GIRLS DAY
- BOOK WEEK
- SCIENCE WEEK
- ANYTIME!

**Family - Mental Load - Engineering - Invention - Equity  
Problem Solving - Critical Thinking - Animal Care**

This cross-curriculum story-driven workshop is designed to provoke thought and open age-appropriate discussions about what can be a 'Heavy' topic: intergenerational and societal patterns of load carrying for women and girls. Some handy curriculum links are woven in too, like looking at levers, pulleys, catapults, loads & weight.

## IN THIS 1 HOUR WORKSHOP...

After reading mentor text *HEAVY*, Dannika will guide a gentle group discussion of the book's central themes and facilitate a fun hands-on craft activity and/or experiment using upcycled, recycled (and optionally edible!) materials to help students make relevant real-world connections.

**Age Range: Ideal for Prep - Year 6.**

**Can be adapted for high school & adult audiences.**



**BOOKING ENQUIRIES - DANNIKAPATTERSON@GMAIL.COM OR 0413 449 428**