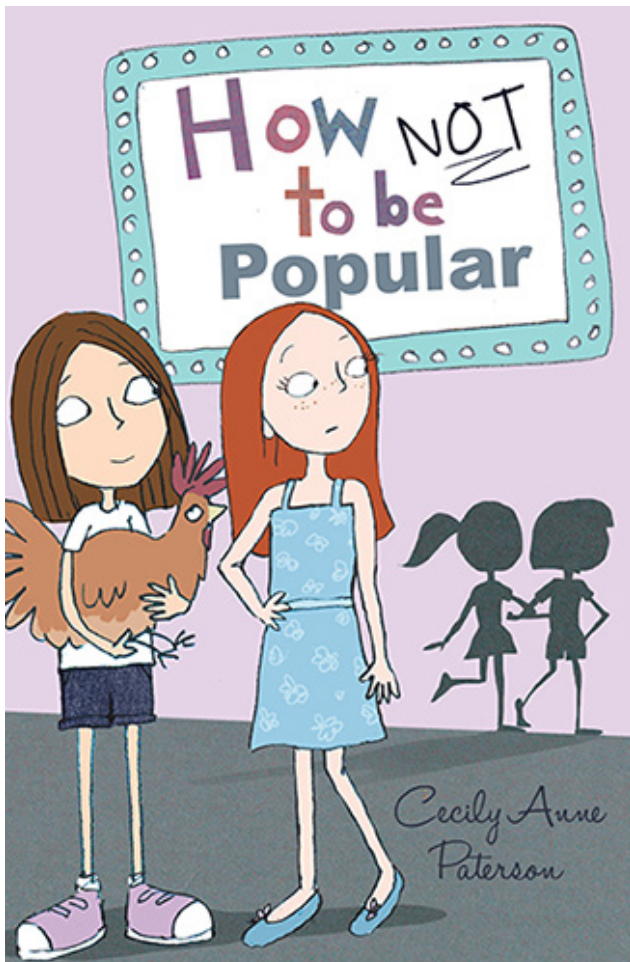




**Wombat Books**  
Stories you'll want to share

## Teacher's notes



### How Not to be Popular

Cecily Anne Paterson

ISBN: 9781925563443

Recommended retail: \$18.99

Reading level: Age 10+

### Book summary

Maddie tries to be nice to everyone. Even weird, chicken-obsessed Thalia. But she'd way prefer to hang out with the cool K-girls at school.

The only problem is they don't seem interested in her, at least not until the Year 6 camp. That's when Maddie has a decision to make: how far will she go to be popular? Will she be able to live with the guilt when she finally has everything she's been hoping for?

Follow Maddie's hilarious antics with chickens, secrets and undies in the latest adventure at Kangaroo Valley Public School.

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### Why study this book?

Bullying and friendship are two major issues pre-teens encounter as they figure out who they want to be. Maddie's struggles to decide who her true friends are and how she wants to fit in showcase these concerns. This book ties in well with the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence schools take part in. We see Maddie trying to make amends for an action she feels guilty about, a positive message to send, as well as having the courage to admit fault. Curriculum connections also exist with English, HASS and HPE, focusing on interactions in different social contexts as well as the effect of emotional responses on relationships.

### Themes

- **Honesty and integrity**
- **Bullying**
- **Guilt and shame**
- **Kindness and inclusiveness**
- **Friendship**

## About the author



Cecily Anne Paterson grew up as an Aussie kid in Pakistan where she went to boarding school in the Himalayan mountains for five years. She lives in Kangaroo Valley NSW, right opposite Kangaroo Valley Public School. Maddie and Ava are based on a set of red-headed sisters who live there.

Cecily is married with four children and a very cuddly dog. She likes reading, craft and playing the cello. Cecily focuses on stories about girls and their friendships because she was bullied in Year 6 and felt friendless for an entire year. She likes to help girls discover their voice, understand their relationships and feel that they are not alone.

Cecily's books have been shortlisted and won places in both the CALEB and SparkLit writing awards, and her first teen novel, *Invisible*, was a semi-finalist in the Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award in 2014.

Cecily loves to hear from readers! Send her an email at [www.cecilypaterson.com/contact](http://www.cecilypaterson.com/contact). Get news about new stories, freebies and book recommendations from Cecily Anne Paterson by signing up at [www.cecilypaterson.com/intheloop](http://www.cecilypaterson.com/intheloop).

## Author interview

### 1. What even is 'being popular'?

I think being popular is another way to say 'being socially powerful in a pleasant way'. Some kids seem to instinctively understand how to get other people to do what they want, even from a very young age. Some kids can do this. Some learn to do it. Others can't do it at all. Even though we might think 'lucky them', it's not necessarily all roses for the socially powerful kids. Their true character may not be recognised or shaped by parents and teachers because of their natural charm.

### 2. Why do you think National Day Against Bullying and Violence is important?

Bullying and violence can wreck your life. It can reduce someone who is confident, capable and happy to a person who thinks they don't deserve to be loved or valued, and that they have nothing to offer the world. People who get bullied don't deserve it. It's never about them – it's always about someone else's bad behaviour and misuse of power. But when people work together for good, they can do amazing things.

### 3. Why is this book a great resource for guardians and teachers?

*How Not to be Popular* provides jumping-off points for discussion with girls and boys about relationships, bullying, popularity and how we treat people. They can read the dialogue, analyse what's going on and discuss the things that are said, the things that aren't said and the things that should have been said. It's great for teaching and reflecting on empathy and kindness, truth-telling and honesty.

## Questions and reflections

1. What does being inclusive of others really mean?
2. Is it okay to ignore someone if you'd prefer to be with other people?
  - Do you have to be friends with everyone?
3. How do you know who your real friends are?
4. Read page 34–39, where Maddie agreed to steal the undies, and page 43–45, when she did it.
  - Who was really to blame for the undies-stealing incident?
  - Why do you think this?
  - Would you have made the same decision as Maddie?
5. Read page 126–129, where Maddie's friends confront her at the vegetable garden.
  - Were they bullying Maddie?
  - Why or why not?
6. Do you think it mattered that Maddie finally confessed to stealing Tahlia's undies?
  - Would you have done the same thing?
7. Maddie talks about guilt being like a dark cloud (page 61), a heavy bag (page 163), or a "cold black slime crawling around my insides" (page 77).
  - What words would you use to describe the feeling of guilt?
8. Why do some kids get left out or excluded more than other kids?
  - What could happen to change this?
9. Why do you think it's so important to kids to be part of a friendship group?
  - How important is it to you?
10. Ava says to Maddie "You care so much" (page 106).
  - What does she mean?
  - Do you think it's true?
11. Maddie's mum says their Aunty Louise "had time for absolutely everybody" (page 42).
  - What does that mean?
  - Do you know somebody like that?
  - Would you like to be a person like that?
12. What did Maddie learn over the course of the story?
13. Why did Tahlia seem so different during the shopping trip?
14. Why do you think Tahlia likes chickens so much?

15. What have you learned from reading this story?
16. Were you happy with the way the book finished?
  - What would you have liked to see happen to Maddie?
17. What are the differences between Maddie and her sister?
  - Who do you think would be the better friend?

## Activities

- Put yourself in the picture – what would you want to say about bullying? Use the worksheet below to add in a photo of yourself and fill out the speech bubble. Alternatively, use an app with that capability.
- Redefine the definition of bullying based on what you think it means. You can present your response in whatever form you like: a dance (like Maddie), a rap/poem, a script for a play or video, or an artwork.
- Research the pecking order of chickens. Answer the following reflection questions.
  - What are the different roles in a chicken's pecking order?
  - Do you see similarities between the social dynamics of chickens and children in the playground?
  - What role do you think Maddie is in? What role do you think she wants to be in?

## Key curriculum areas

### Year 5 English

ACELA1501

ACELA1797

ACELA1512

ACELT1610

ACELY1698

ACELY1699

### Year 5 HASS

ACHASSI102

ACHASSK118

### Years 5-6 HPE

ACPPS051

ACPPS055

ACPPS056

ACPPS059

ACPPS060

### Year 6 English

ACELA1515

ACELA1516

ACELA1518

ACELA1520

ACELT1613

ACELY1801

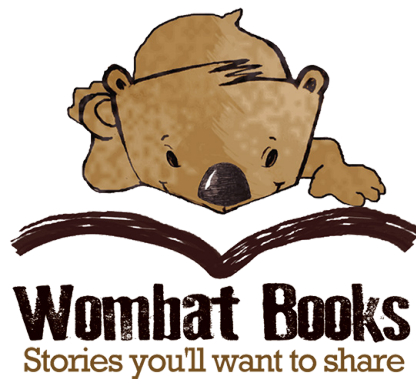


# PUT YOURSELF IN THE PICTURE

What do you want to say about bullying?

Write your response here...

Put your  
photo here



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