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# Teachers' Notes

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## A ROOM FOR RYEL

Emma Cameron

ISBN: 9781761111358

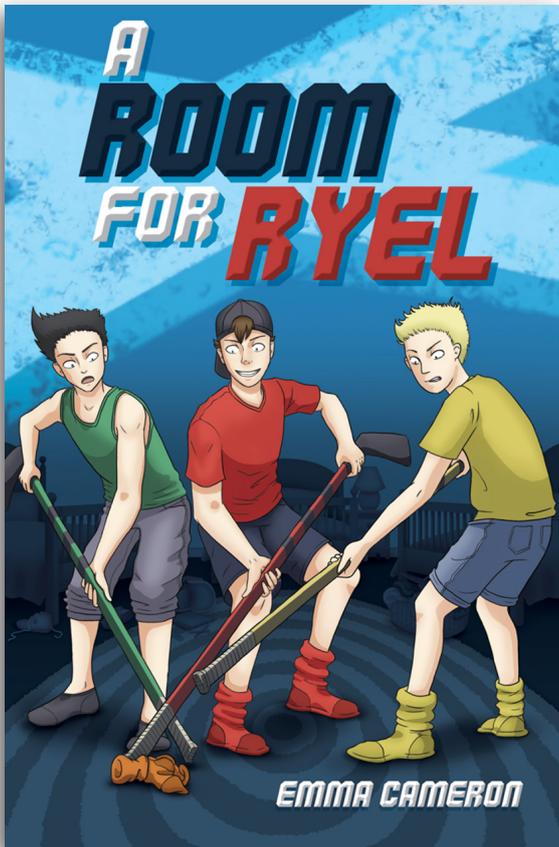
Recommended retail: \$14.99

Reading level: 7 to 12

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### BOOK SUMMARY

When Ryel and his dad blend their family in three bedroom house with Lonnie and her two sons Darcy and Harry, Ryel finds himself having to share a room. Luckily, the annual sockey tournament at school is coming up and the boys make a deal. Whoever ranks the highest in the competition gets the empty room all to himself.



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### THEMES

Family • Friendship • Community • Compromise • Change •  
Gratitude • Confidence • Taking Responsibility • Perception of others

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Light the Dark Pty Ltd, Trading as Wombat Books  
Wombat Books, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413

ABN: 30 137 345 941  
admin@wombathriza.com.au

**Emma Cameron is available for author talks and workshops.  
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*Room for Ryel 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.*



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Emma Cameron delights in standing barefoot on floorboards warmed by sunlight, knows the joy of growing sunflowers alongside blueberries, and believes that cooking for others is a privilege. She is an internationally published author living on the NSW South Coast. Her novels have received recognition in the Global Read Aloud, Sakura Medal, and Children’s Book Council of Australia Book Week Awards. They also appear on the Premier’s Reading Challenge lists. Besides writing, Emma enjoys wearing her manuscript assessor, editor and coaching hats to help others with their literary endeavours. She often ponders a lot without concluding anything, always feels a jolt inside when a bird flies into a windowpane, hopes the sky never falls down and is more than happy to be contacted at [emmacameron.com.au](http://emmacameron.com.au)

### AUTHOR NOTES

I wanted Ryel’s story to be relatable and used a blended family situation as this is something that many children must navigate. I allowed Ryel to be a gentle character, as I felt it was important for readers to be able to see themselves in him. Not every child causes a fuss when things aren’t as they want them to be. By using characters who actually got on well in a school and social setting, I was able to tip their world up when they had to live together. This meant the narrative still held a protagonist with a problem and goal, while the plot contained an everyday exploration of people as they manage changes that life brings. Ryel’s reflective nature demonstrated how we can be thoughtful about others while still trying to achieve what we want to.

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## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

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A story of adapting to change, coming to terms with a new family and learning to compromise. Many children have their families change, grow and sometimes blend with a new one. By tackling these themes and issues at a child-friendly level this story aims to help children grasp and tackle with the impact and effect of new family dynamics.

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

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Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes.

### YEAR TWO

English, Humanities and Social Sciences

ACELT1589	ACELT1591	ACELY1665	ACELA1462
ACELY1668	ACELY1670	ACHASSI038	ACHASSI041

### YEAR THREE

English

ACELT1594	ACELT1596	ACELT1599	ACELT1600
ACELY1675	ACELY1676	ACELY1678	ACELY1680

### YEAR FOUR

English

ACELA1490	ACELT1602	ACELT1603	ACELT1605
ACELY1692			

### YEAR FIVE

English

ACELT1609	ACELT1610	ACELT1795	ACELY1699
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## TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

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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

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### 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

1. Ask students if Ryel or his friends remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps?
2. How do Ryel and his friends change over the course of the story? See if you can use descriptive words to explain the change, e.g. confident, involved, thoughtful, energetic
3. Is there anything about Ryel's story that resonated with the students? Perhaps they've been in similar situations, or also have a blended family.
4. Ask students what Ryel's situation was. Does he overcome the challenges in the end?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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### GENERAL

- Which character do you relate to most: Ryel, Darcy, Harry, Bella, someone else? Do you find you have interests in sports? School? Specific classes?
- Imagine the story from the character's perspective that you most relate to, who is it? How does that change the story?
- If you could pick anyone else and read the story from their perspective who do you think it would be? Why? What special view would they bring to the story?
- Do you play lots of sports? What problems do you imagine you could fix with sports just like Ryel does? If you're not into sports is there something else you could substitute like music or science that you could use to help solve a problem with friends?

### FAMILY

- Ryel belongs to a blended family. Do you belong to or know of others who belong to a blended family?
- Each character in Ryel's new family deals with change differently. Choose two characters from Ryel's family and compare their varied responses to their situation.
- Can you think of some reasons why they may have different responses?
- When Ryel and Bella work on stories they've written, their conversation shows that these reflect their individual circumstances. Examine Chapter Seven and find some similarities between their own lives and what they've written.
- Ryel goes from being a family of two to being a family of five. Do you know people whose families have grown quickly overnight because parents get remarried? It goes both ways, do you know someone whose family has shrunk? What impact can this have on people and their feelings?
- Harry and Darcy are not related to Ryel but they still become one family. What makes a family? Is it only dependent on blood relations? Are you, or any of your friends or cousins, part of a family that is part of a blended family? How do you decide who is family?
- A functioning family needs lots of structure and work to be successful. Just like in Ryel's family where Lonnie doesn't go to work every day but then has other things to do around the house. What jobs do you have in the house to help your family function? Do you do the dishes? Walk the dog? Do you have an older sibling who does more or less? What about younger? Is your job to do homework still and focus on school?
- Ryel leaves all his things inside one day when he gets locked out of the house and misses the bus because he can't sleep. He blames the twins for leaving him at home but it turns out they called him and he didn't get up. Do you have any siblings you have fought with before school? Do they sometimes get in the way of your morning routine? How does your morning routine work with your family? How do they help you get ready? Get in your way?

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## WRITING

- Explain how and why is imagery used at the beginning and end of the story? Now, use imagery to describe a place that is special to you.
- Identify whose point of view (POV) the story is written in, and attempt to write the story from a different POV: Roy's wife, daughter, Rusty the dog, even Roy.
- Get students to choose a scene and rewrite it using dialogue.
- Ask students to work in groups or pairs to create an Acrostic Poem using emotion words such as: HAPPY, FRIGHTENED, BRAVE, LOYAL, PATIENT. Share with the class and compare.
- Write a book review of the story.
- Interview a parent or grandparent and chronicle key moments from their lives in a written memoir. Alternatively, students could record a podcast.

## FRIENDSHIP

- Ryel learns that the girl he initially called 'Bossy Bella' isn't as bossy as he thought she was and that she actually has some great qualities. Has there ever been someone you underestimated before you got to know them? Did that change with time?
- Harry, Darcy, and Ryel find that even though they make great friends at school it's different and harder trying to live together. Are there fights you have with friends that would be worse if you lived together? Do you have siblings? Have you fought with them? Are there more intense fights with your siblings than with your friends? Why is that?
- Ryel misses having his own space without friends, do you with your friends lived with you? How would your life be different if you lived with your friends?

## COMMUNITY

- Ryel's class presentation about what is essential to human survival explores why humans need one another. Can you see how they arrived at the conclusions that they arrived at?
- Think about Heath and the neighbour who checks on him when he is obviously unwell. Then look at how this ties in with the class presentation. Do you think seeing Heath helped Ryel contribute to the class presentation? Do you think the class presentation contributed to Ryel's awareness of Heath's needs?
- Bella's family circumstances could seem to impact on her community interaction, leaving her isolated in some ways. Discuss ways that Bella may miss out on community interaction. If you find this difficult, consider things the other kids do that Bella doesn't do.
- Do you know anybody like Heath or Bella? Do you think that they miss out on community interaction?

## COMPROMISE

- At the end of Chapter Two, once Ryel, Harry and Darcy agree to all share the same room, the chapter ends with the question What could possibly go wrong? While this prepares readers to see things go wrong, did you still believe Ryel could get a room of his own?

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- During the Sockey Tournament, Lonnie says 'we can't all be winners.' Though this reminds readers that Ryel could still loose, did you give up hope that he might get a room to himself?
  - At the end, were you surprised to see that Ryel did not get what he really wanted? When Darcy reveals why he wasn't cheering for Ryel to win, were you as shocked as Ryel was to learn that Darcy preferred to share a room with Ryel rather than Harry? Do you think that the resolution was a suitable compromise?
  - Ryel has to compromise on room space when he first moves into the house with Harry and Darcy. Do you have to share your room? Have you on holidays maybe? How is sharing a room different than having your own?
  - Ryel learns that going from a family of two to a family of 5 is a big change and that means sometimes he has to make changes. When was the last time you had to make changes to accommodate for your family? Does your family compromise often? How does compromise make you all happier when you do it?
  - Not only does Ryel learn how to compromise when sharing the rooms, he also does not win the Sockey Tournament at the end. This might make it seem like Ryel gets the short straw with the compromise. Do you always get the best of a compromise? Do you sometimes have to be okay with that? How does this affect if and when you choose to compromise? Is compromising a worthwhile skill to help you keep friends and family?

## CHANGE

- Ryel experiences a big change when him and his dad move into the new house. He is uprooted from his regular bus route, his usual weekend plans, and his own bedroom. When was the last time you experienced a big change in your schedule? How did the new change affect your regular routine? Do you like regular routine?
- When Ryel first goes through these changes he doesn't adapt well, he can't sleep and he misses the bus a lot. Does change through you out of whack? How can you get used to new change when it happens? What strategies do you have to make sure you can handle change?

## GRATITUDE

- Though Ryel really wants his own room, he's grateful for some aspects of the change that sharing a home with others brings to him. Find three things in the text that may indicate that Ryel is pleased about the new situation.
- On page 17, Lonnie says, 'This is my idea of heaven. All of us together sharing our day and the food I've made.' Think about your own life and list three things that you are grateful for.
- What happens in a story can convey a message. What message or messages do you think A Room For Ryel conveys? What parts of the narrative support your opinion?

## CONFIDENCE

- Ryel has to play in the final in front of the whole school and loses his socks. Then he gets to use the magic first ever winning sockey socks, but in the end he doesn't win. Do you think the socks were magic? Do you think he made it all up in his head? Why would Ryel believing in magic socks help him

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to win?

- Through the book, Ryel learns to rely on his friend to help lift him up. In the end of the book, they all sit together and cheer for each other to help. Have you ever had people cheer for you when you're doing something? How does support help you feel more confident? Is confidence important when you're performing in front of lots of people?

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

- When Ryel misses the bus for the last time his teacher tells him she understands things have been hard but he needs to start being in charge of himself. What is something you are in charge of making sure gets done? Does it help just you or your family and friends as well? Did you find your first bit of responsibility too hard to handle?
- Lastly, when Ryel and Darcy lose the room to Harry, Darcy tries to weasel his way into the room. Ryel tells Darcy that they made the deal so they have to live with the consequences. Did you ever agree to something but not want to deal with the consequences? Did you just have to deal with it in the end? What did you learn from that experience?

## PERCEPTION OF OTHERS

- Early in the story, Ryel refers to Bella as Painful One. Throughout the plot, there are times he learns more about her and comes to see her in a different light. Find three places in the text where Ryel notices something that contributes to changing his perception of her.
- When Ryel's perception changed as he learnt something new about Bella, did your perception of her also alter? By helping you travel alongside Ryel as his story unfolded, do you believe that the author helped you change your perception in the same way that Ryel did?
- Our perception and how we view things can affect how we feel about a situation. Think about something that you may have changed your mind about in your own life, based on learning new information.

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## ACTIVITIES

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### SOCKEY PLAY

Sockey is an invented game with hockey sticks, a hoop on the ground, and some goals at both ends.

- Sit down with a partner or some friends and try to invent your own game? How can you combine a couple different sports to invent something new? Go with the class to the PE department and use the tools you can find there to try to play the sport.
- Once the sport has been trialled sit down and reflect with your friends, how did your sport go? Did you have to make changes to your game on the spot to make it work? Do you think other people would be interested in playing it?
- Use whatever format you like to advertise the Sockey Tournament. This could be a radio recording, a film for television, a brochure, poster, or anything else you can think of. Be sure to include information about the game celebrating its 50th anniversary and use persuasive language to entice people to attend the event.
- Create your own game and write a set of instructions. Make sure it includes clear steps that appear in the appropriate order. Remember to use specific verbs to help people understand what's required of them. Also use diagrams to help people understand how to play.
- Make a poster for your sport as if you were holding your own sockey competition? How do you make sure all the important aspects of the sport are represented in your poster? How do you make it interesting?

### WRITE FROM NEW PERSPECTIVES

- Choose two characters in the story and write a diary note from each of their viewpoints to show how they perceive a situation differently to each other.
- *A Room for Ryel* and the story he writes in the novel both incorporate aspects of the fairytale Cinderella. Write your own short story by using a classic fairytale and place it in your world.
- Pick one of the twins and rewrite the story from their perspective. How do they feel about Ryel moving in? Does Ryel disrupt their way of living? Do they think they can win the sockey competition? How do they prepare?

### SIMILAR CHARACTERS

Some of the characters in *A Room For Ryel* are similar to those in Cinderella. Draw a line from the Cinderella characters on the left to the character they match up to in the list of those in *A Room For Ryel* on the right.

Cinderella	Lonnie
Stepsister 1	Mr Creswell
Stepsister 2	Ryel
Stepmother	Darcy
Fairy godmother	Bella's Bike
Stage Coach	Harry

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## WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

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B I K E O O A E H R Y O E R M  
N I G E E N Y A N V V E S L O  
O M C J E O R E A W I O R E T  
T L A E C R T T L N C C I I T  
R L L N Y T C R N K H E M I C  
U E A N M M E O E C A T A N B  
B W R A S N L Y C U R E S D G  
R S A R N I F C M P L Y N A N  
M E M I A E T E W C I L H R O  
X R W T L I N N A T E D E C L  
H C D L L E Y R O A O N Y Y S  
E R A R E I E E L T S I H W M  
A M T D B E E N I S U O M I L  
T X A V I E R J L I A R C N E  
H D D A D T N E M A N R U O T

RYEL	DAD	LONNIE	MS LONGBOTTOM
HARRY	DARCY	BELLA	MR CRESWELL
SAMIR	ELEENA	JENNA	SOCKEYFELLA
NAT	PUCK	XAVIER	TOURNAMENT
BIKE	LIMOUSINE	HEATH	MRS MCTAVY

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