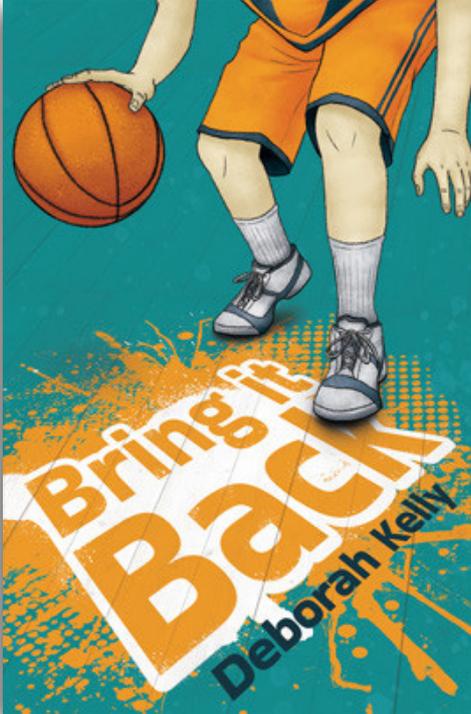

Teachers' Notes



BRING IT BACK

Deborah Kelly

ISBN: 9781761113635

Reading level: Reading age of 8 +, Interest age 10+

BOOK SUMMARY

It's the last term of primary school and Liam is bored with the same faces, places and lunches—even basketball.

When a new student named Clint arrives, things become much more interesting. Soon, Liam is taking risks and bending the rules and even has a haircut just like Clint. Liam's mates are acting weird, though. And Mum keeps asking if he's OK. His teacher even has 'a word' with him. Liam wishes they would leave him alone and let him grow up. He's going to high school next year!

But when Liam finds himself in serious trouble, he realises how far he's drifted from the things and the people he loves. But just like a game of basketball that's heading south, can he bring it back?

THEMES

Friendship and Peer Influence • Identity and Growing Up •

Choices, Consequences, and Integrity • Belonging, Empathy, and Second Chances •

CONTENTS

Book Summary.....	1
Themes.....	1
About the Author.....	3
Overview.....	4
Discussion Questions.....	6
Classroom Activities.....	7
Key Curriculum Areas.....	9

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Rhiza Edge, PO Box 302, Chinchilla, Queensland 4413 admin@wombathriza.com.au

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Bring It Back 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



Deb Kelly is a multi-award winning, internationally published author of picture books, junior fiction, middle grade and young adult titles. She has also published poetry and material for the educational market. Her books include the *Ruby Wishfingers* series, *Dinosaur Disco*, *Little Horses*, *The Doll Box* and *The Thing about Oliver* which was recently included on the NSW school's curriculum. Deb is passionate about literacy and enjoys visiting schools, libraries and festival events to share her books with children. She has a degree in marine science and recently completed a Bachelor of Speech Pathology at the University of Newcastle.

AUTHOR NOTES

The book was inspired by my children's and my own experience of that significant last year of primary school where we go from being a big fish in a small pond, to the prospect of starting high school and all the excitement and anxieties that come with it. It is also a time where we discover more about ourselves and start to define our own personal boundaries. I hope that the book helps kids to trust their own inner compass. To know that it's ok to experiment and make mistakes because that's where we learn more about ourselves and that it is never too late to put wrongs right again. Leading by example can even help others to make better choices too.

On a trip to Melbourne a few years ago, my daughter and I did a street art tour where I discovered a whole new world and looked at graffiti in a new light. We even saw an original Banksy in one of the laneways. I also had to do a bit of research about basketball- not just the rules of the game itself but also the colloquial language and terms used by young people.

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OVERVIEW

MAIN CHARACTER

Liam is in his final year of primary school and feels caught between childhood and the independence of high school. Surrounded by familiar routines — basketball with his friends, school with the same classmates, and his mum’s affectionate nickname “LeeLee” — Liam begins to feel restless and eager to prove he is growing up.

When a new student, Clint, arrives at school, Liam is drawn to his confidence and rebellious attitude. Clint seems exciting and different, and Liam quickly finds himself trying to impress him; copying his haircut, bending school rules, and distancing himself from the friends he once spent all his time with.

At first, the risks feel thrilling. But as Clint’s behaviour becomes more serious, Liam starts to experience a “niggly feeling” that something isn’t right. When their graffiti prank leads to real consequences and Liam is forced to take responsibility, he begins to realise how far he has drifted from the people and values that matter most to him.

With the support of his mum, his teacher and the kindness of his neighbour Mr Lovegrove, Liam begins to repair the damage he has caused. Through reflection and honest conversation, he learns that growing up is not about rejecting the people who care about you, but about learning to make choices that reflect who you truly want to be. Liam’s journey is one of self-discovery: from seeking approval and excitement to understanding responsibility, friendship and personal integrity.

Liam’s Strengths	Liam’s Weaknesses
Loyal: Liam cares deeply about his friends and family.	Easily Influenced: He is eager to impress Clint and follow his lead.
Thoughtful: He reflects on his choices and feels genuine guilt when he does wrong.	Insecure: Liam worries about being seen as childish or uncool.
Responsible: When things go wrong, he eventually chooses to make things right.	Avoidant: At first he struggles to admit the truth about Clint’s involvement.
Empathetic: He recognises Clint’s artistic talent and later helps him belong.	Impulsive: He sometimes acts before thinking about the consequences.

OTHER CHARACTERS

Barry (Baz): Barry is Liam’s best friend and a steady presence in his life. Loyal and straightforward, Barry values honesty and friendship above popularity. When Liam begins spending more time with Clint and pulling away from the group, Barry feels hurt and confused. His reaction reflects how deeply he cares about their friendship. Barry represents the importance of standing by your values, even when friends make difficult choices.

Sam & Amir: Sam and Amir are part of Liam’s close friendship group and share his love of basketball. They notice Liam’s behaviour changing and become concerned about Clint’s influence. While they do not confront Liam as directly as Barry does, they represent the quiet disappointment that can occur when friendships strain.

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Clint: Clint is the new student who disrupts Liam's familiar world. Confident, rebellious and creatively talented, Clint quickly attracts Liam's admiration. However, Clint also challenges rules and boundaries, leading Liam into situations that make him uncomfortable. Beneath his tough exterior, Clint struggles to find a place where he belongs. His talent for art ultimately becomes a bridge toward acceptance and connection.

Amber: Amber is a classmate who is rude and dismissive of the people around her, in particular Liam and his friends. Although she is often not a nice person, her role in the story demonstrates how no one deserves to be targeted with hurtful or dangerous actions (even if intended as a joke).

Mr Roberts: Mr Roberts is Liam's teacher and represents the adult authority within the classroom. While Clint dismisses him as "lame," Mr Roberts remains attentive to the changing behaviour among his students. His conversations with Liam reflect the role teachers play in guiding students through moments of uncertainty and growth.

Mr Speers: Mr Speers, the school principal, must respond to the graffiti incident when Mr Lovegrove contacts the school. Though firm in applying consequences, he also allows Liam the opportunity to make amends rather than immediately involving the police. Mr Speers demonstrates that discipline can also include opportunities for learning and responsibility.

Mr Lovegrove: Mr Lovegrove is Liam's elderly neighbour who has always been kind to Liam and his mother, often sharing homemade jam from his garden. When Liam vandalises his fence, the moment becomes particularly painful because of the trust between them. Mr Lovegrove's willingness to allow Liam to repair the damage instead of pressing charges highlights the power of forgiveness and community understanding.

Liam's mum: Liam's mum is caring, perceptive and supportive, even when Liam makes mistakes. Although she worries about his behaviour, she approaches the situation with patience rather than anger. Her conversation with Liam after his suspension helps him reflect on his choices and understand that growing up means finding his own boundaries and values. She represents the importance of family support during moments of personal growth.

MESSAGE OF THE NOVEL

Bring it Back explores the challenges of growing up and learning who you want to be. As Liam prepares to leave primary school and move into a new stage of life, he experiences the uncertainty that comes with wanting independence while still needing guidance from others.

The story shows how easily people can be influenced by those around them, especially when they are searching for belonging. Liam succumbs to the usual influences of peer pressure present in this age group, and as he comes to grips with his mistakes he shows how one can listen to their own sense of right and wrong. What matters most is the courage to acknowledge them, make things right, and move forward with a stronger sense of who you are.

At its heart, the novel is about friendship, accountability and second chances. Everyone makes mistakes. But Liam learns that real maturity is not about breaking away from the people who care about you, but about taking responsibility for your actions and repairing the relationships that matter most.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FRIENDSHIP AND PEER INFLUENCE

1. Why does Liam become interested in Clint so quickly when he first arrives at school?
2. How does Liam's behaviour change when he starts spending more time with Clint? Give examples from the story.
3. Why are Barry, Sam, and Amir worried about Liam? What signs do they notice?
4. What does Barry mean when he thinks Liam is becoming like Clint? Do you think he is right? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think Liam wants Clint to like him so much?
6. How can friends influence the choices we make, both positively and negatively?
7. At the end of the story, how does the friendship group change? What helps repair the friendships?

IDENTITY AND GROWING UP

1. At the beginning of the story, Liam feels bored with primary school. Why do you think he feels this way?
2. Why does Liam decide to copy Clint's haircut and style? What might this say about how he sees himself?
3. How does Liam feel about his mum calling him "LeeLee"? How do those feelings change during the story?
4. Liam says he doesn't want people to think he's a baby anymore. What do you think "growing up" means to him?
5. Do you think trying new things is an important part of growing up? Why or why not?
6. What moments in the story help Liam start to understand who he wants to be?
7. By the end of the book, what do you think Liam has learned about himself?

CHOICES, CONSEQUENCES, AND INTEGRITY

1. Liam often feels a "niggly feeling" in his stomach. What do you think this feeling represents?
2. Why does Liam go along with Clint's ideas even when he feels uncomfortable?
3. What are the consequences of the graffiti incident for Liam?
4. Why does Liam refuse to tell the principal that Clint was involved? Do you think this was the right choice? Why or why not?
5. What does Liam do to try to make things right after the graffiti incident?
6. Why do you think Mr Lovegrove gives Liam the chance to fix the fence instead of going to the police?
7. What does the story show about how people can take responsibility for their mistakes?

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BELONGING, EMPATHY, AND SECOND CHANCES

1. Why might Clint act the way he does when he first arrives at the school?
2. How do the other students react to Clint at the start of the story?
3. What does Liam notice about Clint's talent for art? How does this change the way he sees him?
4. Why does Liam suggest that Clint paint a mural for the school?
5. How does the mural help Clint feel like he belongs?
6. What role do forgiveness and second chances play in the story?
7. How can recognising someone's strengths help them feel included?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

THE "NIGGLY FEELING" DECISION CHART

Discuss the "niggly feeling" Liam experiences when he knows something is wrong.

Students create a decision chart with three columns: Situation, Possible Choices, Possible Consequences. Go through scenarios and think through your choices and the consequences.

Example scenarios:

- A friend asks you to lie for them.
- You see someone being bullied.
- You accidentally break something that isn't yours.
- A friend encourages you to break a rule.
- Students work in pairs or groups to fill out the chart.

Reflection questions:

- Why do we sometimes ignore our "niggly feeling"?
- How can we make better choices when we feel unsure?

IDENTITY SHIELD

Students create a personal identity shield divided into four sections.

Sections might include: Something I'm good at, Something important to me, A value I believe in (e.g., honesty, kindness), A goal for the future

Students decorate their shields and share them in small groups.

Connection to the story: Discuss how Liam struggles with figuring out who he wants to be and how everyone develops their identity over time.

GRAFFITI VS. ART DEBATE

Hold a class debate.

Topic: "Graffiti is always vandalism."

Divide the class into two sides:

- Agree
- Disagree

Students prepare arguments using examples from the story.

Discussion points might include:

- When does graffiti become art?
- Why was Clint's mural accepted but the fence graffiti wasn't?
- Who should decide what belongs in public spaces?

COMPLIMENT BASKETBALL

Students sit or stand in a circle with a basketball.

When a student receives the ball, they say:

- One thing they appreciate about themselves.
- One positive quality about the person they pass the ball to.

Example: "I like that I am creative. I'm passing the ball to Alex because they are a good friend."

REPAIRING THE FENCE

Present students with this prompt: "If someone makes a mistake that hurts others or damages property, what are the best ways to repair the situation?"

Students brainstorm actions and place them into categories:

- Apologising
- Fixing the problem
- Learning from the mistake
- Helping others

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

CURRICULUM V9

YEAR 5

English

AC9E5LE03 – Recognise that the point of view in a literary text influences how readers interpret and respond to events and characters.

AC9E5LY05 – Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning to evaluate information and ideas.

AC9E5LY01 – Describe the ways in which a text reflects the time and place in which it was created.

Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)

AC9HS5S01 – Develop questions to investigate people, events, developments, places and systems.

AC9HS5K07 – Explain how citizens with shared beliefs and values work together to achieve a civic goal.

YEAR 6

English

AC9E6LY05 – Use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning and connect and compare ideas from a variety of sources.

AC9E6LA02 – Understand the uses of objective and subjective language, and identify bias.

AC9E6LY01 – Examine texts that represent ideas and events and identify how they reflect the context in which they were created.

Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)

AC9HS6S01 – Develop questions to investigate people, events, developments, places and systems.

YEAR 7

English

AC9E7LE01 – Identify and explore ideas, points of view, characters and events in literary texts drawn from social and cultural contexts.

AC9E7LE02 – Form an opinion about characters, settings and events in texts and justify responses.

AC9E7LE03 – Explain how literary devices and language features such as dialogue create character and influence emotions and opinions.

AC9E7LE05 – Identify and explain how characters, settings and events combine to create meaning in narratives.

AC9E7LY06 – Plan, create, edit and publish written and multimodal texts to convey information, ideas and opinions.

Civics and Citizenship

AC9HC7K05 – Explain how values based on freedom, respect, fairness and equality of opportunity support

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social cohesion in Australian society.

AC9HC7S01 – Develop questions to investigate Australia’s political and legal systems and contemporary civic issues.

AC9HC7S03 – Analyse information about political, legal or civic issues to identify differences in perspectives and challenges.