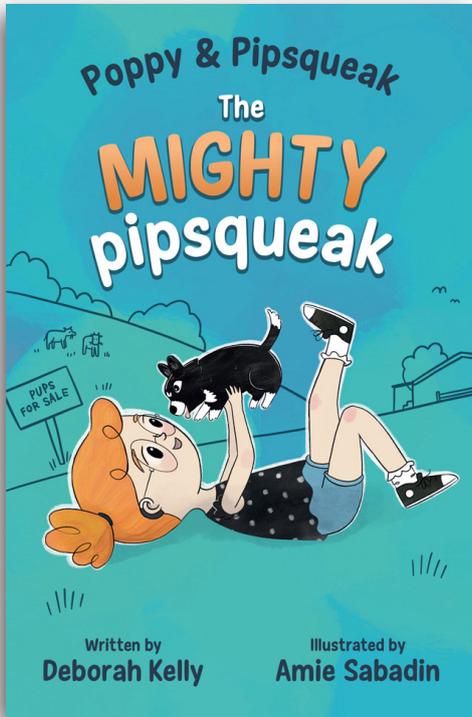

Teachers' Notes



POPPY & PIPSQUEAK: THE MIGHTY PIPSQUEAK

Deborah Kelly / Amie Sabadin

ISBN: 9781761112768

Reading level: 6 to 8 years

BOOK SUMMARY

When Poppy was born, it was a long time before she could come home from the hospital, so when Jessie-Dog has a puppy that's smaller than the others, Poppy insists it can do everything the other pups can do. But Dad says there's no place for weak pups on a farm and Poppy has to convince him to let her take care of Pipsqueak, determined that Dad will see that the little pup can grow into a fine dog. But what if she fails? And what if Dad decides Pipsqueak needs another home, far away from Poppy?

THEMES

Power regardless of size • Rural/farm life • Australian animals •

Family relationships • Disability inclusion • Resilience and determination

CONTENTS

Book Summary.....	1
Themes.....	1
About the Author.....	1
Reasons For Studying This Book.....	3
Key Curriculum Areas.....	3
Teaching Points and Activities.....	4
Knowledge and Literal Understanding.....	4
Discussion Questions.....	5
Activities.....	7

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**Deborah Kelly is available for author talks and workshops.
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Poppy & Pipsqueak 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.

The Thing about Oliver (Wombat Books) was shortlisted in the younger readers category of the Children's Book Council of Australia awards, shortlisted for Speech Pathology Australia's Book of the Year and won the Australian Association of Family Therapists book of the year award in the younger readers category. Her picture book *Me and You* (Penguin Viking) won Speech Pathology Australia's Book of the Year award (3-5 year olds) in 2017. Her recent releases include *Little Horses* (Wombat Books, 2024) and *Skin* (Rhiza Edge, 2025). Deb visits schools, libraries and festival events to share her books with children. Many of her books are included in Premier's Reading Challenge lists around Australia. She is a Role Model for Books in Homes and reviews children's books for Reading Time magazine.

AUTHOR NOTES

I grew up on a farm in New Zealand. While we did not have snakes in NZ, I did have many experiences watching animals being born and caring for those who had been injured. Sometimes our cats caught mice or owls, and we nursed them back to health. Another time, my dad found a nest of pheasant eggs. The mother was nowhere to be seen, so we hatched the chicks in our linen closet and raised them until they were big enough to go to a sanctuary (see photo).

I wanted to write a story to reconnect children with nature and help them realize that being small doesn't mean they are insignificant or powerless. Small can mean mighty and young people can do amazing things.

As part of my recent speech pathology degree, I studied hearing and learned much about the deaf and hearing-impaired population. I was very much inspired by the teachings of my lecturer Megan Barr to represent children with hearing aids in my books. As such, I have dedicated the first book in the Poppy and Pipsqueak series, *The Mighty Pipsqueak*, to her.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Amie has been scribbling and splashing paint since forever. With a background in design and a handbag always stocked with art supplies, she finds inspiration everywhere. She works in traditional and digital mediums to create joyful illustrations.

Amie lives in Queanbeyan, NSW with her husband, their two children and miniature schnauzer. When she's not drawing, she enjoys organising her art supplies, walking, and spending time with her family.

ILLUSTRATOR NOTES

Illustrating *The Mighty Pipsqueak* was fun! The biggest challenge was working out my process, but once I did that, I was full steam ahead.

After reading the story many times, I worked on creating the characters, ensuring each one had their own personality and aligned with the story well. I then worked on a storyboard, choosing the key scenes to illustrate and sketching out their compositions. Adding all the textures, values and finishing touches was the best part—there's nothing quite like seeing it all come together.

Materials wise, I began with pencil sketches in a traditional sketchbook, I then experimented with and created textures using paint, ink, and pastels. The rest of the process took place digitally, using my iPad and laptop.

I found themes in this book interesting and fun to learn about. For example, I had heard of a whelping box before but was really sure what one looked like or if there were many different types of whelping boxes. I did quite a bit of online research before I knew exactly how I wanted the whelping box in the story to look. Other topics like hearing aids and baby incubators required the same type of research.

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REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

The Mighty Pipsqueak is a heartfelt story that promotes resilience, empathy and self-belief. It explores the power of being small and the importance of never giving up, even when others doubt you. Through the story of a young girl and a tiny puppy, it models determination, responsibility and the value of caring for others.

Set in rural Australia, the book gives readers a window into farm life, encouraging appreciation for nature, animals, and hard work. It gently introduces children to the realities of living with physical challenges such as hearing and vision impairments, and shows how these differences don't limit a person's strength or capability.

The story is ideal for developing readers, with engaging characters, emotional depth and accessible language. It encourages inclusion, kindness, and compassion, and helps children understand that courage comes in all sizes. *The Mighty Pipsqueak* inspires confidence, celebrates uniqueness, and reminds young readers that even the smallest voice can make a big difference.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes.

YEAR ONE

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1444	ACELA1451	ACELT1582	ACELY1656
ACELA1787	ACELA1452	ACELT1584	ACELY1788
ACELA1447	ACELA1458	ACELT1586	ACELY1660
ACELA1449	ACELT1581	ACELT1832	ACELA1454
ACHASSI022			

YEAR TWO

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELA1461	ACELA1463	ACELT1833	ACELA1454
ACELA1462	ACELT1591	ACELY1665	
ACHASSI038			

YEAR THREE

English, Humanities and Social Science

ACELT1594	ACELY1676	ACELA1488	ACELY1675
ACELT1596			
ACHASSK093	ACHASSI059	ACHASSK070	ACHASSI080
ACHASSI060	ACHASSI056		

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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: What do you think this story might be about?
2. Read the back cover blurb aloud. Does this help you understand more about who Poppy is and what might happen in the story?
3. Look closely at the cover image. Can you tell where this story is set? What clues suggest it's on a farm?
4. Ask students: Have you ever seen or heard the word "pipsqueak" before? What do you think it means? Why might it be used in the title?
5. What do you already know about farms or farm animals? What might be some of the challenges of living on a farm?

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Does Poppy remind you of anyone you know? Maybe a friend, a sibling, or even yourself?
2. What is your first impression of Poppy at the beginning of the story?
3. How does Poppy change or grow by the end of the story? What helped her change?
4. How do you think Poppy felt when her dad said she couldn't raise Pipsqueak? How did she handle that challenge?
5. Do you think Dad changed by the end of the story? What made him see things differently?
6. Why do you think the author chose to make both the girl and the puppy small and different from the others? What message is the story trying to share?
7. What does this story teach us about bravery and determination? Can small things really make a big difference?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- Have you ever felt too small or not strong enough to do something? What did you do?
- Why do you think Poppy cared so much about the little puppy?
- What does this story teach us about not giving up?
- Do you think animals can be brave? Why or why not?
- How is life on a farm different from life in a city or town?
- What would you do if someone told you that you couldn't do something because of your size or abilities?
- What makes a good working dog on a farm? Do you think Pipsqueak will be a good one?
- Why do you think Poppy's dad was unsure about letting her keep Pipsqueak?
- Can you think of a time when you changed your mind about something like Poppy's dad did?
- How do you think the story would be different if Poppy had given up on Pipsqueak?
- What special tools does Poppy use to help her see and hear?
- Why was Pipsqueak in danger when she was born?
- What does Poppy do to help Pipsqueak survive?
- Why do you think Poppy wanted to care for Pipsqueak so much?
- What does the story tell us about what Poppy believes in?
- What do you think helped Poppy convince her dad to let her raise Pipsqueak?
- Why do you think the author chose a small girl and a small puppy as the heroes of the story?
- How does the author show us that being small doesn't mean you're not strong or brave?

POWER REGARDLESS OF SIZE

- How does Poppy show that being small doesn't stop her from doing big things?
- What are some of the challenges Pipsqueak faces because of her size?
- Can you think of a time when someone small (like a person or an animal) did something surprising or brave?
- Why do you think people sometimes believe that only big or strong things can be powerful?
- What does The Mighty Pipsqueak teach us about what really makes someone strong?

RURAL/FARM LIFE

- What do you think it's like to live on a farm like Poppy's?
- What jobs do people (and animals!) do on the farm in the story?
- How do you think farm life is different from city or suburban life?

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- Why do you think Poppy's dad said there's no room for weak animals on a farm?
 - What are some of the responsibilities Poppy takes on when she helps with farm animals?

AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS

- Which Australian animals can you find in the story?
- Why were the kookaburras making so much noise?
- Can you name some animals that are commonly found on Australian farms?
- Choose one animal from the story — what makes it special or different from other animals?
- What kinds of sounds, smells, and sights would you expect on an Australian farm?

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- How would you describe Poppy's relationship with her dad at the start of the story?
- Why do you think Poppy wanted to prove something to her dad?
- What changes in the relationship between Poppy and her dad by the end of the story?
- Have you ever had to convince a grown-up to let you do something? What happened?
- How does Poppy show love and responsibility to both her family and the animals?

DISABILITY INCLUSION

- What are some of the challenges Poppy faces because of her hearing and vision differences?
- How do her glasses and hearing aids help her?
- Do you think Poppy's physical challenges make her less capable? Why or why not?
- What does this story teach us about people who are born differently or live with disabilities?
- How can we include and support friends who might need extra help to see, hear or move around?

RESILIENCE & DETERMINATION

- What does Poppy do when people doubt her or Pipsqueak?
- How does Poppy show determination throughout the story?
- Can you think of a time when you had to keep going, even when something was hard?
- What would have happened if Poppy gave up on raising Pipsqueak?
- Why is it important to believe in yourself, even when others don't?

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ACTIVITIES

ANIMAL 'CREATURE FILE' - CREATE YOUR OWN

Choose a native Australian animal or farm animal from the story (like a border collie, kookaburra, or a farm dog).

Complete a "Creature File" that includes:

- Animal name
- Drawing of the animal
- Diet (what it eats)
- Habitat (where it lives)
- One interesting or fun fact

Display them as part of a classroom animal wall or book.

Extension: Compare your chosen animal with another—e.g. a wild animal vs. a farm animal.

JUXTAPOSITION DRAWING - BIG VS SMALL

Discuss the meaning of the word "juxtaposition" – putting two opposite ideas next to each other (like mighty and pipsqueak).

Students then draw two pictures side by side:

- One of a time they felt big, strong or brave
- One of a time they felt small, unsure or scared

Under each drawing, they write a short sentence explaining the situation.

Extension: Write about what helped them feel "mighty" in the end.

"SMALL BUT MIGHTY" CHARACTER POSTER

Students create a poster titled "I am small but mighty!"

On the poster, they draw themselves and write 2–3 sentences about a time they were brave, helpful, or strong.

Display the posters as a "Wall of Mightiness" in the classroom.

Extension: Include a class discussion about how being small doesn't mean you're not powerful.

FAMILY CIRCLE SHARING & DRAWING

Class sits in a circle. Students share something special about their family (could be a person, a family tradition, or a pet).

- Then, students draw their family (can include pets!) and label each member.
- Underneath, write: "One thing I love about my family is..."
- Extension: Create a class "family album" from the drawings.

INCLUSIVE HEROES MINI-LESSON

- Read or revisit parts of the story that show how Poppy uses her hearing aids and glasses.
- Discuss: What are hearing aids and glasses for? What do they help with?
- Watch a short video or read a story about a child with a disability.
- Then, students draw a superhero with a disability and write a superpower they have

Extension: Discuss how we can help everyone feel included in the classroom.