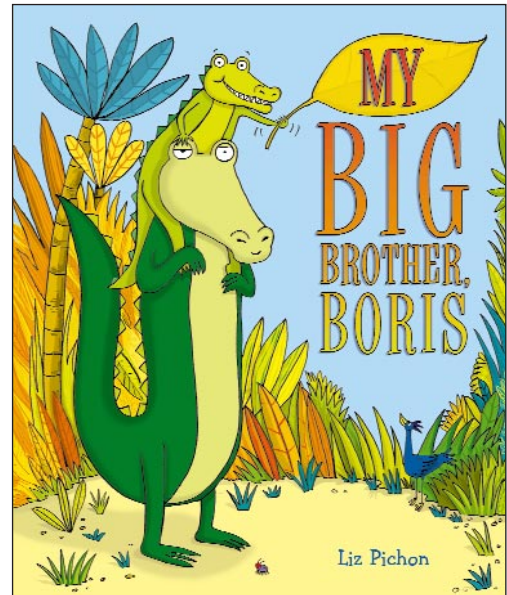


My Big Brother, Boris

**Written and illustrated by
Liz Pichon**



◀ The Back Story ▶ with Liz Pichon

Do you have a big brother? (If so, did he ever have a nose ring?)

Yes I do have one big brother, and I have two big sisters. My sister Angela used to wear huge amounts of black eye makeup and massive platform shoes which was pretty scary at the time but no-one had a nose ring (that I know of!).

What gave you the idea or inspiration to produce this book?

The idea of Little Croc and Boris came from a combination of my own son Zak, who is a teenager (and sometimes grumpy), and remembering what it was like for me following Angela around, as she was the nearest sister in age to me – much to her annoyance.

Which comes first – the text or the illustrations?

Sometimes I will have one little drawing that will spark off an idea for a whole story. I think that was the case with Boris. Then I work on both the text and illustrations at the same time, re-writing and drawing as I go.

Which is your favourite illustration in the book?

I like the picture of Boris in the forest slumped on a log. Little Croc is desperately trying to cheer him up. Boris has got that 'bored beyond belief' look, and Little Croc looks so hopeful. I've seen that look of tedious boredom on my own son's face many times.

Why did you choose to hand draw and then manipulate the images digitally?

I drew the sketches by hand, then scanned them into the computer and worked on them there. It's new for me to work like this. I'm in a studio where everybody has a fancy computer and I felt I really ought to try and use one too, not wanting to be a dinosaur! My next book for Scholastic (*A Tale of Two Kitties*) is a combination of both techniques as well. It's great to mix it up – then I don't get bored.

Why did you decide to make your characters crocodiles?

I had a little drawing of a crocodile with a handbag and shoes, and I always liked her. It seemed like a good idea to give her a family!

Would you like to write more books using these characters?

I'd love to do another book with these characters, but it would have to be quite different. There are lots of other family situations that I could imagine them being in, such as sending the whole family on holiday together, or Little Croc could get a little sister. That would be fun.

About the author/illustrator:

Liz Pichon

I studied graphic design at Middlesex Polytechnic and Camberwell School of Art in London. After graduating, I got a job in the music industry for Jive records as a designer and art director. This involved organising photo sessions and designing record and CD covers.

Eventually, I decided to go freelance, and my illustrations were used on many different products all over the world – from beach towels for Marks & Spencers to fabric, calendars, mugs and games.

I also worked with Camden Graphics on several successful ranges of cards, some of which are still selling today.

Then I turned my hand to children's books. Initially I illustrated other writers' books. My illustrations for *Twilight Verses and Moonlight Rhymes*, published by Lion, won the National parent book award in the USA. I now write and illustrate my own stories, the first of which was *Square Eyed Pat*.

I now live with my husband and three children in Brighton, England.

Teaching Ideas ✓

Before Reading ✓

- Hide the words of the title, and then show the cover of the book to students. Ask them to guess what the book might be about. Encourage students to justify their predictions. Either as a whole class or in small groups, have students brainstorm possible titles that would suit the illustration on the cover. Come together as a class to discuss the answers.
- Read the title of the book to students. Do the words relate to the picture? Ask students which crocodile might be Boris. Why do they think this?
- Ask those students who have a big brother to stand in front of the class. Have the remaining class members, either individually or as a group, count how many students are standing up. Then have everyone in the class finish the statement: '[blank for number] students in our class have big brothers.'
- Ask those students who have big brothers to remain standing in front of the class. Stimulate a discussion by inviting the remaining students to ask them questions such as:
 - Is your brother much older? Is he much bigger?
 - Has your big brother ever put you on his shoulders?
 - Is your big brother fun to be with?
 - What sorts of things do you like doing with your big brother?
 - Is anyone's big brother called Boris?
- Read the blurb on the back of the book to students. Then examine the picture. Why might the younger crocodile think that his big brother hates him?
- The blurb also mentions 'trials and tribulations of everyday family life'. What might this mean?

Activities

My cover!

Draw another picture for the cover of this book that would suit the title. Remember that you do not need to have a big brother to be able to complete this task. Nor does your drawing have to be of crocodiles. You can use your imagination! When you have completed your picture, explain to the class why you chose these particular characters. Is it obvious to everyone that they are brothers (or a little sister with her big brother)? What are they doing?

Let's play

Choose a friend and put on a short mime about a big brother. Think about what you would like to do together and, after rehearsing your mime, present it to the class. Can classmates guess what you are both doing?

During reading ✓

- Explain, or reinforce, how the images in a good picture book always extend the text (ie the images give more information). Ask students what Boris lets Little Croc play with in his bedroom. How do students know this? Why can't Boris's parents find him when he is lying in the water with the logs? Encourage students to examine other images. What information do they give that is not in the text?
- Have students examine the double-page spread where Boris is lying on the log. Liz Pichon says that this is her favourite illustration. What do students think of it? Why might there be a thundercloud and lightning over Boris's head?
- Discuss Boris's snout ring with students. How do his parents react? How do students think their parents would react if they walked out of their bedroom wearing a nose ring?
- Discuss the ending of the story with students. How does Boris manage to shock his parents this time? What other things could Boris do to shock his parents?

Activities

My favourite game

Little Croc and Boris's favourite game is 'Guess What I Am?'. What is your favourite game? Write down how it is played or draw a picture of it, then ask some friends to play your game with you.

Parent pics

Little Croc's grandparents came to the rescue by showing everyone pictures of Boris's parents when they were much younger. They were wearing snout rings and platform shoes! Draw a picture of your parents when they were much younger. Be as imaginative as you can.

Oh no!

By the end of the story Boris has a snout ring and a purple mohawk. What else could Boris do to surprise or shock his parents? Using the final page as a model, create a new page that has Boris showing his parents his next 'look'. How do his parents react? When completed, show class members how you ended the story.

After reading ✓

- Revisit the title of this book. Ask students what they notice, if anything, about the words '[My] Big Brother Boris'. Try to encourage them to notice that three of the four words all start with the same letter. Mention to students that this is called alliteration – but it doesn't matter if they can't remember this grammatical term at this stage. It is good if they can just be aware of the concept. Discuss the effect that the use of the same letter has. What would happen if the title of the book was 'My Big Brother, Sam'? Does it roll off the tongue as easily? Is it as memorable? As a class you might like to brainstorm words that begin with the same letter. Write these on the board so students can refer to them if necessary. Then place students in pairs and ask them to make up two or three titles that have most words starting with the same letter. They might like to use the title of the book as a model. (Examples could include 'My Baby Brother, Ben'; 'My Silly Sister, Susie'.) Alternatively, students might like to make up completely different titles, such as 'Crazy Crocs Cough'. Come together as a class and have students vote to find out their favourite alliterative title.
- Reread the story to students. As you read, ask students to point out the words that are in capital letters. Why might the author have used capital letters? Is it always for the same reason?

BEHIND THE BOOK TEACHER'S NOTES

■ Discuss the characters in this story. How do they differ from one another? Remind students to examine both the text and the illustrations for information. Have students decide which character they like the best and why.

■ Encourage students to think about why they liked or disliked the book. Ask them to take it in turns to stand in front of class members so that they can give their opinion of the book. 'I liked/disliked this book because ...'. List the different ideas on the board. Do students agree with the answers given?

Activities

Perfect party!

Boris loved his birthday party. Imagine that you have to plan a party for someone in your family. List or draw the things that would make this party perfect. (Hint: don't forget food, games and decorations!)

I'm the best

Congratulations! You have been given an award for being the best brother or sister ever! (Or daughter/son if an only child.) Unfortunately the wonderful trophy has been lost. Because you are so good, you have been asked to make your own.

Using recycled materials, make a suitable trophy for yourself. Design a label that states you are: 'The BEST Brother/Sister in the Whole Wide World'. When completed give it to your teacher. You can then be presented with your special trophy. Perhaps you could put it on your mantelpiece (or special shelf) at home.

Literature study

To encourage students to read, and to increase their enjoyment and understanding of this book, discuss the following questions. Students might like to add some questions of their own.

■ Show students the front cover of the book. What else is written on it? Apart from the title and the name of the author/illustrator, it also mentions that this book was shortlisted for the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize 2004. Help students to research to find out what this award is all about. What are some of the criteria needed to be eligible to win this award?

What other books were shortlisted in 2004? Which book won the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize 2004? If possible, borrow some of the books from the school or public libraries. Read and discuss them with students. Have students vote for the one they thought should have won.

■ Have students bring in their favourite picture books that have been published in 2005. Ask them to vote to select a shortlist of their favourite stories. Which one do they consider to be the best one and why?