



Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley

Written and illustrated by Aaron Blabey

SYNOPSIS

Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley are different in every way. Pearly Barley loves death-defying missions, solving mysteries, talking very loudly and is a terrible show-off. Charlie Parsley prefers reading in quiet places to jumping off buildings, is scared of everything and everyone, and is painfully shy. So how on earth is it that they are such good friends...?

Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley is Aaron's first picture book. It is a heart-warming, quirky and uplifting book about innocence, fears, self-belief and – above all – friendship.

WRITING STYLE

See also author's notes.

This beautiful picture book is ideal for sharing with young pre-school aged children and children in the early years of school. It's a perfect read-aloud book for very young children. The themes of friendship, courage, self-belief and loyalty will provide teachers and librarians with the perfect opportunity to talk about how we are all different and the importance of friendship. As the reader reads to the children they will discuss opposites, emotional connections, role reversal and defying stereotypes, and how the author/illustrator conveys emotions through their art.

Schools will be able to use this book across key learning areas of:

- Literacy
- Art
- Performing arts (ideal for role play)
- Pastoral care

THEMES:

- Friendship
- Opposites
- Recognising and Understanding Differences
- Using colour to convey meaning in books
- Taking care of each other

CHARACTERS:

Pearl Barley is a boisterous, active, outgoing little girl. She is inquisitive and questioning, and enjoying finding out about things.

Charlie Parsley is a quiet, introspective and shy little boy. He enjoys gentle activities and calm environments.

ACTIVITIES / POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- In almost every example, Pearl and Charlie are the opposite of one another. Even the words used to describe them are opposites, like 'loud' and 'quiet'. Can you think of other words that might be used to describe Pearl and Charlie? For each word that you come up with, try and find out what the opposite word might be.
- Usually best friends have similar interests and enjoy the same things. Pearl and Charlie are best friends, yet they are very different from each other. Is it uncommon to like different things to your friends? How does it impact your friendship?
- Make a list of the things that you like to do, how you behave, whether you are noisy or quiet, and then make a similar list about your closest friend or someone who is special in your life. How different are the two lists? Do the lists reveal that you and your friend are very alike, or are you quite different, like Pearl and Charlie?
- How important are your very special friends? What do they do to make your life happier and fuller? What do you do to be a special friend to them? Consider the things that Pearl and Charlie do for one another, such as helping each other feel brave, keeping each other safe and sound, and giving one another positive messages such as 'you're great'. All of these things have nothing to do with being the same or different, but rather they are about feeling warmth and love for each other, and showing it through their actions and the things they say and do for each other.
- Pearl and Charlie realise that it is important to support the things that the other person does, even if it doesn't necessarily agree with the way they would do things themselves. For example, when Pearl is silly enough to forget her mittens on a cold day, Charlie doesn't make her learn her lesson, but instead just shares his own warmth with her. When Charlie is scared of a shadow, Pearl doesn't make fun of his fear, but instead shows him that he is brave in other ways. When Pearl gets tired from running amok, Charlie doesn't point out that it is her own fault for doing so much, but instead he comforts her until she feels better. This sort of behaviour is called having empathy, which means understanding how another person might be feeling, even if we don't have those same feelings ourselves. Think of some times when you have felt empathy for something someone close to you is feeling, and how you were able to help them feel better. What about some times that someone has shown empathy towards you?
- How have the illustrations been used to express emotions? Look at the colours used in the second half of the book, when one feels bad and the other is able to comfort them. Their sadness or discomfort is shown in muted shades of blues and greys, and when they are helped by their friend to feel better, the colour returns to the picture to show that things have been righted.
- Do you use colour in your own drawings and paintings to express yourself? If you are feeling sad, what colours might you be more likely to use? What about if you are feeling excited and full of laughter, what colours would you use? How

about if you are angry? Embarrassed? Sick? Tired? Think of lots of different emotions and feelings, and see if as a class you can apply a colour to the emotion. Does everyone agree? It might be that some people feel these things differently from others so not everyone will have the same colours in mind. Do some drawings and see if your classmates can determine the sort of mood you were in when you did the pictures. Your teacher might be able show you some well-known pieces of art that use colour to express mood and emotion. See if you are able to pick up on these moods through the pictures.