



Reading Notes

Sunday Chutney

Written by Aaron Blabey

SYNOPSIS

Sunday Chutney is not your ordinary every-day girl. Sunday has lived everywhere and been everywhere. The only problem is this means she is always the new girl at school and she never really has a place to call home. But Sunday doesn't mind, not really. After all, she doesn't care WHAT people think, she LOVES her own company, she has HEAPS of imaginary friends, so MANY important interests that keep her very busy ... and travelling is SO glamorous. What more could Sunday Chutney want?

WRITING STYLE

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 imagination, fitting in and being yourself will provide teachers and librarians with the perfect opportunity to talk about how we are all different and the importance of home and family. As the reader reads to the children they will discuss imagination, emotional connections, fitting in, friends and family 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

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aaron Blabey is a well-known award-winning Australian actor (1995 AFI Best Actor Award) who has starred in numerous Australian series including *Stingers* and *Crashburn*. He has won acclaim Australia-wide with his unique paintings which depict his life and his family. Between his three galleries, he has sold an astounding 90 paintings. Aaron's illustrations, like his paintings, have a magical quality. Quirky and melancholy yet uplifting and totally unique, they are enhanced by the large hardback format.

Aaron's first picture book *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley* won the 2008 CBC Book of the Year – Early Childhood and was short-listed for 2008 CBC Crichton Award for New Illustrators and the NSW Premier's Literary Award - Patricia Wrightson Award.

Aaron writes about the picture book writing process:

For me, a good picture book is comparable with a well-crafted pop song. As a talentless musician but a lifelong admirer of great songwriters, I've long been obsessed with that particularly fragile gift of taking a simple emotional idea, placing it into an appropriate musical context, attaching a 'hook' that pulls a listener into its web and then, once their attention is caught, stirring in all the things you want to say. Similarly, my favourite picture books have always done much the same thing, but with images in place of music.

Accordingly, by vaguely using this as my template, I took a very personal story and placed it into a visual context that, for want of a better description, just made me feel *happy*. I then worked towards capturing the very particular rhythm that existed within the children's books I've responded to in my life, whilst being true to my own voice. And strangely, working within the restrictions of a standard 32-page format created another parallel with popular song-writing – the enforced time restriction of the three-minute pop song. It's something of a cliché, but harsh parameters can allow you great freedom. You just have to say your piece with as much panache as you can muster while trimming the fat at every given opportunity.

And that's it. I'm not quite sure how else to describe a process that is entirely generated from something as simple as *feeling*. Sunday Chutney is an equally personal story [as *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley*] (apart from the bit about the optometrist) and the same (possibly unintelligible) musical analogy still applies.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

Like the delightful *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley*, this second picture book from Aaron Blabey is a heart-warming and humorous tale. Sunday Chutney is an adorable, totally unique character with a big heart (and even bigger horn-rimmed glasses) and a desire to discover the world.

STUDY NOTES/ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

THEMES:

- Belonging
- Being different
- Stability
- Family

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

Characters:

- Describe Sunday Chutney – her personality, how she gets on with other kids and the other members of her family.
- In what ways is Sunday Chutney 'a bit unusual' – consider her name, looks, background, lifestyle etc
- In what ways is she just like any other girl?
- Do you think Sunday Chutney does anything to make the other students dislike her?
- Sunday Chutney says she doesn't care what the other kids think about her. Do you believe this? Why?
- Why do you think Sunday Chutney has such a strong imagination?
- Consider the list of things that Sunday Chutney like and doesn't like. Which of these would you expect from most kids? Are there any unusual ones?
- Why does Sunday Chutney really dislike her lazy eye?
- How does Sunday Chutney feel about her parents? What does this tell you about both her and them?
- Describe Sunday Chutney's parents.
- Why do you think her one wish would be 'to always have the same home'?
- Describe the home of Sunday Chutney's dream.

- Do you think Sunday Chutney is happy or sad? Explain your answer.
- Can you relate to Sunday's experiences? Have you ever been the new kid? Why is it hard to be the new kid? How is the new kid treated? Why?
- Did this book make you feel happy or sad? Explain why.

Illustrations:

- Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to make many of the illustrations look like photographs?
- What is the effect of this form of illustration?
- Look at the picture of the school on pages 4-5. What sort of mood is created by this image? How has this mood been created? (Consider the size of the images, colours etc)
- How does Sunday Chutney feel about this school?
- How does Aaron Blabey manage to convey humour in his illustrations?
- Which is your favourite illustration from the book? Why?

ACTIVITIES:

Written

- Write a summary of the story of *Sunday Chutney*.
- In the same style of illustrations as the book, draw a 'photograph' of each of Sunday Chutney's parents.
- Make a list of the things you like and dislike.
- As Sunday Chutney, write a letter to your grandmother or to an old friend describing your first day at this new school.
- Write and illustrate 5 postcards that Sunday Chutney sends her grandmother from different places she has lived. (Consider what she may have seen, experiences she may have had, the weather, unusual foods or customs etc).
- As a class, write a list of things all new kids should know about your school and the people in it if they want to fit in.
- As a class, make a set of rules for your class as to what you could all do to help any new kids who may arrive.
- Write a story about an experience you had as the new kid and how it made you feel.

Oral

- Spend two minutes telling the class about a time when you were the new kid. How did you feel? Discuss what you did to make yourself fit in.
- 'Hot seat' activity: in turn, students play the role of Sunday Chutney. Each student is to answer 2-3 questions about Sunday Chutney's life – where she has lived, what was her greatest experience, famous people she has met etc. (Remember, Sunday Chutney has a very vivid imagination!)
- Role play some 'new kid' scenarios showing how new kids should and should not be treated.