

My Big FANTASTIC Family

Discussion notes and classroom activities for K-2 Educators



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Ages 4–8

My Big Fantastic Family is a funny and moving story about Lily-May, a little girl coping with change after her parents separate. This reassuring celebration of unconventional families reminds children that they will always be loved, even if their parents separate or divorce. Beautifully written in rhyme by **Adam and Charlotte Guillain** and with vibrant illustrations by **Ali Pye**, this uplifting story with a diverse cast of characters embraces all the beautiful—and difficult—things that come along with becoming a blended family.

About this educator pack

Stories are a really great way to help children explore and manage difficult experiences and feelings. Stories give kids a safe, comfortable space to process and understand complex emotions—they distance children from a situation, allowing them to “experience” it safely while it’s happening to someone else. This distancing can then help them manage their own experiences, or to develop empathy for others.

My Big Fantastic Family is a picture book about parents separating, families changing and growing, and what this can be like for a young child. Lily-May has to deal with a lot of different feelings when her parents separate, but she also gains a bigger, loving family as a result. The story shows that change can be positive as well as challenging, that “family” means different things, and that people can love and care for one another and be part of a family even if they don’t live together.

This resource uses *My Big Fantastic Family* to help explore learning around families, feelings, and change.

Setting the scene for learning

Ways to promote a positive discussion for this age group:

★ **Agree on and uphold ground rules** so that students feel their contributions are valued and not judged. Children can come up with these themselves, but some examples include:

- We show people we are listening to them.
- We can ask questions if we are not sure
- We approach conversations about others' families or homes with curiosity rather than judgment.
- Only one person speaks at a time (*as a reminder, use an object such as a ball for children to hold when they speak*).
- Everyone should feel free to share as much as they are comfortable with. You never need to share something you don't want to.

★ **Be mindful of those** in challenging family situations, in foster care, or who have experienced or are experiencing family separation. Assume that at least one child in the class is affected directly in some way, to ensure sensitivity in delivery.

★ **Create a pressure-free environment** by using the book to reflect on and discuss Lily-May's feelings and situation. Make sure no one feels like they must share their own experiences if they don't want to.

★ **Provide support to students** and give them a way to ask questions or share something privately. Be available to pupils if they want to talk about the story separately and ensure they know who in school can support them if they need it.





Questions and discussion ideas



The discussion questions below are meant to prompt or encourage discussion before and after your reading of the book. They can be tailored to fit your curricular needs. Other questions might also arise, depending on students' responses and reactions. Choose the questions that work best for you and your class, or ask students to come up with their own—this is not an exhaustive list!

Before reading

Look at the book cover together as a class. Ask students about their expectations for the book.

Ask questions like:

Who do you think all these people are?

What do you think this book will be about? Why?

What does the book's title make you think of?

How does the book's cover make you feel?



After reading

Family love and care

How do Mom and Dad show that they both love and care for Lily-May?

Who else is in Lily-May's family?

How do we know that these people love and care for Lily-May? (Help draw out things people say and do to show love and care.)

What are the difficult things about the changes in Lily-May's family?

What are the good things about the changes in Lily-May's family?

What other kinds of changes happen in families?

Feelings

How did Lily-May feel when her parents separated? (Draw attention to clues such as the things she says or does, her facial expressions, and words and phrases to describe feelings.)

Does she feel like that all the time?

How does she feel by the end of the story?

What helped her feel better?

How do the different people in her family make her feel? (Highlight that different people bring different things into her life.)

How do we know how Lily-May is feeling?

How does Lily-May feel when she can't find Blue Bear?

Why do you think she feels like that?

What helps her feel better?

Families

What is a family? (Use this question to challenge stereotypes of what a family "should" look like.)

What can a family look like/who can be in a family? (Focus on diversity and all the different ways a family might look, including people who are not related but are considered family.)

Do people have to live with each other to be part of a family?

Why is it important to show people in our families that we love and care about them?

How can we show people in our family that we love and care about them?

(Encourage children to think of words as well as behaviors.)

How can families make one another feel? (Discuss positives and negatives; include sensitive discussion of times when siblings might annoy each other or argue, etc.)

How can families help and support one another?

Beyond the book

How does your family look similar to/different from Lily-May's family?

What do you think makes a family, a family?

Who do you consider your family?

What different things do you do with the different people in your family?

If you are feeling worried or sad, what helps make you feel better?



Activity ideas: Families and Change

★ Discuss the front cover of the book and the illustrated pictures on the last page that show everyone who is part of Lily-May's family. Ask students to draw themselves on a piece of paper and draw people who are part of their family around them, or alternatively to draw a picture of themselves with someone else in their family.

They could show how different family members are joined together (e.g., using string).

- ★ Ask students to make a trophy or medal for someone they consider family who doesn't live with them. They could write things on the award that demonstrate how that person shows them love and care.

★ When Lily-May's parents separated, her family changed. Ask students to think of some other changes that might happen to a family (e.g., a new baby, getting a pet, moving, a grandparent moving in) and draw a timeline of their family. At the top, they should draw or write changes that have happened to them between being a baby and now. At the bottom, they can write changes that have happened to their family in that time.



Activity ideas: Feelings

★ Together, come up with some feeling words (e.g., scared, excited, worried, happy, upset). See how many different words students can think of, encouraging them to widen their vocabulary. Then ask children to choose an emotion and draw someone feeling that emotion. How would they look? What would they be doing? Ask them to show where or how on the body they might feel the emotion (e.g., with arrows, labels, drawings, or words).

★ Ask students to act out given emotions. “What does someone look like when they feel excited?” They might jump up and down with a big smile. “What does someone look like when they are disappointed?” They might slump and walk away slowly, or stamp their foot and say “Not fair!” Play emotions charades, where someone picks a word and acts it out silently for others to guess. Encourage others to look out for all the clues to how someone is feeling that go beyond being told.

★ Discuss what Peter did to help Lily-May feel better when she was missing Mom, and the things that Dad did to help Lily-May when she lost Blue Bear. Ask students about all the ways people in families can show love and care when someone is upset. What could they do to show love and care to someone in their family who was upset?



Thank you for using these resources!

Share your thoughts with us:

nosycrowinc@nosycrow.com

#MyBigFantasticFamily

Written in consultation with Lucy Marcovitch, author and education consultant at Lucy Education. www.lucyeducation.co.uk