

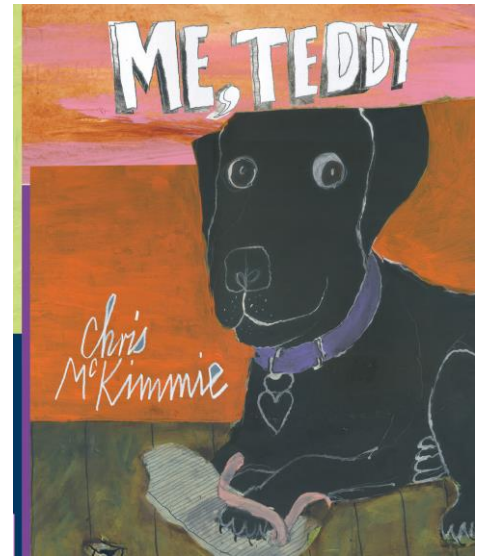
Me, Teddy

By Chris McKimmie

March 2016 ISBN 9781760291334 hb picture book

In the following pages, Chris McKimmie reveals his working methods and their rationale. He tells about the importance of serendipity and answers the questions most often asked by teachers and children: What comes first, pictures or words? Why is typeface so important? What media do you work in?

But first, a word about the book and its place in the classroom.



Summary

Me, Teddy is the most delightful, imaginative and sweet tribute to a dog – ever. Fans of Chris’s work will adore this book. Those new to his work will discover the delight of his deceptively simple and child-like graphics and the wise whimsy of his stories. Children will love Teddy’s view of the world and the disconnects with the illustrations that wittily reveal the mayhem he causes and the reactions of those around him.

Me, Teddy is the autobiography of a dog. His ‘main human’ is Jackie, who lives with Chris. Teddy is clearly the very loved companion of Chris and Jackie and this shines through in his extremely confident, happy and positive attitude to life. He knows that:

*I am
as
CUTE
as
a
Button!*

Of course, food and smells loom large in Teddy’s life and his pursuit of them sometimes causes angst in the life of those around him. But, as he says, ‘I AM NO MONSTER!’ He warns off the bush turkeys in the garden before going to bed, he can understand English (‘food’, ‘dinner’) and even spell (w-a-l-k-i-e-s). He is scared of stairs but likes having his tummy rubbed – forever. He shares his bed with Jackie and Chris and is sad and lonely when they go away. Until Carman comes to look after him, that is. When they return, he tolerates their over-the-top, soppy greetings – ‘Hello, babykins!’, ‘We are back, beautiful dog!’, ‘Mummy’s little baby!’. With a wink at us, he admits, ‘I know, but I like it’.

This is a heart-felt, wicked and adorable picture book.

Use in the curriculum

Chris McKimmie’s books are excellent for exploring the creation of imaginative texts and the dance between author, text and reader. His stories are full of idiomatic language and word play and reference everyday life in ways very recognisable to children. To read and enjoy them is to engage with visual literacy at a sophisticated level. Unpacking the double-page spreads alerts students to design elements: medium, typography and lettering, intertextuality (‘sub-text’). They can explore the use of colour and the careful choice of words to create emotion.

In studying every hand-crafted detail of the book, from covers and collaged pages to endpapers and the final imprint page with publication details, they will learn a lot about the construction of the classic 32-page picture book...and about creativity and imagination.

Visit <https://www.allenandunwin.com/resources/for-teachers> for free down-loadable teachers notes, reviews by teachers, extracts and more. And sign up to the Allen & Unwin e-newsletter to receive monthly updates on new resources!

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What comes first?
Pictures or words?



Picture

ME!

I'm first

egg
word

NO

IT'S ME

They take it in turns.
Sometimes the word.
Sometimes the image.

With ME, TEDDY I had a wealth of anecdotes to draw from so it was a matter of writing them all down and deciding what to use. This is fairly rare. Usually the story starts with a title. Or notes about possible images. Or an image or images. The book starts to build itself. With Special Kev once I made him a red head he had to be born on April 1 and have freckles and horrible cousins. Alex and the watermelon boat started with the image of all the lights out during the floods. I still have no idea how I arrived at the title of that story. However the stories start, the way I approach the story is like a big jig saw puzzle. One where you can add new things and throw things away.

All sorts of things become possible to use.
Bits of songs,
poems or notes from books I am reading,
things the grandkids say,
passing conversations and stuff I just make up.



The background above is a painting with three images collaged on top of it.

Armin walking. Teddy and the owl.

Some images have twenty or more images collaged on top of them. Some have none.

They are just paintings or drawings. Collage in photoshop lets me move images around and decided how big or small they should be.

In the picture above Armin is walking home after Teddy ate one of his Birkenstock sandals. I tried Armin different sizes, small medium and big but he had to be overwhelmed by the moon and the task of walking all the way from Paddington to Auchenflower uphill with one sandal. That's why he is small.

Bloody dog!

The owl is there to make sure he gets home ok.

i t' s r a i n i n g
i t' s r a i n i n g
i t' s r a i n i n g
i t' s r a i n i n g

I designed this typeface i am using now to have a series of variations to more or less echo children's writing. It also comes in handy when it rains in a story.

The word can also be the image so there is no argument about what comes first the chicken or the egg.

Type is always an important part of the story. It tells the story and emphasises parts of it. Where it sits in the image depends on what is happening with the picture and what the picture is saying.



ME, TEDDY uses lots of different media.

In the endpaper on the right the background is from an old sketch book of mine. Maisie did the drawing of Teddy. I added Teddy's nose.

It is a chocolate biscuit. A mint chocolate biscuit.

Teddy would be in heaven with a chocolate biscuit nose.

Like everything else in an image media has something to say.

I have a lot of old brushes I have trimmed down to give 'accidental' lines when I am drawing in ink or painting. These accidents sometimes define character or lead to a direction I hadn't thought of for the image. Sometimes mistakes are the best things to make.

In the classroom...



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Themes

- Pets
- Family life
- Connections with the local area
- Love

Curriculum Topics

- Study of history, society and environment
- English language and literacy
- Visual literacy
- Creative arts
- Learning technologies
- Mathematics

See the short YouTube film about Chris McKimmie and the making of *Me, Teddy* at <https://youtu.be/54M3xowtu94>

Detailed classroom activities and discussion points can be adapted from Robyn Sheahan-Bright's teachers notes for previous McKimmie picture books. Download them from the bottom of the book's page on the Allen & Unwin website.

Other books by Chris McKimmie

Brian Banana Duck Sunshine Yellow (Allen & Unwin 2006)

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/picture-books/Brian-Banana-Duck-Sunshine-Yellow-Chris-McKimmie-9781741147414>

Maisie Moo and Invisible Lucy (Allen & Unwin 2007)

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/picture-books/Maisie-Moo-and-Invisible-Lucy-Chris-McKimmie-9781741751345>

Special Kev (Allen & Unwin 2008)

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/picture-books/Special-Kev-Chris-McKimmie-9781741755503>

Two Peas in a Pod (Allen & Unwin 2010)

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/picture-books/Two-Peas-in-a-Pod-Chris-McKimmie-9781742373041>

Good Morning, Mr Pancakes (Allen & Unwin 2011)

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/picture-books/Good-Morning-Mr-Pancakes-Chris-McKimmie-9781742377193>

Alex and the Watermelon Boat (Allen & Unwin 2012)

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/picture-books/Alex-and-the-Watermelon-Boat-Chris-McKimmie-9781743310076>

Scarlett and the Scratchy Moon (Allen & Unwin 2013)

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/picture-books/Scarlett-and-the-Scratchy-Moon-Chris-McKimmie-9781743315156>

Crikey and Cat (Allen & Unwin 2014)

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/picture-books/Crikey-and-Cat-Chris-McKimmie-9781760110031>

Lara of Newtown (Allen & Unwin 2015)

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/childrens/picture-books/Lara-of-Newtown-Chris-McKimmie-9781760112325>