

Too Many Ducks

Summary

Heidi Cooper Smith's whimsical story is about appreciating what you have before it's gone, and working out how to make things right when friendship seems lost.

One morning, Alexander woke to find a duck waiting for him. As more ducks arrived, Alexander's life overflowed with fun and affection. However, as his new feathered friends filled the house, it became clear there were simply TOO MANY DUCKS for one small boy to handle.

Themes

- Friendship
- Appreciation
- Caring for living things
- Problem-solving and flexible thinking

Australian Curriculum Links

Health and Physical Education

Foundation

Practice personal and social skills to interact positively with others (ACPPS004)

Years 1 and 2

Describe ways to include others to make them feel they belong (ACPPS019)

Science

Foundation

Living things have basic needs, including food and water (ACSSU002)

Year 1

Living things have a variety of external features (ACSSU017)

Living things live in different places where their needs are met (ACSSU211)

Year 2

Living things grow, change and have offspring similar to themselves (ACSSU030)

English

Foundation

Share thoughts and feelings about the events and characters in texts (ACELT1578)

Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text (ACELT1578)

Identify some differences between imaginative and informative texts (ACELY1648)

Create short texts to explore, record and report ideas using familiar words and beginning writing knowledge (ACELY1651)

Year 1

Discuss how authors create characters using language and images (ACELT1581)

Use interaction skills such as turn-taking, recognising the contributions of others, speaking clearly and using appropriate volume and pace (ACELY1788)

Create short imaginative and informative texts that show emerging use of appropriate text structure, sentence-level grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation and appropriate multimodal elements, for example illustrations and diagrams (ACELY1661)

Year 2

Identify visual representations of characters' actions, reactions, speech and thought processes in narratives, and consider how these images add or contradict or multiply the meaning of accompanying words (ACELA1469)

Create short, imaginative, informative and persuasive texts using growing knowledge of text structures and language features for familiar and some less familiar audiences, selecting print and multimodal elements appropriate to the audience and purpose (ACELY1671)

Before reading

Look

- Help students identify the basic parts of a picture book – front cover, back cover, title page, spine and blurb.
- Look at the front cover: predict what the book will be about; discuss the boy – What is he wearing? Why is he wearing pyjamas? What does his facial expression show us about his feelings? Then look for vectors: gaze – Where are the ducks looking? What does this tell us about who might be the main character?

Think

- Brainstorm the word 'duck'. In an outline of a duck, students write words to describe ducks, facts about ducks and places where ducks could be found.
- Look at the endpapers: What do they show us? What extra clues do they give us about the story?

Wonder

- Introduce theme: friendship. Ask students to participate in a think, pair, share: What makes a good friendship? What does a good friendship look like? How does a good friendship make you feel?
- Create a Y chart from class responses: Good friendship sounds like, looks like, feels like. Add to this throughout the reading and activities.

Seek

- Introduce theme: caring for living things. Do animals make good friends? Survey class pets, create a bar graph and then discuss the information – most popular, most unusual, etc.
- How should ducks be looked after? Explain that we will be learning more about ducks. Start a ducks KWHL (Know, Wonder, How to find out, Learned) chart.

While reading

Suggestions for discussion

1. What did Alexander find on Tuesday Morning?
2. How did he begin a friendship with the duck?
3. What did Alexander find out and how did he feel?
4. Look at the images of Alexander's day. What does he do as part of his daily routine? Do you do any of those things in your daily routine? Does everyone have the same routines? How can we react when other people have different routines at home?
5. What happened on Wednesday morning? What didn't he ask?
6. What happened on Thursday morning? What did Alexander think? Do you agree?

7. Why couldn't Alexander catch the school bus? What was the consequence?
8. What was the worst thing? How do the ducks feel? How does Alexander feel? How can you tell?
9. How does Alexander try to solve his problem? Look at the size, font, capitalisation and punctuation of 'TOO MANY DUCKS!' What does this tell us about Alexander's tone of voice?
10. What happened on Friday? How does this make Alexander feel and how can we tell?
11. In bed that night, Alexander is not only lying awake, he is also problem-solving. What shows you this?
12. What did Alexander create for the ducks? Was it hard work or an effort? How did the ducks respond?
13. Which words describe the activities in the backyard water park? Why has the author chosen these words?
14. It seems to end happily, with Alexander and the ducks being friends, but there's another problem – what is it? Why has the author created a new problem?
15. Does Alexander solve the new problem? How do we know?

After reading

1. Introduce theme: problem-solving and flexible thinking. In pairs, create or design a solution for the chickens. This can include multimodal elements, such as illustrations, diagrams, text or video. Share your solution with the class.
2. Thinking creatively about eggs. Ducks lay eggs; how are they different from chicken eggs? What could Alexander do with all the eggs? With a partner or small group, find egg recipes and crafts. Create a booklet or slide show of your findings and then cook a recipe or make a craft item to show the class. Explain how you made them.
3. Theme work: caring for living things. Find non-fiction books and websites about caring for ducks. Explore the differences between non-fiction and fiction texts, to ensure that students can make a useful selection. As suits the class, these activities can be done individually, in pairs or as group work with different aspects allocated to group members. Present the results to the class to share learning. Remind students about speaking clearly and showing appreciation for each person's contributions. Add learning to the 'L' column in the KWHL chart.
 - a. Research interesting facts about ducks. For instance, we know that ducks like water but did you know that ducklings are not waterproof and can drown? Did you know that ducks have a special flat beak so they can chew underwater? Create a poster of interesting duck facts, for example, appearance, body parts, behaviour, life cycle, habitat, predators, adaptations and collective nouns for ducks (there are many).
 - b. Investigate how to care for ducks in your home environment. Create an instruction booklet for looking after ducks. Include diet, housing, hygiene, water, space. Find out how we can tell if they are happy, through their noises and body language. Are ducks messy? Do ducks bite? What can we do about those problems?
 - c. How are ducks similar to or different from chickens? Find out the names of the sexes, ages, body parts, etc. Create a simple text using illustrations or pictures and comparative sentences – 'Chickens can... and ducks can...'; 'Chickens like...

but ducks like...' After this group presents their work to the class, draw a Venn diagram and ask the class to contribute facts to fill in.

4. Arts and crafts: choose from the following ideas to intersperse throughout the lessons.
 - a. Duckling finger puppets – made from cut-up yellow rubber gloves. Glue on felt beaks, boggle eyes and a few small feathers. Draw feet using markers. The puppets could be used to perform poems about ducklings.
 - b. Ducks made from paper plates or curled paper.
 - c. Pop stick ducklings, with numbered pop sticks to use for counting.
 - d. Model ducks and chickens from playdough or similar.
5. There are many duck videos online, featuring cute duckling compilations and duck friendships, such as Rudy the duck's friendship with Barclay the Golden Retriever. Have a browse, find videos to surprise and delight your students.
6. Reflection: friendship. Looking after his friends helped Alexander feel happier. What did we learn? How can I be a good friend? What does it mean to appreciate our friendships? How can I show appreciation to others? Record the answers on a chart or whiteboard.

About the Authorstrator: *Heidi Cooper Smith*



Heidi knew from the age of 11 she wanted to write and illustrate books. Then, during a Visual Arts degree, she fell in love with Ceramics and spent the next 20 years covered in clay. She rediscovered picture books through her 3 small children and in 2014 began drawing again. Six months later Heidi was offered her first contract to illustrate 'Two Birds on a Wire' (by Coral Vass). In 2015 and 2016 she won the CYA illustrated manuscript competition, which led to the creation of her first book as both author and illustrator, 'Kate and the Thing', released in 2018. This is Heidi's second book with Little Pink Dog Books; her first book was 'Six Sleepy Mice'.

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