

# The Speedy Sloth

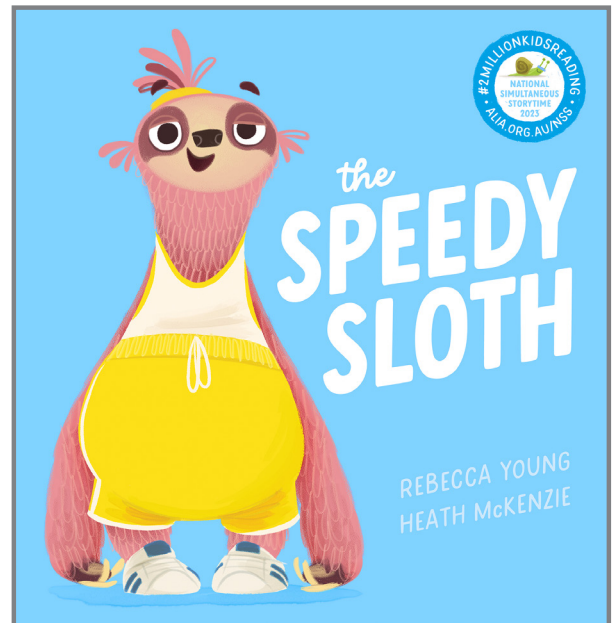
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ILLUSTRATOR  
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SCIS: 5425629

ISBN: 9781760974893

RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



## SYNOPSIS

It was finally time for the event of the year, Spike couldn't believe it—THE GREAT RACE was here! The other sloths said it couldn't be done, but Spike didn't care, she was ready to run!

From award-winning creators Rebecca Young and Heath McKenzie, comes this inspiring story to celebrate all winners... especially those who don't come first.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rebecca Young is an award-winning author from Sydney. Her first book, *Button Boy*, illustrated by Sue deGennaro, was a Notable Book for the 2012 CBCA Awards and has been published internationally. In 2016, *Teacup*, illustrated by Matt Ottley, won the Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature in the NSW Premier's Literacy Awards.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Heath McKenzie is an award-winning children's book illustrator who has written and illustrated countless books for children. Heath lives in Melbourne with his wife, two kids, dog and a fish that he considers more of a lodger than a family member.

## STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
  - What can you see happening on the cover of this book?
  - Who do you think the main character of this story might be?
  - What do you think could happen in this book?
  - What is a sloth? Are sloths speedy?
- What do you know about sloths? How fast are they, and how well do you think one would do in a race?
- Online, or in the library, research sloths. Use your research to help you make a poster about sloths. Some things to try to find out might be:
  - Where do sloths live?
  - What do sloths eat?
  - How fast do sloths move?
  - Why are they called sloths?

- How long do sloths live?
- What are sloths' natural enemies?
- How big are sloths?
- What does it mean when we say someone is 'slothful' or call them a sloth? Why do you think that we might use these words to describe this sort of person? What are some synonyms commonly used for 'slothful', and how would it feel if someone used them about you?
- How did all the other sloths feel about Spike wanting to be in the race? Why do you think they felt this way?
- How did the other sloths react to Spike finishing the race?
- How do you think a group of cheetahs would have reacted if Peter the Cheetah had come last like Spike did?
- Why do you think the other sloths were so amazed at Spike?
- At the end of the book, it says that Spike didn't care that she'd come last, because she was a winner. As a class discuss this, and what being a winner means. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
  - Does being a winner always mean that you have come first in a competition? What are some of the other ways in which people can be winners?
  - What is the difference between 'fair' and 'equal'?
  - Was the race fair? Why/why not?
  - How do you think Spike felt about coming last in the race?
  - When do you think simply completing something might feel as good as winning for someone else?
  - What are some of the things that we do in real life to make races a bit less uneven than the race in the story? (Hint: think about the races at your last school athletics carnival. Did the five year olds race against the twelve year olds? Why/why not?)
- Design a special medal for awarding to Spike as a prize for being the speediest sloth and completing the race. Draw a picture of your design showing both the front and the back of the medal. Label all the different elements of your design clearly, and include explanations of why you chose each particular design element.
- How did you feel when you read that Spike was overtaken by a snail? How do you think Spike felt? And how do you think the snail felt?
- What did you think would happen in the race? Was it the same as what actually happened or did you think that somehow Spike would manage to actually go fast? Why did you think this?
- How did reading the end of the story make you feel? Create an artwork inspired by *The Speedy Sloth* that you feel captures your emotional reaction to the story overall.
- What, in your opinion, was the best bit of the whole story? Why do you think this was the best bit?
- Is it possible to have a race in which everyone is a winner? Why/why not? If you answered 'yes' share your ideas with the class and see if everyone agrees.
- Choose one of the other characters from the story who competed in the race, and write a description of the race from their point of view. Be sure to include their reaction to Spike finishing well after everyone else!
- At the beginning of the book, it says that 'Spike likes to think that hard work pays, so she'd been in the gym for the last seven days.' As a class discuss what the phrase hard work pays means and whether you think it paid for Spike in the race.
- If you were going to be entering a big race, what would you do to prepare for it? In small groups discuss the different activities and behaviours that would help someone preparing for a big athletic competition of some sort, and write an action plan for Spike to follow next year if she wants to enter the race again.
- In small groups or as a class put on a puppet show of the story of *The Speedy Sloth*. Draw pictures of all the different characters who appear in the story. Look carefully at the artwork in the book to help you with your pictures. Once finished, carefully cut out your characters and paste them onto pieces of stiff card then tape icy-pole sticks on the back to create two dimensional puppets of all the different characters in the story. Practise using your puppets to act out the story, while other students read it aloud. Perform your puppet show for another class.