

Your Head's Not the Place to Store Problems

AUTHOR

JOSH PYKE

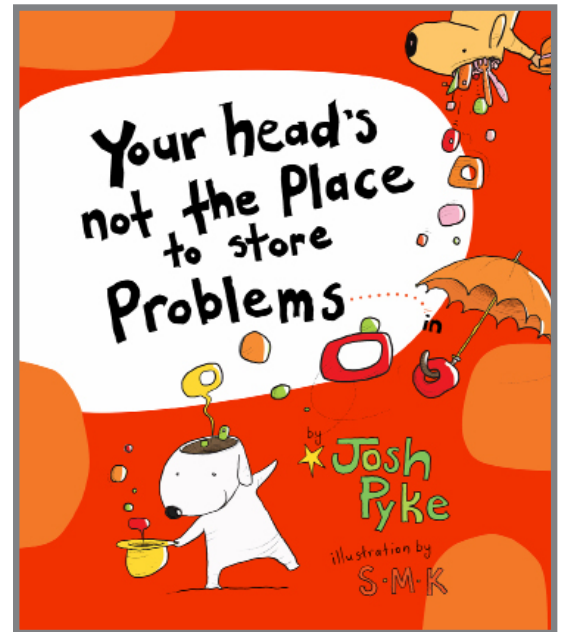
ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

Some problems seem heavy, they can weigh you down. Your mind feels too cluttered, the world seems too loud! Sometimes your brain feels full up and crowded. Your mood swings from sunny to suddenly cloudy. We're full to the brim with unknowable things, but your head's not the place to store problems in.

A whimsical and wise picture book on navigating life's ups and downs, from two multi-award-winning creators.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Josh Pyke is a successful and much-loved Australian singer/songwriter, renowned for his unique and wonderful storytelling and lyricism. Josh has won four ARIA awards, and has also written several books for children. He is a lifelong ambassador for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Award-winning author and illustrator Stephen Michael King has been writing and illustrating children's books for over thirty years which have been sold all around the world. His first picture book, *The Man Who Loved Boxes*, skyrocketed to popularity, winning the Family Award for Children's Books in 1996. He was awarded the CBCA Honour Book for *Leaf* in 2009, *Mutt Dog* in 2015 and *Three* in 2020.

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 do you think is happening on the cover of this book?
 - What can you see falling out of the characters' heads?
 - Why do you think there are things coming out of the characters' heads?
 - What do you think the title means?
 - What type of problems do you think the title is referring to?
 - Where else might be a good place to store problems?
 - What do you think might happen in this book? Why do you think this?
- Re-read the first page. Do 'mind' and 'define' rhyme? Why or why not? Can you make them sound more or less like they rhyme if you change how you read this line? In pairs practise trying to make them sound more like they rhyme, and then less like they rhyme. Can you think of any other pairs of words that almost-rhyme in this same way?

- Why might an author choose to use a near-rhyme instead of a complete rhyme? What would have happened to the rhythm and meaning of this verse if the author had chosen to use 'defined' to rhyme with 'mind'? Would they have had to change the wording of the sentence, and if so in what way?
- Do you ever feel like your mind might explode? What do you think this feels like? In small groups, try to think of at least three other ways to describe what is meant by the phrase 'this mind feels like it might explode'.
 - Individually, draw a picture of yourself in a situation where you think your mind feels like it might explode. Write a caption for your picture explaining what is happening.
- What does it mean when we say that someone is being weighed down by a problem? What types of problems might weigh you down? Look carefully at the illustration in the book, and in small groups decide what problems might be weighing the character down. Share your ideas with the class, and vote on what you think the most likely idea would be.
- What do you think it means in the story when it talks about someone's mind being cluttered and the world being too loud? Draw a picture of someone who is finding the world too loud for them at the moment. Think about what types of circumstances could make someone find ordinary things overwhelming, and try to show this in your illustration.
- Help the mice find their way through the maze to the cheese! Trace or copy the maze on spread two onto a blank piece of paper, then use coloured pencils or pens to draw a path from the mouse on the surface through the maze to the cheese. For a bonus activity, create a maze of your own for a classmate or friend to solve.
- What are all the different animals and creatures that appear in the book? In pairs, look closely at all the illustrations, and make a list of all the different types of animals or creatures you can identify. Are there any that you can't identify?
- Look closely at the picture of the green roadway on stilts. What are all the different vehicles or means of transportation you can see on this page? Where do you think all the characters you can see are going? Why do you think this?
 - Reread the story in pairs or small groups and try to identify what problem each character on this page might be struggling with. Share your ideas and your reasoning with the rest of the class, then choose one character, and draw a picture of them struggling with a problem (and not storing it in their head!)
- What is the most enormous thought that you have ever had? What is the smallest thought you can think of? In pairs, create a very short skit where one of you acts out the role of someone thinking an enormous thought, and the other person acts the role of someone thinking a tiny thought. Think about what type of gestures and movements you need to make. How can you show by your body language and actions the size of the thoughts that you are thinking? Act out your skit for the rest of the class, and see if they can guess which of you is thinking the enormous thought, and which of you is thinking the tiny thought.
- What are all the different places that the book tells us are not the place to store problems in?
- Is your brain different from your mind? Why/why not and in what way?
- What do you think it means in the story when it talks about things seeming much worse than they probably are? Can you think of a time in your life when things seemed worse than they actually were? As a class, discuss how we all sometimes think things are much worse than they are, and how we can become overwhelmed at the time, but later on it is much easier to realise that something wasn't that much of a problem after all. Include in your discussion your ideas on why this happens, and what we can do to help ourselves when we are feeling overwhelmed.
- Create a class list of positive self-talk prompts that everyone can use to help themselves when they are feeling overwhelmed by a problem. In small groups use this list to help you create a poster sharing these ideas, to be displayed in the classroom, or in the hallway for everyone to learn from.
- Who is a good person to share problems with? As a class, discuss all the people in our lives who it is appropriate to share our problems with when we set them free instead of storing them.
- At the end of the story it says that once you share your problems with someone else, they can 'become things to learn from not simply to fear.' As a class, share with each other times when you have been able to learn from your problems.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE