

The New Kid

AUTHOR

JENNIFER BAIN

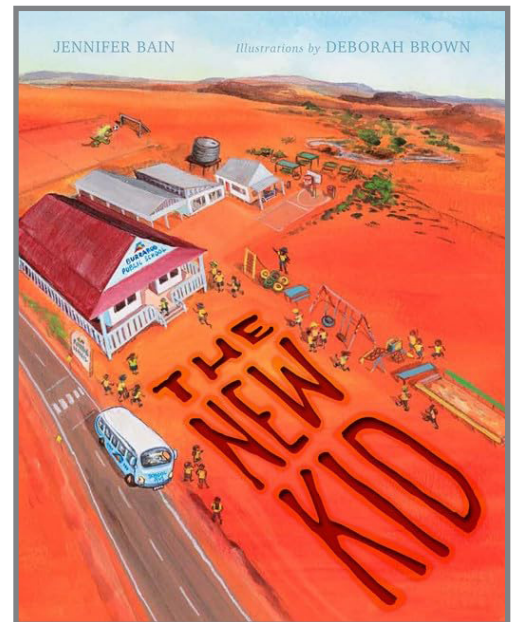
ILLUSTRATOR

DEBORAH BROWN

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

When the students of Burraroo Public School skip through their dusty red playground and into class, they see the most gobsmacking thing . . .

Starting at a new school can be hard. But imagine if you were a bunyip!

Set in a fictional outback Australian school, this is a story about being accepted, finding a place to belong, the value of kindness and how important it is to say sorry.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Bain has been writing stories since she was very small. She was the new kid at six different schools in three different countries growing up, and Jennifer feels she was just as awkward as Barry. Jennifer has always wanted to write picture books to help children feel comfortable in the world, but she got distracted by becoming an accountant, a mum and then a primary school teacher. She now lives on the Central Coast, NSW, and finally has the time to follow her dream of creating positive stories to help children navigate the world with a sense of humour.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Deb Brown grew up in a small country town in NSW, spending her days at the beach or camping out with her family. She has always relished time outdoors where she can draw and allow her imagination to run wild.

Now a semi-retired graphic designer, book designer and web designer, Deb has worked on many award-winning picture books over the years she has worked at various publishing companies. Deb says that telling stories through her paintings still gives her the biggest thrill and will always be her happy place. She now lives with her husband and three dogs in a small country town near a beach.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Display the cover and ask students to use the illustrations, title and back-cover blurb to predict what the story will be about and where the story may be set.

WHILE READING

- Why has the editor/book designer chosen to highlight some words using bold capital letters?
- Where is Burraroo Public School? What makes you think that?
 - Is it a school that really exists? Why might the author have set the story in a fictional setting?
- What is a bunyip? Do buniyps really exist?
- Barry has trouble fitting in from his first day at Burraroo Public School. Why do you think that is?
- Can you think of other kids who might have a hard time fitting in at a new school simply because of things out of their control physically or mentally?
- When Mr Crumb called a class meeting to ask how they might help Barry, why do you think everyone, 'put their heads down sheepishly and looked super busy'?
 - What does the word 'sheepishly' suggest here?
 - What were the outcomes of that meeting and how did they help Barry enormously?
- Not only did Mr Crumb and his class help Barry to feel like he belonged, but Barry also did a lot to help himself. How did he do that and what effect did it have on his fellow students?
- Ask students if they think the story has a satisfying ending and to justify their points of view based on the story as a whole and what they have learnt about Barry.

AFTER READING

- See if students can find Barry anywhere on the front or back cover. Ask them why the illustrator/book designer may have decided not to feature Barry on the cover but instead placed him in the background on the cover and hiding behind text on the title pages.
- Discuss how a picture book is made and the roles of the author, illustrator, editor, book designer and publisher.
- Talk about what makes this story work, highlighting the characters, theme, plot and conflict. Challenge students to rewrite the story using a different setting, a different animal or person in the role of Barry, and different conflicts and themes arising from those changes.
- Discuss the setting for this book: a fictional outback Australian school with Indigenous kids and children from mixed cultural backgrounds. Contact an outback school with a view to children communicating with each other via the internet or in written letters. If possible, have students ask Indigenous kids to share their language with them.
- Draw students' attention to the names of the days of the week and times during a day mentioned in the text. Challenge them to create a timetable for Barry drawn from the story, and then to construct an alternative timetable and to rewrite the story based on that.
- Point out the rich vocabulary and terms used in this book and ask students how they contribute to the story, particularly the setting.
- Add the following words and terms to class vocabulary and spelling lists and discuss their meanings:
 - gobsmacking
 - basking
 - syrupy
 - pluck
 - withered
 - tetchy
 - wringing wet
 - wedged.
- This story speaks to the heart of the basic human needs of acceptance and belonging. As a class, discuss students' experiences of being a new kid at school or pre-school and how it felt for them. Talk about why some students find it harder than others to fit in. (Some, like Barry, may be physically very different to everyone else. Others may be struggling with depression, anxiety, problems at home, developmental delay, or behavioural issues associated with ADHD, autism, obsessive-compulsive disorder, or Tourette's syndrome).
- Brainstorm acts of kindness that could help kids to fit in easier but still maintain their individuality. Note that the kids at Burraroo Public didn't ask Barry to change but rather found ways to incorporate Barry's unique skills into

their daily lives. Highlight also that Barry realised his behaviour may have been difficult for others at times and was prepared to say sorry if he felt he had upset anyone. Focus on helping, sharing, cooperating and the importance of saying sorry. Create a class list of acts of kindness each day.

- Together design a program to be rolled out across the school to help new kids feel a sense of acceptance and belonging. Have students work in groups to design posters around the following 10 concepts:
 - Look out for new kids, especially those who don't know anyone and aren't talking to or sitting with anyone.
 - Say hello, asking simple questions like where they are from, whether they have pets or play sports.
 - Sit with them at lunch.
 - Partner with them by simply including them in a group chat or class project.
 - Talk to them; it doesn't matter if they're not your best friend, but if you never speak to the new kid, you won't find out if you have anything in common.
 - Help them by giving tips such as what clubs, sports or other activities are on offer.
 - Inform them about such things as how the tuckshop works and what is particularly nice to order.
 - Hang out with them, eg. elect to sit with them on the bus, or stand with them to make sure they catch the right bus.
 - Compliment them, eg. they may have a cool backpack, or they may have done something that displays a unique talent.
 - Be welcoming and inclusive. Rather than always teaming up with your best friend, reach out to someone new. Or do as Jada did and invite the new kid to your next birthday party.
- Draw students' attention to the last page of the book and give them each a copy of the text. Encourage them to answer the question posed based on further research on bunyips and other mythical Australian creatures, such as the yowie, rainbow serpent, muldjewangk and tiddalik.