

Today

AUTHOR

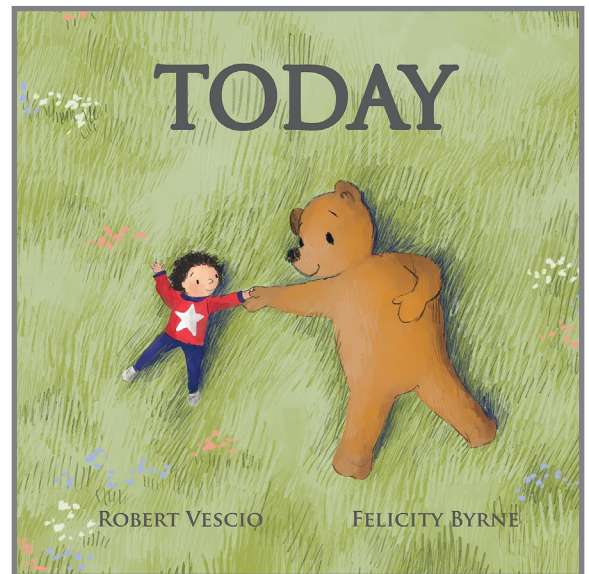
ROBERT VESCIO

ILLUSTRATOR

FELICITY BYRNE

SCIS: 5483072

ISBN: 9780645418439



SYNOPSIS

Today is a story about the beauty we find in everything. A child ventures out with his best friend—a bear, and the two enjoy a day of realisation and acceptance. A joyous celebration of love and friendship.

Today sends a message that little things are special and fun. The child in the story shows that every day is full of possibilities—especially today!

Today inspires imagination and fun. It's an empowering story for making choices, celebrating life to the fullest and caring for ourselves.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Vescio is an international award-winning author. He has written many picture books, many of which have been included on NSW Premier's Reading Challenge. He has won awards for his children's writing, including First Place in the 2012 Marshall Allan Hill Children's Writing Competition and Highly Commended in the 2011 Marshall Allan Hill Children's Writing Competition. His aim is to enthuse and inspire children to read and write and leave them bursting with imaginative ideas.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Felicity Byrne loves to draw. Especially, illustrations that convey emotions and special moments in time. Light is a huge inspiration for her; it gives her drawings a sense of space, life and time. She is interested in combining hand and digital drawing techniques, allowing her to layer and edit while remaining connected to the drawings.

THEMES

- Relationships
- Mindfulness
- Being outdoors
- Physical activity
- Imagination
- Play

STUDY NOTES**BEFORE READING**

- Ask students to make connections that explore identity and belonging by discussing who they are, where they come from and people in their lives, such as friends.
- Ask students to recall stories and videos set in imaginary lands. Identify and discuss the features and benefits of imagination. Ask them to think about a fantastical adventure they could go on with a friend.
- Reveal the cover and the endpapers. Ask the students what they think the story will be about and to share their reasons.
- Discuss the meaning of the terms 'healthy' and 'unhealthy'. Brainstorm why making healthy choices is essential.

WHILE READING

- Who are the main characters?
- What day is it?
- How do they feel about their day?
- What discoveries do they make?
- How do they feel? How can you tell this?
- What happens to them? How do they get to these places?
- What is 'happy' described as? Do you have a friend you can have fun with?
- How would you describe the characters' friendship? Why is it good to have a friend to do things with?
- The author and illustrator show the characters going to sleep in bed. Why is this important?
- What colours are repeated throughout the book? How would you describe the colour scheme? How does it affect you?
- Share your favourite page and explain why you liked it.
- Where does the human character get their ideas and imagination from?
- In what ways are the characters similar or different to you?
- We didn't know the characters' names when we finished the book. Why hasn't this been told to us? What names would you give the characters, and why?
- What adventures might the two friends have next?

AFTER READING**Health and Physical Education**

- Investigate how friendship, sleep, creativity, physical activity and time outdoors help to keep our bodies and minds healthy.
- Brainstorm examples of physical activities. Ask students to list, draw or show pictures and to share activities they do or would like to do. Contrast these with passive activities like reading, viewing videos and playing computer games. What are the benefits of physical and outdoor activities? For example, enjoyment, fun, friendship, being with others, confidence, physical strength and personal challenge.
- Discuss the purpose of goal setting towards a healthy choice. Encourage students to develop a healthy, short-term goal for three weeks, for example, being physically active, bringing a healthy lunch and going outdoors to play. Afterwards, ask students to reflect on the impact of their healthy choice and how they felt. Specifically, draw out any increase in confidence and improvement in self-identity.
- Two circles: seat students in two circles facing each other. Students complete the sentence, 'I am active when . . .' and share one physical activity, ' . . . when I play handball/walk to school/ride my bike.' Time about 40 seconds for students to share with the person facing them. Then, the outside circle moves clockwise, and students share another activity with the next person. Students may also share a physical activity they would like to learn, for example, 'I would like to learn to swim/ride horses/play cricket.' After a suitable time, students report anything they learned about class members or any new ideas they gained, to the class.
- Organise activities focusing on fundamental movement skills, such as follow-the-leader, movement sequences, a circuit and/or relays. Include skipping, hopping, jumping, balancing, jogging, sliding, etc., possibly with animal

references, such as kangaroo jumping, frog hopping, ostrich running and starfish stretching. Music can be used as appropriate. Provide a tracking card for students to represent their feelings about each physical session using a word, icon or emoji. Look for increasing confidence, enjoyment and skill. Discuss ways to improve safety, fairness and inclusion. What could we do differently? Ensure students are aware of themselves, others and their bodily needs, such as moving with care, respecting others and getting a drink afterwards.

- Introduce the concept of 'wellbeing' and how rest, sleep and mindfulness contribute to wellbeing. Discuss how physical activities can help sleep and how screen time disrupts sleep. Recall how the characters in *Today* were mindful, and then have a mindfulness session with the class. Explain that mindfulness can be a helpful strategy for falling asleep.

VISUAL ARTS

- Explore the physical features of the school environment and ask students to identify the natural and outdoor settings that make physical activities in these spaces enjoyable. How do the students use these spaces? Are there any rules or limitations, for example, out-of-bounds, no running on the path, etc., that help students be included, active and safe?
- Set up a range of materials with tactile qualities (rough, smooth, spikey, goeey, etc.) for students to play with. Explore how they feel about these qualities to develop ideas for a visual artwork linked to the outdoor environment, for example, creating clay sculptures using sticks, leaves, rocks and implements to create textures. Develop the activity for a higher skill level by hand-building imaginary structures.

DANCE

- In groups, students create a dance or soundscape, using movement, Lummi sticks, ribbons and/or voice to depict or embody the tactile qualities they discovered in the texture activity. Students could move their bodies in ways that represent the nature of outdoor plants and objects, such as a tree, bird, wind or storm. Explore the effects on students as they use all their senses when performing to give them immediate feedback.
- Develop awareness of self and others in the dance space by setting boundaries, for example, 'Stretch your arms as wide as you can in every direction as you can to create a safe dance space.' Emphasise leaving room for props, moving with care and respecting others.
- Students create their own small group performance using movement. Discuss ways to encourage and include others in the activity by using appropriate language (verbal and non-verbal, body language, and gestures). After a rehearsal, students present their activity to another class group. The students share what they liked, anything they would change, and how safe and fair the activity was for all participants. Ensure students are aware of bodily needs, such as getting a drink afterwards.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
JEN SCANLAN