

Your Brain is a Lump of Goo

AUTHOR

IDAN BEN-BARAK

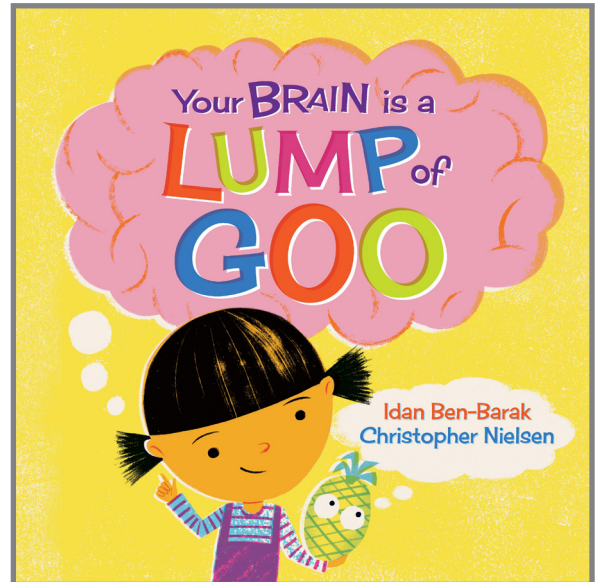
ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

Hi, I'm your brain.

Here are some things you should know about me:

I'm about the size of a pineapple.

I sit behind your eyes. I look like a big walnut (but gooey). I'm not a computer.

So what do I do? Oh, just about everything.

With all the discussions about mindfulness, anxiety, depression, neurodiversity and intelligence that are flying around at the moment, it seems like we are constantly talking to children about how the brain works. So who better than Idan Ben-Barak to help us understand how the brain really works? (SPOILER ALERT: It's not at all like a computer.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Idan Ben-Barak writes science books, usually for children. They've been translated into over twenty languages and won several awards. He lives in Melbourne with his family. Sometimes, after they go to bed, he plays his guitar a bit. Idan has degrees in microbiology and in the history and philosophy of science, a diploma in library studies, and a day job that has very little to do with any of the above.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Christopher Nielsen is an Australian author/illustrator specialising in bringing joy and wonder to children through his art and storytelling. His illustration is inspired by a deep passion for mid-century culture and design. In 2018 his first picture book saw him shortlisted for the CBCA Crichton Award for best new illustrator, and in 2022 his book *Just One Bee* received the CBCA Honour Award for Picture Book of the Year. When he's not busy with a book, Christopher can be found raising his beautiful young family or playing with his band The Ramalamas.

STUDY NOTES

- Before opening *Your Brain is a Lump of Goo*, look at the title and cover design. Discuss what students think the book might be about and the clues in the cover that make them think that. Ask questions such as:
 - Where is your brain?
 - What does your brain control?
 - How does it do so many things at once?
 - Can you find an illustration of a brain on the cover?

- Why do you think there is a pineapple on the front cover?
- Turn to the book's front endpapers (the double-page spread on the inside of the front cover) and see if students can find a path, without crossing a line, from the words 'Can you find the pineapple at the end of this book?' to 'Keep Going!' Turn to the book's back endpapers and continue the path until you reach 'Behold! The pineapple!' Ask questions such as:
 - What parts of your body helped you work out the puzzle?
 - What part do you think your brain played in helping you work it out?
 - Can you train your brain to get better at working out puzzles?
- Read through the book once. When finished, close the book and ask the following comprehension questions:
 - Make a list of the things your brain helped your body DO since getting out of bed today.
 - Make a list of the things your brain helped you UNDERSTAND and REMEMBER.
 - Make a list of the things your brain made you FEEL.
 - How do we know everyone's brain is slightly different?
 - Can we help our brains to GROW?
- Explain that like our bodies, brains need certain things to grow and thrive. Allow students time to discuss and create a poster or multimedia presentation on ways to strengthen our brains. Responses may include healthy eating, regular exercise, sleep, following our passions, mindfulness, etc.
- What do you think the author meant when he wrote, 'It took me many millions of years to become what I am.' How do the illustrations on the page help show this?
- Open discussions around diversity, explaining that people have diverse appearances, backgrounds and brains! Emphasise that these differences contribute to better ideas and perspectives. Provide each student with a sticky note, and ask them to write down one thing they feel they excel at or enjoy doing. Ask students to come up to the front of the class and put their sticky note on the whiteboard. Celebrate the uniqueness of the classroom and how everyone's sticky note is different and points to the uniqueness of everyone's 'lump of goo' in their skull.
- The following questions relate to the last two pages of information in the book.
 - Which part of the brain allows you to play sport?
 - Which part of the brain is responsible for you breathing?
 - Human cerebrums are much larger than those found in animals. True or false?
 - The cerebrum is divided into things called I s.
 - Your F L is responsible for your temper and personality.
 - If you damage your Occipital Lobe you might have problems with your s
 - How might you feel if your Amygdala is overactive?
 - Your Pituitary Gland is responsible for what in your body?

AUTHOR OF NOTES
CAROLYN WALSH