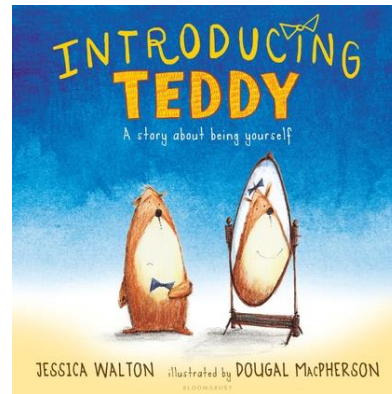


Introducing Teddy

By Jessica Walton

Illustrated by Dougal MacPherson



Synopsis

Introducing Teddy is the sweet story of young Errol and his teddy bear Thomas who love sharing lunchtimes and playtimes together – until one day, Thomas seems depressed. Errol asks what the matter is, but Thomas is afraid if he reveals his problem, Errol won't want to be his friend anymore. When Errol tells him that they'll *always* be friends, Thomas confesses that in fact, he is a girl teddy, and he wants to be called Tilly. Errol responds that he doesn't care whether Thomas is a girl or a boy teddy, as long as they are friends.

Errol decides to invite his friend Ava to join them. She is in the middle of building a robot, but comes to the park to meet them. Errol simply tells her Thomas has a new name, Tilly. Ava says it's a great name. Tilly then shifts her bow tie on to her head, as a bow. Impressed, Ava tells Tilly she should wear whatever makes her happy. She decides to remove her own bow, as she prefers her hair loose. From then on, Tilly and Errol play just as usual. The story ends with the four friends enjoying a tea party – Errol, Tilly, Ava and the robot.

About the Book's Creators

Jessica Walton is a former secondary school teacher who lives with her wife and son in Melbourne. She was inspired to write *Introducing Teddy* after her father transitioned into the woman she had always been on the inside, and Jess wanted to find a way to tell that story to her young son. This is her first book, started as a Kickstarter project that rapidly gained media attention (and its funding goal), with support from Neil Gaiman.

Dougal MacPherson has illustrated for tech websites and conferences, but this is his first children's book. Dougal lives with his wife, son and daughter in Australia. He documents the antics of his family through fifteen-minute drawings in popular Instagram account @15mindrawings.

Themes

- Being yourself
- Accepting and supporting other people for who they are
- Doing and wearing what makes you happy, no matter what gender labels are attached
- Friendship transcends gender divisions

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

- Look at the cover. What can you tell about the story from the picture? Why do you think the bear looking into the mirror is sad, and the bear in the mirror is smiling?
- What are the things that Errol and his teddy bear like to do together (pp.4-6)? Do they still do the same things together at the end of the book? Why do you think this is?
- Where are Thomas and Errol now? How can you tell? (pp. 10-11)
- Look at the colours on the page as you read through the book. Do the colours change from the first half of the book (pp.4-17) to the second half of the book (pp. 18-32)? Also, look at the tree on p. 6 and the tree on p. 30. Why does this happen?
- Why is Thomas afraid that Errol won't be friends with him when he tells Errol why he's feeling sad? (p. 15)
- What does Thomas mean when he says he needs to be himself? Why do you think he is unhappy being called Thomas instead of Tilly? (p. 15)
- What do you think Errol will say? (p. 15)
- Why does Errol say this? (p.17) Would you say the same thing, and why?
- Could the robot that Ava built be a girl robot? (p. 31) Why or why not? Does it matter?
- Who took the photo on p. 32 and when?

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: STORIES IN PICTURES

Get the students to draw one picture that tells a story about how their teddy bear (or robot) is feeling, using a mixture of colours, facial expressions and even objects around. Look at the tree that changes in the story, look at how Thomas is facing away from the reader on p. 13, the sky on pp. 5 and 29. Get the students to look at each others' pictures and discuss their conclusions.

ACTIVITY 2: IT'S NOT A GIRL OR BOY THING

Discuss with your students whether the things that Errol and Thomas do are boy activities or girl activities, or both (pp.4-6)? These include having tea parties, digging in the garden and playing in treehouses. What about building a robot like Ava (p.19)? Get the children to put their hands up if they enjoy doing various things, and see how many are girls or boys for each, then talk about how the story of *Introducing Teddy* shows how it doesn't matter whether you're a boy or a girl if you are doing what makes you happy.

Help the students to plan a story in which the main character is doing something people tell them they shouldn't do because they are a girl or a boy. Help them plan their idea, with an introduction, a story arc in which the problem gets worse, and a resolution at the end. Allow the students to share their stories with the class.

Teaching notes by Andrea Jutson