



Teachers' Notes

Losers?

Mates series

Written by Pauline Deeves
 Illustrated by Adam Carruthers

Teachers' notes by Anita Jonsberg

OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Mates series
Title	Losers?
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Illustrator	Adam Carruthers
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Contents

Introduction.....	2
About the Author.....	2
About the Illustrator.....	2
Activities.....	3

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Introduction

Losers? is a warm, funny tale with a true Aussie heart. Pauline Deeves' story explores the question of what makes winners and losers, because sometimes what we think is happening is the opposite of the truth.

The 'Wiggly Worms' aren't very successful on the soccer field, but 'The Rotten Rats' seem to be. The Worms are coached by Kyle's mum, who researches her role relentlessly. The Rats' coach believes that only scorching wins count. After a terrible defeat, it seems that the Wiggly Worms are the definite losers – or are they?

The local chemist donates jelly beans and the team has a kind nurse who looks after the players. The Worms also have an adorable mascot, Floppy, who joins in games and sometimes helps them to lose. The Rats have an angry coach who yells at them when they do things wrong – even when they are winning.

Can losers be winners? It is a matter of perspective and rests on the question: 'who is having the most fun?'

About the Author

Pauline Deeves has been a teacher and teacher librarian for almost 30 years and had more than 200 articles published, including fiction and non-fiction for both adults and children.

About the Illustrator

Adam Carruthers is an illustrator and graphic designer based in Melbourne, Australia. He lives in Altona with his beautiful wife, Jodie, gorgeous daughter Eden & their 2 little dogs, Tasha and Chloe. Adam illustrated another book in the Mates series, *Hanging Out* by Catherine Bateson.

Activities

NB: Please check all websites for suitability on the date of proposed use. If certain sites are blocked in your school, see your IT administrator to have them unblocked, or to get the address of a proxy server.

English

1. How does the author engage the reader at the very beginning of the book?
2. Look at the verbs used in Deeves' story – how do they help to convey the action involved in sport?
3. What do we learn about the 'Wiggly Worms' coach? Write down the quotes that are important and explain what they *show* about the character.
4. Consider the narrator. How does he feel about his team and the way it is run?
5. Write the story of the football match from the perspective of a Rats' player.
6. Write a recount of your best sporting achievement. (If you do not play sport, write about your best achievement ever.)
7. List the ways in which the Wiggly Worms can count themselves as winners.
8. Share a class discussion about winners and losers – are the boundaries as clear as they seem?
9. Hold a team debate based on the book, entitled 'Losers can be winners'.

Art

1. Look carefully at the illustrations. How do they contribute to telling the story?
2. How do Carruthers' illustrations help the reader to view the Wiggly Worms sympathetically?
3. What aspects of the illustrations of the Rats help to communicate their unhappiness?
4. Make a model that symbolises your favourite sport – you can use shape and colour, not just a literal representation.

5. Research Adam Carruthers' work and create a profile of his style for your folio.

The following link may be useful:

<http://www.adamcarruthers.com/illustration/illustration.html>

Creative activities

1. Survey your school about what forms of sport they are involved in. Make a graph of the results for display in your library.
2. Interview the sporting achievers in your school and have your teacher help edit your articles for the school newsletter.
3. Write a story about a time when what seemed to be a loss turned out to be a win.
4. Make a list about your life experiences in two columns: Column one should focus on the 'losses' in your life; column two should focus on the 'wins'. Be careful to take into account *all* the good things, perhaps comparing yourself to a child in another country who may not even have adequate food and shelter. If you like, you can make a pie chart that shows the difference between the successful and less successful parts of your life. Some categories could be:
 - Family
 - Friends
 - School
 - Pets
 - Hobbies
 - Ambitions
 - Achievements so far
5. Create and maintain a monthly newsletter about the sports teams and individuals in your school.

6. Imagine the Wiggly Worms' cricket team. Would they change their name?
Write an imaginary end-of-season report for their first season, complete with illustrations or even a Powerpoint presentation to accompany the report.

Society & Environment

1. The Wiggly Worms have a mascot named Floppy. The narrator seems to like him. Find out how animals can help people and discuss with reference to your own experiences and research. The following websites will help (teacher assistance required):

<http://advocacy.britannica.com/blog/advocacy/2007/01/service-animals-help-humans-live-fuller-lives/>

<http://www.assistancedogs.org.au/casestudies.php>

http://www.dogslife.com.au/dogs_life_articles?cid=9454&pid=150295

2. Think and write about how important sport is to the Australian identity. Who is likely to be known overseas? How many people do you know whose main concern is their sport? What other things are important to Australians and how is sport linked to 'mateship'? The following websites may be useful:

http://www.edna.edu.au/edna/go/schooled/school_theme_pages/culture

<http://aso.gov.au/education/culture/australian-identity/> (many video clips of aspects of culture – please select clips close to the day of showing with regard to suitability for your class)

3. Look at the types of people (particularly parents) represented in the book, both in the story and illustrations – what do they show about the makeup of Australian society?