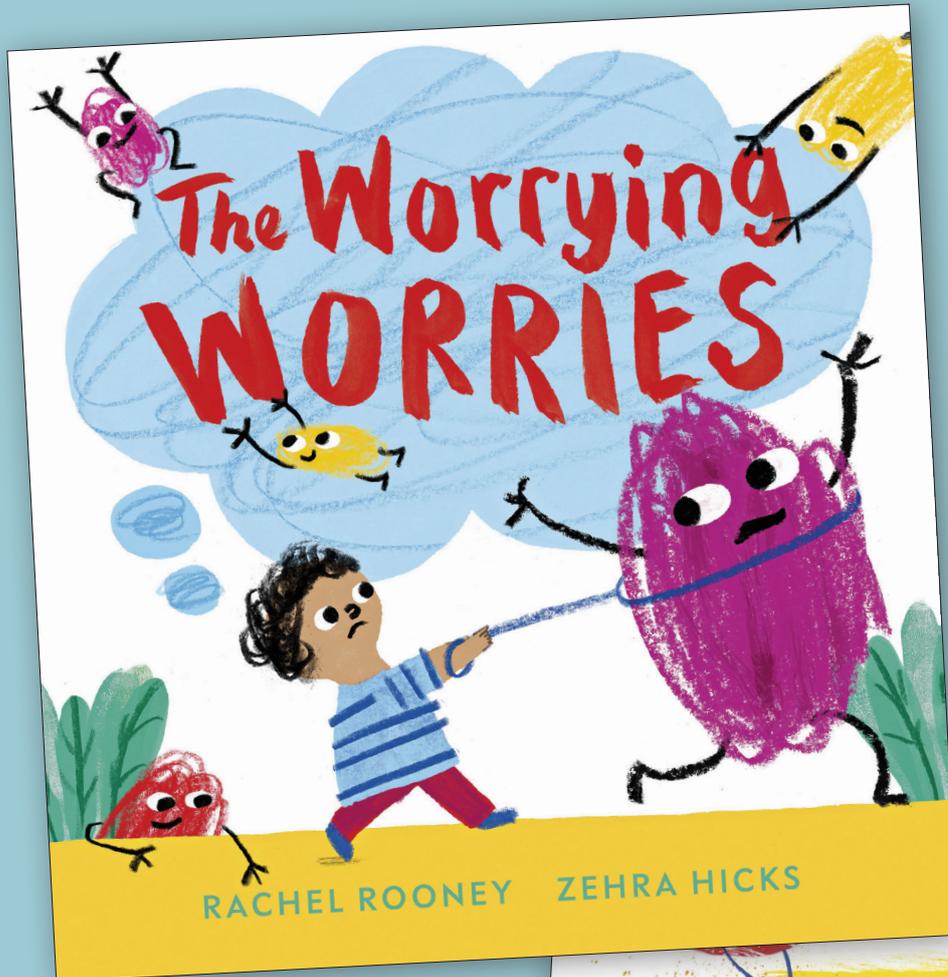


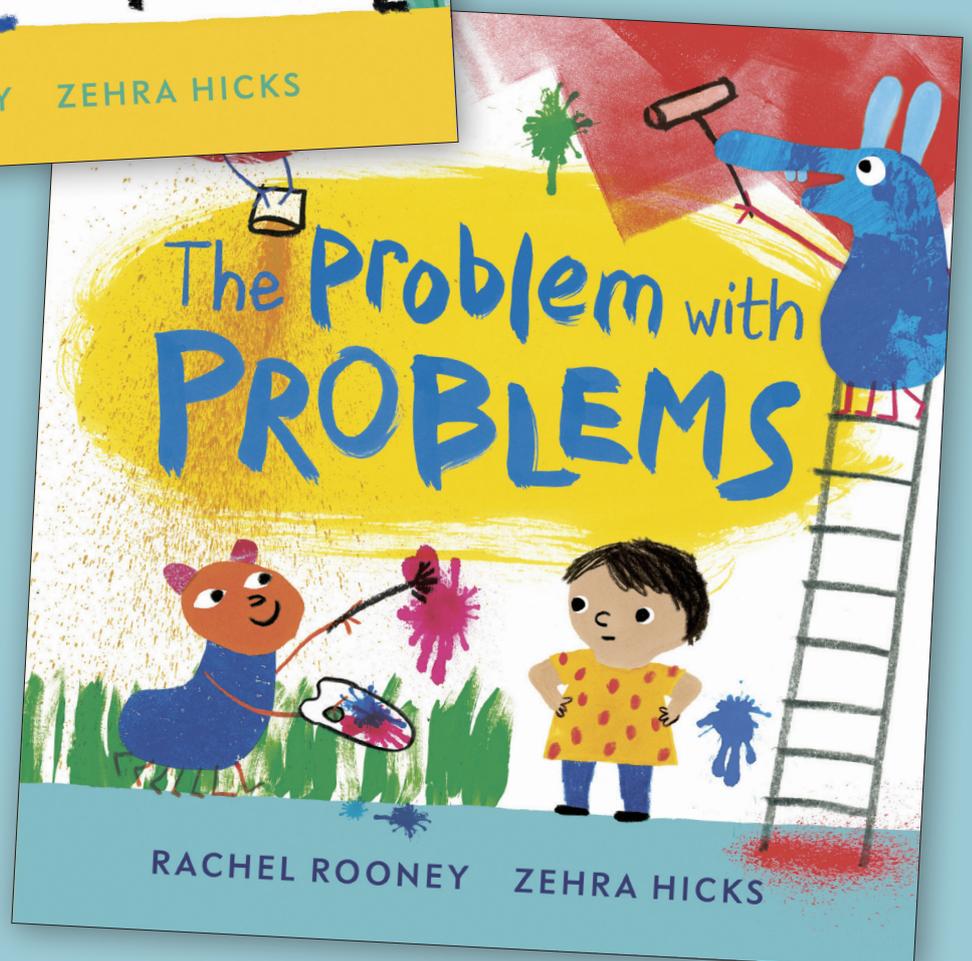
TEACHING NOTES

for *The Worrying Worries* with links to *The Problem with Problems*



The Worrying Worries
by Rachel Rooney,
illustrated by Zehra Hicks

The Problem with Problems
by Rachel Rooney,
illustrated by Zehra Hicks



These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text at school or in the home environment. They build on our work supporting teachers to use picture books to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.

These notes have been written with children aged 3-8 in mind. However, this is a sophisticated picture book which has scope for it to be interpreted in different ways with pupils of different ages. It is important that you use your knowledge of the children you are working with to select questions and activities from those suggested that are most appropriate and that best suit their age and emotional maturity.



Reading aloud and key talking points:

- Look at the front cover of the text and spend time closely looking at the illustration, before exploring the words you can see. *What do you notice about the characters you can see on the cover? How do you think the child is feeling? What tells you this? What do you think the other characters are? How are they behaving? How is this affecting the child?*
- Now read the title of the book '**The Worrying Worries**' - what do you think this means? Do you know what a worry is? What kinds of things might people worry about? Does the title give you any more ideas about the other characters on the cover? Does all this give you any ideas about the story to come?
- Now open the book to reveal the inside title page. Spend time looking closely at the images they can see and talking about these together. *What do you think is happening here? What more do you learn about the brightly coloured creatures from these pages? How are they behaving? How do they interact with the child you saw on the front cover? How do you think the child is reacting to this? What might they be thinking, saying or feeling at this point? Come up with some ideas and think about whether these might be things they are thinking in their head or whether they are saying these things out loud. When you have some good ideas, write these in speech or thought bubbles and position them around the illustration. Now, come back to the brightly coloured creatures. What might they be thinking, feeling or saying? What makes you think this?*
- Turn the page and read the first spread, looking closely at the illustrations alongside. Discuss the text and illustrations together. *What do you learn about the purple creature? How does the child look in these spreads? How do you think they are feeling here? How does this compare to what you've seen in the previous illustrations? What do you notice about the size of the purple creature here, compared to the front cover? What might this suggest about how the story might continue? Re-read the text and think about what is happening here. Do you think it's possible to find a worry? What might happen if you keep a worry? What do you think a child should do if they find a worry? Collect examples of the children's thoughts and ideas around a copy of this illustration.*

- Read on to 'When I woke I knew it was a pet I couldn't keep.' *Is this what they thought would happen? Compare the events with the children's predictions. Re-read and revisit these pages, looking in close detail at the illustrations and discussing what is happening as the spreads move on. How do they think the child feels about the worry as the story moves on? What tells them this? Look back over these spreads and this time, look carefully at the worry. How does the worry change as the story moves on? How does this compare to the first spread, where it was trapped in the net? If they don't see this themselves, draw their attention to the size and scale of the worry on the page. What does this suggest about the worry?*
- Now, look at what else is going on in these illustrations. *What other people can you see in the spreads? What do you think their relationship with the child is? How do the other people in the illustrations react to the child? Do you think they notice the worry? Why do you think they don't notice?*
- Re-read this section again. This time focus on how the worry is affecting the child. Support the children to summarise the different things that are happening to the child because of the worry, e.g. The child is worried all the time. They don't want to eat. They are biting their fingernails. The worry is making the child so upset that they are crying. It's making them think bad things. The child is having nightmares, as they are so worried.
- Talk with the children about how we recognise and respond to our own emotions and those of friends and family. *Can they think of a time when they have seen someone who has felt worried? How did they know this? What did they do? Or, have they ever felt worried and no-one has noticed, like this child? What did they do, or, what would they have liked other people to do?*
- Re-read the spread 'When I woke I knew it was a pet I couldn't keep.' Talk about how important it is that the child has realised that the worry is affecting them so badly and they need to do something about it. *What do they think the child should do next? Collect examples of suggestions made by the children and make a note of these around a copy of the illustration to come back to.*
- Support the children in writing a letter or email to the child to help them decide what to do about the worry. If children have been confident to talk about worries of their own and how they overcame these, with agreement they could be used as examples in the letter. Talk about the importance of writing to them as a friend, showing understanding and trying to help them, being supportive rather than directional, using phrases such as, 'Perhaps you could...' or 'Have you tried...?'
- Use this as an example of beginning to create an open environment to share and talk about worries they may have themselves. Explain that everyone has little worries sometimes, and make sure that as an adult you are able to share suitable examples of your own worries with the children, so that they know this isn't something to be ashamed or embarrassed about. You could also set up experiences that allow them to share their worries confidently and openly, if they wish to. They could draw or craft their own worry and use this to signal when they have a worry that is affecting them and take it to a trusted friend or adult if they are feeling worried about something and want to talk about it. Revisit the suggestions made by the children and create a list of suggestions for what you could do if you're feeling worried about something.



- Read on to 'Then made our bodies floppy like a jelly or a slug'. *Were they surprised by what happened next? How did it compare to their predictions? How did the child learn to deal with the worry? Who do you think the 'Worry Expert' might have been?* Use these conversations to open up a discussion around who the children think they would feel comfortable going to if they had a worry themselves. *Would this be the same person all the time? Who would you want to go to when you are at home? What about in school?* Make a note of the children's suggestions so that you know how to actively support them if they are anxious at any time.
- Re-read this section again, focussing on the activities they did together. *Why do you think these things helped? What does it mean to be calm? How do you calm down when you're feeling anxious, worried, upset or angry?*
- Now, focus in on the worry on these pages. *What is happening to the worry on these pages? Did doing these things take the worry away completely? Why do you think these things might have helped? What do you do when you feel worried that helps you to cope with or begin to overcome this feeling?* Talk about the different things they mention, comparing these with what the child does in the book. It would also be a good idea to keep a note of the children's responses so that teachers, adults and classmates know what might help different children cope with or overcome worries of their own.
- Try out some of the activities mentioned as well as other activities that help children to feel calm and focus, like reading, yoga and breathing or meditation exercises. Encourage them to talk about how it feels to be calm. Talk about the importance of being able to find time and an appropriate activity to calm ourselves if we are feeling worn out, anxious or angry.
- Read on until the end of the book. Look at the passing of time in these illustrations. *Did the worry go away straight away? How can you tell? Why do you think it took a while for the worry to go away? Do you think it would have been better if the child has found the Worry Expert earlier? What do you think the child might do differently if the worry returned?*
- Look again at the child. *How do you think they are feeling now? How can you tell?* Talk about the range of emotions we all experience. Encourage the children to name and recognise these emotions through sharing images and other texts. You may find the following examples useful:
 - *A Book of Feelings*, Amada McCardie and Salvatore Rubbino (Walker)
 - *The Great Big Book of Feelings*, Mary Hoffman and Ros Asquith (Frances Lincoln)
 - *Everybody Feels...* (series), Moira Butterfield and Holly Sterling (Quarto)
- Read the entire book from the beginning and continue to read aloud until the end. Allow the group to begin to explore their responses to it through booktalk with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls 'the four basic questions'. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:
 - Tell me... was there anything you liked about this story?
 - Was there anything that you particularly disliked...?
 - Was there anything that puzzled you?
 - Were there any patterns... any connections that you noticed...?
Did it remind you of anything else you've read or seen?
- The openness of these questions unlike the more interrogative 'Why?' question encourages every child to feel that they have something to say. It allows everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the 'wrong' answer.

- As children reply it can be useful to write down what they say under the headings 'likes', 'dislikes', 'puzzles', 'patterns'. This written record helps to map out the group's view of the text and the important themes and ideas around the story from the children's perspective and is a way of holding on to ideas for later. Asking these questions will lead children inevitably into a fuller discussion than using more general questions. You may, for example, ask the children if they had favourite parts of the story, and why this was.
- Extend the children's thinking through a more evaluative question, such as *Why do you think Rachel Rooney chose to write this book? Do you think it would help someone that is feeling worried? Why do you think this? Who else do you think would like this book? Why?*
- Leave multiple copies of the book in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or socially in a group.

To continue work around the book:

- Look at the other worries that are shown on the front cover and the inside title page. *Why do you think Zehra Hicks, the illustrator, showed worries of different sizes, shapes and colours in this way? What does it tell us about worries? Are everyone's worries the same? How might they be different?*
- Write and draw about your own experiences of feeling worried or other emotions. Display these in the class so that children can see and reflect on their individual and shared experiences.
- Re-read the text and focus on the rhyming structure. Children with a good awareness of rhyme and good initial rhyming skills tend to become better readers and spellers. A focus on rhyme can significantly reduce the difficulty of reading words for beginner readers, as the correspondence in the spelling patterns that represent rhymes and their sounds in spoken words is far more consistent than the correspondence between single graphemes and phonemes. Children with reading difficulties often tend to have gaps in knowledge and experience of rhyme, so a focus on rhyme and analogy is useful with any children who are having difficulties in learning to read. Re-read the first spread in the book:

Once, I found a worry so I trapped in in a net.

I picked it out and put it in my pocket for a pet.

Encourage the children to listen for the words that rhyme. What part of the words sound similar? Write the words down and encourage the children to look at the similar parts of the word -et. What other words can they think of that end with the same pattern? Create rhyme strings together, e.g. net/pet/let/vet/set/jet/fret. They may also invent words such as zet, splet, bret. This is absolutely fine and a good part of the exploratory process of playing with sounds and language. You could write down the words, look at the letters that are the same in each of the words, and sort them into real words and invented words.



- When children are confident with recognising and following rhyming words with the same spelling patterns, move on to rhymes which contain words which rhyme but have different spelling patterns e.g. me/library/tea, cake/ache, head/bed. Look at the two rhyming words in the couplets. *These words sound the same, but do they look the same?* Write out the words on word cards, large enough for the children to see clearly and look at the parts of the word that make up the rhyme. *Look at other words that rhyme, are they all spelt the same? What are the differences?*
- Move on to reading Rachel Rooney and Zehra Hicks' first book, **The Problem with Problems**. Discuss the similarities and differences within the two books. *What is the difference between a worry and a problem? Can you think of a problem that you or someone you know has had?* Look at the words used to describe the problems in the book: *tiny, huge, wearing disguises, knotty, hairy, slippery, tough, sticky* and the illustrations that represent these kinds of problems: *tying a shoelace, dropping an ice cream, jumping off a diving board*. *Why might these kinds of things be described as problems? Can you think of any other words to describe problems you or someone else has had?*
- Look carefully at the reactions of the children in the book, as you did with the child in **The Worrying Worries**. *How are they reacting to the problems? How do you think the problems they are faced with are making them feel?* Add to the words already collected to describe feelings and emotions, encouraging children to extend their vocabulary and make it more precise by introducing words like *frustrated* or *defeated*.
- Look at the everyday scenarios that are presented in the book in the spreads from 'You'll find them in cafes, playgrounds...' up to 'and odd socks and shoes.' *Can the children relate to any of these problems? Have they ever not wanted to try a new food, been hungry or needed the toilet when these things aren't readily available, struggled with sharing or lost something? How did this make them feel? What did they do to overcome this problem? What advice might they give to the children in these illustrations?* Support the children to compose their thoughts in writing and stick their ideas around a copy of the spread.
- Read to the end of the book and discuss the different ways of dealing with particular problems. Think about whether some problems could be dealt with by yourself, and how you might go about this. Look at strategies that include:
 - Stopping and being calm, thinking the problem through and whether you can think of a solution or way around it for yourself.
 - Thinking about whether the problem is something that can or needs to be solved straight away or whether it is something that can be ignored or returned to at a later time if it remains a problem.
 - Strategies for diverting attention and focus so that a problem doesn't become bigger.
 - Knowing which trusted friends or adults that you can go to, to help you with problems that you can't manage by yourself.
 - Adults in the setting creating a safe space where children feel comfortable to share worries, problems or concerns and taking time to listen and respond to children. Some things that seem small to adults can be huge for children and with news and other media being so prevalent to children they can have genuine worries about world events that may seem too big for them to comprehend fully and may feel uncontrollable to them. It's important to take time, be an active listener and help children to work these things through using some of the strategies referenced above.

- Create a space in the environment where children can display their work around worries and problems and use this as a focal talking point for children to share and discuss their feelings more widely. You could:
 - Create a specific place where children can share their worries or problems, like a worry box or worry book.
 - Display all the ideas and strategies they have learnt about how to deal with worries.
 - Add an audio device where they can listen to calming music.
 - Display mindfulness, meditation or yoga activities that help children to calm and refocus.
 - Make a display of other texts that focus on feelings to support the children in sharing and discussing experiences, related to different characters and story events. These could include the books referenced so far, as well as other relevant titles such as:

When Sadness Comes to Call, Eva Eland (Andersen Press)

Where Happiness Begins, Eva Eland (Andersen Press)

Ruby's Worry, Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)

Ravi's Roar, Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)

Meesha Makes Friends, Tom Percival (Bloomsbury)

Silly Billy, Anthony Browne (Walker)

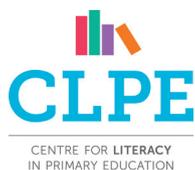
Owl Babies, Martin Waddell and Patrick Benson (Walker)

Dogger, Shirley Hughes (Red Fox)

A Book of Feelings, Amanda McCardie and Salvatore Rubbino (Walker)

Feelings: Inside my heart and in my head, Libby Walden and Richard Jones (Caterpillar Books)

Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears, Emily Gravett (Macmillan)



These resources were created in partnership with CLPE.

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