

Finding Abe *By Fleur Beale*

Introduction

Abe is Sally's four-year-old brother. Sally is fourteen and hates settling in to a new school in a new city without her mum around. But when Abe becomes lost, Sally discovers she is not so alone after all: she has unexpected friends among her new classmates.

Reason for reading

You could use this book with your students to:

- explore the topics of loneliness, friendship, coping with moving, and settling in to a new home and school
- form part of a wider unit on caring for each other, fears, or survival
- explore how the author builds character and creates atmosphere and tension.

Setting the scene

Draw on your students' prior knowledge. If necessary, introduce concepts or vocabulary to help them access the story. Also communicate the reason for reading.

- Brainstorm ideas about loneliness and friendship. What makes a good friend? Why are friends important? How can we make new friends?
- Students explore the cover and determine what they think the story is about.
- Students share their experiences of moving house, starting at a new school, making new friends. How did it feel not knowing anyone? What did they do? How did they cope?
- Students share their experiences of being lost or losing someone such as a family member.
- Introduce vocabulary that the students may need to access the text. Refer to the vocabulary worksheets (3, 4a and 4b) for words that are unfamiliar.

Getting stuck in

Choose the prompts that you feel your students need. Remind them to note any unfamiliar words and check for clues to the meanings in the text or images.

- End of page 3 – “It is Sally's second week at her new school. How is she feeling and why? What more might her father say to her? What does Sally wish for?”
- End of page 5 – “Why does Sally make herself as small as she can? Where do you think Sally would rather be: at home or at school?”
- End of page 7 – “Who is Mrs Chan? Why is she so upset? Abe is ‘crazy about animals’. What does this mean?”
- End of page 10 – “Some of Sally's ‘cold feeling melts away’. Why? How does Sally's teacher help?”
- End of page 16 – “Where is Sally's mum? How do you think Sally feels about her mum's job? It is darker and colder. Why is Sally really worried about Abe now? Why does she say, ‘... not if we can't find Abe’ at the end of page 16?”
- End of page 19 – “Who finds Abe? How does Sally find out?”

- End of page 21 – “Why does Sally notice the jacket around Abe’s shoulders more than the puppy? Sally’s classmates text their parents about the BBQ. Would you text yours in the same situation?”
- End of page 24 – “How does Sally feel about her new home now? In what way has her relationship with her dad changed?”

Taking a closer look

Choose suggestions that suit your students and reason for reading.

Exploring ideas and opinions

- Ask for your students’ opinions of this story. How do they feel about it and why? Did they enjoy it? In what ways do they identify with Sally? Can they identify with her classmates? Encourage the students to make connections with their own experiences.
- After the students complete the three-level thinking guide (Worksheet 1), they discuss their responses in pairs, in small groups, or as a class.
- Students discuss in pairs or small groups: “A time when I moved to a different house and/or started a new school” or “A time when I, or a member of my family, was lost”. How did it feel? What happened? How did they cope?

Exploring character

- Ask students to explore how Sally changes during the story. Think about how she is feeling at the beginning of the story. How and why do her feelings change during the story? Do you see her as a different person at the end of the story? Why or why not?
- Discuss: The author writes this story using the first person narrative. Why? Do you think you can identify with Sally better because of this way of writing?
- Discuss: Who are the other characters in this story? Think about each one and how you get to know them through the story. In what ways do they change?
- How do the illustrations affect your perception of the characters? Do they show how the characters are feeling?

Exploring structure

- Give the students the statements from Worksheet 2 to sequence correctly.
or
Students take a statement each from Worksheet 2 and arrange themselves into the correct story sequence; then, taking turns based on this sequence, they retell their part of the story.
- Students plot how the tension levels change throughout the story, building to the first climax on page 6 and to the second climax on page 17. (The plotted line could look similar to that on a heart monitor.)

Exploring language

- Cut out the words and definitions from Worksheet 3 and mix them up. Hand them out to students, who then find their correct “partner”.

- As an alternative to the above activity, divide the class into two groups: one group fills in the second column of Worksheet 4a and the other fills in the second column of Worksheet 4b. This activity involves the students in creating definitions, which they then use to test the other group.
- Students complete Worksheet 5 – the cloze activity.

Moving beyond the text

Choose activities that suit your students and reason for reading.

Reading

- Read *Fab!*, the magazine from the GO for IT series that complements this book.

Writing

- Set this writing task: “Imagine you are Sally. Either write a diary of your first two weeks at your new home and school, telling how you are feeling without your mum around, or write a letter to your mum telling her what happened to Abe and how you coped.”
- Working in pairs, students decide who will be Sally and who will be Avery or Frank. They write the conversation they might have at school on the day after the BBQ.

Debating

- Hold a class debate on a topic related to the story, such as: “The best friend is an old friend” or “Both parents should always be around to look after their kids.”

Research

- Students do research on: survival stories of people who have been lost.

Art and design

- Students prepare a static image – a “missing” poster that advertises Abe.
- Students design a book cover that sells *Finding Abe*.

WORKSHEET 1

Finding Abe – Three-level thinking guide

- Level 1 – Reading on the lines (interpreting what the text says on a literal level)
- Level 2 – Reading between the lines (inferring, or interpreting what the text might mean)
- Level 3 – Reading beyond the lines (evaluating ideas and information)

Students write “agree” or “disagree” beside each statement and then discuss their responses in pairs, in groups, or as a class. The value of this activity lies in the discussion it generates as students justify their views. The activity is not intended as a test for comprehension.

LEVEL 1	Agree/disagree
Sally takes her time getting ready for school because it's sports day.	
Abe is missing his mum and doesn't want to go to Mrs Chan's.	
Sally finds the lessons at school really interesting.	
Sally's new home is out of town.	
The school secretary comes into the classroom and calls for Sally.	
Mrs Chan is crying because she can't find Abe.	
Sally tells Mrs Chan to phone her dad and tell him Abe is lost.	
Everyone carries on with their work as Sally starts to leave the room.	
Sally describes what Abe looks like and what he is wearing.	
The teacher draws a map on the board and tells the others where to go.	
All the kids ride off together to look for Abe.	
Sally tells Avery that her mum is a doctor in Afghanistan.	
Frank finds Abe and texts Sally, who forwards the text to her dad.	
Sally's dad invites everyone to their house for a BBQ to say “thank you”.	

LEVEL 2	Agree/disagree
Sally believes she is old enough to take care of herself.	
Sally's dad is angry with both her and Abe because they are not ready to leave in the morning.	
Sally thinks Mrs Chan should have taken better care of Abe.	
Sally is amazed when the kids in her class offer to help her find Abe.	
They couldn't have found Abe if they hadn't had cell phones.	
Mrs Chan wants to go with the kids to find Abe.	
Avery expects Sally's phone call to be from her mum.	
Sally is angry that her mum is so far away.	
Abe wants the puppy because he is missing his mum.	
All Sally's classmates care about her and her family.	
Sally and her dad have a really close relationship.	
LEVEL 3	Agree/disagree
It is a good thing that Abe got lost.	
Both parents should be around in an emergency.	
Leaving children to be looked after by others is irresponsible.	
We could not live without cell phones.	
Charity begins at home.	

Sheet 2 of 2

Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007

WORKSHEET 2

Finding Abe – Restore the order

Cut out the statements and mix them up. Ask your students to place them in the correct order.

Sally takes her time getting ready to go to school.
Dad helps Abe get ready to go to Mrs Chan's.
Sally can't wait for the school day to finish, but she isn't sure she wants to go home.
Suddenly Mrs Chan arrives in Sally's classroom, upset because she can't find Abe.
Sally tells Mrs Chan to phone her father while she goes looking for Abe.
A girl in Sally's class offers to help her find Abe.
Sally tries to remember what Abe is wearing.
Other students in Sally's class offer to help her find Abe.
Sally's teacher organises the search for Abe.
All the searchers get Sally's cell phone number.
Mrs Chan returns to her house in case Abe goes back there.
Avery and Sally ride their bikes, searching the streets for Abe.
Sally wonders if the other kids are still looking for Abe or if they have gone home.

Sally's dad rings her and asks if she has found Abe.

Avery asks Sally about her mum.

Sally tells Avery her mum's a Red Cross nurse who is working in Afghanistan for six months.

It is getting cold and Sally suddenly remembers that Abe is only wearing his favourite t-shirt.

Sally gets a text message to say Abe has been found.

Sally, Avery, and all the other kids head for the corner where Frank has found Abe.

Sally's dad invites everyone to a BBQ at their house to say "thank you".

Mrs Chan gives the puppy a bath.

Sally and her dad are happy and relieved that Abe is all right.

Sally looks forward to going to school.

Sheet 2 of 2

Note that some words above may have different meanings in other contexts.

Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007

WORKSHEET 3

Finding Abe – Match the meaning

Cut out the words and their definitions, mix them up, and ask your students to match the pairs.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Afghanistan	a country between Iran and Pakistan
blubbered	cried, sobbed
crawls	(time) drags, passes slowly
crazy about	passionate about
credit	money available
curious	keen to know
detention	a punishment where you have to stay in class outside of class time
fault	responsibility
grubby	dirty
heck of a long way	a very long way
holds it together	stays in control
jammed	squashed

Word	Definition
lets fly	releases feelings
mangy	uncared-for, unkempt, unclean
maze	a jumble, network of streets
mobile	cell phone
nap	a short sleep
scruffy	messy
shoved	pushed
skinny	narrow, thin
snapping	speaking sharply or angrily
stress	worry, pressure
text message	a written message sent using the cell phone
tricky	difficult to handle
zip	to move quickly

Sheet 2 of 2

Note that some words above may have different meanings in other contexts.

Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007

WORKSHEET 4a – GROUP A

Finding Abe – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups, and give one group Worksheet 4a and the other group Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column of its own worksheet, each group writes a definition for each of the words listed in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, the group may need to check the page of the book that is listed.
- Each group then folds the first column out of sight and swaps worksheets with the other group.
- Each group guesses the original words based on the definitions given in the other group's worksheet, and writes them in the third column of that worksheet. A group can go to the page in the book that is listed if it needs help. For an extra challenge, groups can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

Word	Definition (Group B)	Word (Group B)
Afghanistan (p 14)	(p 14)	
crawls (p 5)	(p 5)	
credit (p 17)	(p 17)	
detention (p 2)	(p 2)	
grubby (p 19)	(p 19)	
holds it together (p 3)	(p 3)	
lets fly (p 3)	(p 3)	
maze (p 16)	(p 16)	
nap (p 6)	(p 6)	

Word	Definition (Group B)	Word (Group B)
shoved (p 6)	(p 6)	
snapping (p 2)	(p 2)	
text message (p 17)	(p 17)	
zip (p 11)	(p 11)	

Sheet 2 of 2

Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007

WORKSHEET 4b – GROUP B

Finding Abe – Vocab swap

- Divide the class into two groups, and give one group Worksheet 4a and the other group Worksheet 4b.
- In the second column of its own worksheet, each group writes a definition for each of the words listed in the first column. Where a word has more than one meaning, the group may need to check the page of the book that is listed.
- Each group then folds the first column out of sight and swaps worksheets with the other group.
- Each group guesses the original words based on the definitions given in the other group's worksheet, and writes them in the third column of that worksheet. A group can go to the page in the book that is listed if it needs help. For an extra challenge, the groups can guess without referring to the page.
- You could make this a fun competition and give points for every correct word.

Word	Definition (Group B)	Word (Group A)
blubbered (p 6)	(p 6)	
crazy about (p 7)	(p 7)	
curious (p 14)	(p 14)	
fault (p 7)	(p 7)	
heck of a long way (p 14)	(p 14)	
jammed (p 5)	(p 5)	
mangy (p 20)	(p 20)	
mobile (p 10)	(p 10)	
scruffy (p 18)	(p 18)	

Word	Definition (Group B)	Word (Group A)
skinny (p 22)	(p 22)	
stress (p 12)	(p 12)	
tricky (p 7)	(p 7)	

Sheet 2 of 2

Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007

WORKSHEET 5

Finding Abe – Fill in the gaps

Add your own words in the spaces to make this passage come alive!

I get to school in time. The eyes me as I find a seat
..... the back by myself. I hear the lesson. I don't
any of them all day. I sink into chair and make myself as
..... as I can.

The day through the morning. It crawls the lunch
break when I sit by where the eyes can't me. It crawls
on through the At last there are five minutes
..... and then I can escape. I can home to the
narrow house that's jammed smack bang the next horrible house. Abe
will to play outside, but the only..... is the street or the
....., scruffy shoebox of a yard the house. I'm thinking, "Do
I even want to home?"

Worksheet designed by Barbara Freeman, Wellington, New Zealand, 2007