

English Units for the Classroom

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HarperCollins Publishers

Using the Award Winning *Buddy*

- New Zealand Post
Children's Book Festival Winner
- Junior Fiction
 - Best First Book

Teacher Notes

- **Buddy** is the first novel by V M Jones, who lives in Christchurch with her two sons. This award-winning novel will really appeal to adolescent students and best fits into the curriculum at achievement levels 4 – 5+.
- **Buddy** is ideal for student personal reading or as a book to be read, enjoyed and shared with the class. Students will easily relate to the characters and the real life nature of the adolescent issues will provide teachers with opportunities to plan for and achieve many English curriculum learning intentions.

Synopsis of the Story

Josh Cranford loves all forms of sport. He is very competitive and especially likes to win against his arch rival, Shane Hunter.

A new and popular teacher encourages his class to take part either individually or as a team, in the Iron Kid Triathlon. This seems like a perfect chance for Josh to come out on top.

Unfortunately Josh cannot swim and has vowed he never will.

The story tells of an intense six weeks when Josh must not only learn to swim but must confront the reasons why he never has – his handicapped twin brother Buddy whom he could not save in a swimming pool accident when they were both five years old.

The powerful conclusion to the book deals with how Josh overcomes his fear of water; accepts a new relationship his father has with his new live-in partner; celebrates the life of Buddy and learns that love, friendship and understanding can be more powerful than the urge to always win.

Achievement Objectives

Personal Reading • Close Reading • Thinking Critically

Teaching and Learning Activities

Sport

- What sort of attitude does Josh have towards sports?
- Have students talk about their attitudes towards sports:
 - *is winning the most important thing?*
 - *is a person's attitude to taking part in a sport closely related to their ability at that sport?*
 - *do they think Josh's initial attitude towards sport is healthy?*
- Discuss what Josh means at the end of the story when he says that he '*had an inkling that something bigger than a medal was happening here*'.
- What changes in attitude towards sport do they predict Josh will have in future? Write a paragraph to justify their opinion.

Characters

- Excluding Josh, have students choose two characters from the story to describe, eg Suzanne, Mr Mitch, Chantal ...
 - *have students describe the characters and their feelings to towards them when they initially 'met them' in the story.*
 - *did their attitude to the characters change as the story progressed? How and why?*
 - *did the characters' attitude towards Josh change?*

Relationships

- Do the students think that Josh's attitude towards Suzanne at the beginning of the story was justified? Have them list incidents in the story which helped change this attitude.
- What reasons can the students give for Josh keeping his relationship with Buddy a secret from all his friends? Was Josh right to believe that he was guilty of causing Buddy's problems?
- Have students select and read out an extract from the story which illustrates a turning point in the relationship between any two characters. Have the class describe how the relationship had changed.

Concluding and Student Assessment Activities

- From a newspaper reporter's point of view, have each student write a report about the extraordinary finish to the triathlon.
- Students write a letter to the author giving their opinions about the book and suggesting some ideas to include in a sequel.
- Have the students think of Josh at the beginning and the end of the extraordinary six-week period of his life. Have groups brainstorm and list everything that Josh found out about himself as a person and about other people, eg
 - *people are not always as they seem*
 - *winning isn't everything.*