



Teacher Notes

Two Mates

written by Melanie Prewett and illustrated by Maggie Prewett

Magabala Books

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler (Teacher Librarian)

SYNOPSIS

Set in Broome in Australia's north west, *Two Mates* shares the true story of Jack's and Raf's special mateship. Jack is Indigenous and Raf is a non-Indigenous boy who has spina bifida. Together they explore, hunt, play and laugh. The fact that Raf is confined to a wheelchair is only revealed at the end of the story, allowing the reader to see that true friendship has no obstacles.

THEMES

Aboriginal culture and customs

- Some aspects of Indigenous language, culture and customs are shared in the story

Friendship

- Two boys from different backgrounds become good friends
- Together, these friends can achieve anything

Spina Bifida

- Raf has spina bifida. This does not stop him from leading a full and active life

Broome

- Life in Broome features in the story
- Broome is a multicultural community

WRITING STYLE

Two Mates is written in first person, present tense. The narrative is told from Jack's point of view. The language is tangible to young readers and allows the audience to engage with the story

STUDY QUESTIONS

- Look carefully at the end covers of *Two Mates*. Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to draw feathers all over the end covers? What do these feathers represent?
- *Two Mates* is narrated by Jack. Retell this story from Raf's point of view.
- Create your own story about you and one of your friends. What sorts of things do you do together?
- Invite a guest speaker to talk about spina bifida. Create a brochure to help inform people about this disease.
- How do the two boys share their skills and talents with one another?
- Discuss how the boys' strengths and weaknesses complement each other.
- After reading *Two Mates*, write a reflection about the story and the message that the author and illustrator are conveying to the audience.
- Compare this book on friendship with other picture books about friendship such as *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley* by Aaron Blabey.
- Why has the author and illustrator waited until the last page to show Raf in his wheelchair? Would your reading of this story have been different had you known that earlier?
- Discuss whether or not people might pre-judge Raf for being in a wheelchair.
- Create a photo journal that shares the story of a special friendship that you have. PhotoStory is a good program for this.
- Draw a self-portrait and/or a portrait of your friend in a style similar to that of Maggie Prewett. Take note of the way in which she exaggerates certain facial features such as cheekbones, lips and eyes.
- Research the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Create a poster to promote this region to tourists.
- Brainstorm a list of features about your home town. Include things such as climate, pastimes, and places to visit.
- Use Google Earth to visit Broome on the internet.
- Download a copy of the Broome Visitor Monthly Guide at <http://www.broomevisitorcentre.com.au/pages/download-our-brochure/>. Use this resource for comprehension and reading activities
- Broome is multicultural, sharing aspects of various cultures. Keep a log of the different cultures that make up Broome's unique community.
- Family plays an important role in the lives of Jack and Raf. Find examples from the text that show evidence of this.
- Create a story map of *Two Mates* that shows Broome and the places the boys visit along with the activities they enjoy together.