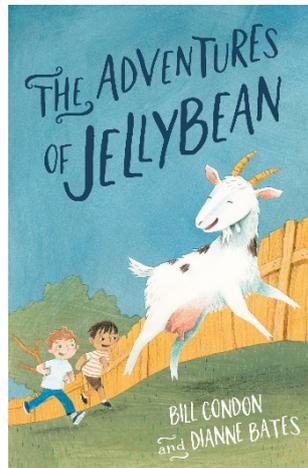


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THE ADVENTURES OF JELLYBEAN

Bill Condon and
Dianne Bates



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian
in context with the Australian curriculum
(English)

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SYNOPSIS

When Jellybean becomes the new pet for best friends Rory and Trang, they quickly realise that looking after a goat is a lot more complicated than they first thought. Jellybean eats everything in sight, escapes from her pen and keeps the neighbours awake at night, but she also surprises them with her many unexpected qualities.

In a story that explores friendship, responsibility and perseverance, *The Adventures of Jellybean* shares the many joys that come from owning a pet.

THEMES

- Friendship
- Family
- Pets
- Goats
- Responsibility
- Perseverance
- Problem-solving

WRITING STYLE

The Adventures of Jellybean is written in third person, past tense, and is a novel suitable for readers aged 6+. The language and storyline is relatable, making it an excellent choice for exploring themes of friendship, responsibility and perseverance.

STUDY NOTES

- Discuss the way in which the opening pages establish the setting of the novel. Sketch the neighbourhood depicted in this chapter.
- Discuss the personification of the fig tree on p1: 'The fig tree moaned in the wind like a cranky old giant with a sore back.' Why is figurative language an effective tool in describing settings?
- Rory has dreams of being an astronaut and a wrestler. Trang also wants to be a wrestler, as well as an inventor. What do you want to be when you grow up? Share with a friend.
- Rory and Trang like to hang out with Rory's dad, as well as 'mucking around with timber and tools'. What do you like to do with your friends?
- Rory wonders if he will look like his dad when he grows up. What features do you share with your parents? Compare your baby photos with those of your parents. Draw a picture of what you think you will look like as an adult.
- As you read *The Adventures of Jellybean*, create a character profile of Rory's sister, Luna.

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- Rory and Trang do chores around the house. What do you do to help around your house? Why is it important to contribute to your family in this way?
- Why does Rory think getting a goat is a good idea? What are his parents' thoughts? Create a PMI table that explores the plusses, minuses and interesting aspects of getting a goat.
- In the role of Rory, give a persuasive speech to your parents to convince them to get a goat.
- Rory describes his Nan as 'never boring' and his Pop as 'big, from his giant laugh to his sumo wrestler belly" (p. 23). How would you describe your grandparents?
- What can we tell about Rory's character from the family barbeque? How do his actions during the soccer game show his maturity and values?
- Describe your family gatherings. What do you like to play with your cousins?
- Discuss the relationship that Rory has with his family. Use evidence from the text to support your ideas.
- What role does Bitsa play in *The Adventures of Jellybean*? Why have the authors included him in this story?
- Design and create a model of your own goat pen.
- Rory and Trang have sleepovers once a month. How do they spend their time together? Write a reflection about a sleepover you have had. What sorts of things did you do?
- What can we tell about Trang's family from *The Adventures of Jellybean*? What role does Trang's grandma play in his life?
- Rory enjoys Scrabble and has fun turning the name Levi into other words such as 'evil', 'vile', 'veil' and 'live'. Create words using letters from the names of your classmates.
- Rory's dad cracks dad jokes. What jokes does your dad make? To extend this idea, read the picture book *My Dad Thinks He's Funny* by Katrina Germein and Tom Jellett.
- Rory and his family go to a goat farm to choose Jellybean. Have you ever had the opportunity to choose a pet? Share your experience with a friend.
- Bitsa takes a little while to get to know Jellybean, but before long, they become close companions. How does this help *The Adventures of Jellybean* explore the theme of friendship?
- In what ways do Rory and Trang show persistence? How does their friendship help them to develop this skill together?
- How do the boys problem-solve after Jellybean keeps the neighbours awake at night? Why is problem-solving important in everyday life?
- Find out more about the products that can be made from goat's milk. Why does goat's milk have to be boiled before being consumed?

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- Write a procedural text that gives instructions on how to make goat's milk soap.
- Create a label for Jellybean Soap. In addition, make posters to advertise this product.
- In the role of Rory or Trang, write a diary entry about the school fete, including events from the text to help add detail.
- When waiting to see what surprise Dad and Mr Nguyen have in store for him and Trang, Rory says 'being patient was about the hardest thing in the world' (p. 106). Have you ever felt like this? Write a reflection to share your experiences.
- What causes Mrs Herman's opinion of Jellybean to change? Why is it necessary to have characters like Mrs Herman in stories?
- Why is Trang upset that Rory wants him to take Bitsa to the pet show? How would you solve this issue? What do you think of Rory's behaviour at this point in the story? How does their disagreement help show the ups and downs that friendships go through?
- Discuss Dad's comment that 'sometimes you have to put your friends first' (p. 129). Share a time when you have put one of your friend's needs ahead of your own.
- Rory is reminded to 'think about what a good friend Trang has always been, and what your life would be like without him in it' (p. 129–130). Write a reflection about a good friend of yours and why you need them in your life.
- Why does Rory's mum say it is important that he and Trang be 'good losers' (p. 133)? What does she mean by this? What might being 'good losers' look and sound like?
- Using the description of the pet show in Chapter 16, draw a picture of the photo taken of the children with their pets.
- What can you learn about friendship, including the importance of giving and accepting apologies, from *The Adventures of Jellybean*?
- Why do the authors choose for Jellybean not to win one of the prizes at the pet show? How does this help readers to understand the true value of pets and friendship?
- Hold your own pet show. If your school doesn't allow animals onto the school grounds, hold a 'virtual pet show', sharing photos and video footage of your pets.
- What clues do we get about Jellybean's special surprise? What was your response when you learnt she was pregnant?
- Why is Sally happy for Jellybean to eat her sunflowers? In what ways does Jellybean help Sally?
- Why does Sally call her new pet Happy?
- Retell the main plot points of this story in your own words.

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- Write this story from Trang's first person point of view.
- Write a story that shares the role a pet has played in your life.
- Find out more about goats by researching books and websites. Create an information report about goats, including different breeds, their diet, behaviour, offspring and physical features.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

Bill Condon: I've written many books over the last 30 years, so it would seem natural that I'd find writing easier, after so much practice. Unfortunately, that isn't the case. Every new story is another mountain to climb. When you're at the start of a book and looking up to the top of the writing mountain, the end appears to be impossibly far away. It is so easy to give up, because writing never ceases to be hard. But I know it's worth all the effort. As I wrote *The Adventures of Jellybean* I kept telling myself, 'One word at a time, one sentence at a time – keep going.' My motivation was to write the best book I possibly could, one in which readers could relate to the characters and enjoy the story. It's the same motivation I have with every book.

Dianne Bates: Like Bill, I have been writing for decades, making a living from the many books I've published. Each book has its own challenges but once I've decided on subject matter, I don't usually have problems writing it. With *The Adventures of Jellybean*, I started with the idea that there didn't seem to be many books around for boy readers aged 7+. (Although I'm sure girls will also enjoy the story.) I named the main character Rory after my great-nephew. I decided the boy should have a goat as I grew up on a goat farm and goats are my favourite animal. Most of my fiction books are social-realism and based on my childhood experiences or on children I know. Somehow, Bill soon got involved co-writing the book so we worked on it together.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dianne (Di) Bates grew up on a goat farm and goats are her favourite animal, though sadly she doesn't have any in her life now. Di has worked as a newspaper and magazine editor and manuscript assessor. She has published over 130 books for children. In 2008, Di was awarded The Lady Cutler Award for distinguished services to children's literature.

Bill Condon has written numerous stories, poems and plays for children, and four of his novels have been shortlisted for the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award. He has also won the Prime Minister's Literary Award. Bill lives on the south coast of New South Wales with his wife, the well-known children's writer Dianne Bates.