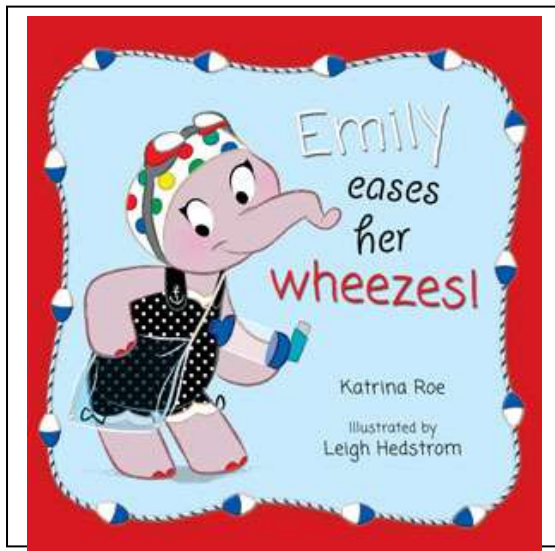


Teacher's Notes and Ideas

Prepared by Wombat Books



Emily Eases her Wheezes

by Katrina Roe

Illustrated by Leigh Hedstrom

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Recommended Age: 3 to 8 years

About the author/illustrator	page 2
Introduction/Story Summary	page 3-4
Learning	page 5-6
Resources	page 6
Discussion questions	page 7

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About the Author



Katrina Roe is an author and radio presenter.

She is the host of *Hope Mornings* on Sydney's Hope 103.2 radio (www.hope1032.com.au).

Emily Eases her Wheezes is Katrina's second picture book. Her first, *Marty's Nut-Free Party*, was published by Wombat Books in 2012 and was short-listed in the Speech Pathology Book of the Year Award and the Caleb Prize. It is also on the Premier's Reading Challenge in NSW and Queensland. Katrina's third picture book, *Same*, will also be published by Wombat Books in 2015. A fourth book, *Little Seed*, is also in production.

Katrina enjoys kayaking, bushwalking, reading novels and taking holidays. She's adamant that tea should always be made in a pot and she has a definite weakness for soft cheese.

She lives in Sydney with her two young daughters and her husband Chris.

About the Illustrator



Leigh Hedstrom is an African-born, Sydney-based freelance illustrator with an education in Fine Arts.

Emily Eases her Wheezes is Leigh's third picture book with Wombat Books and her second collaboration with Katrina Roe. The first book in the series, *Marty's Nut-Free Party* was also Leigh's first venture into hardcover picture books. Her second, *When I See Grandma*, by Debra Tidball, was recently awarded the Caleb Prize. With over twelve years of experience in Illustration, Leigh specialises in the creation of appealing and humorous characters

for print, web and screen.

Leigh lives on Sydney's Northern Beaches with husband Ben Hedstrom (art teacher, painter and Archibald Prize finalist) and their son James. Like Emily, Leigh also enjoys ocean swimming!

Introduction

Emily Eases her Wheezes is a story about an elephant who is full of energy. Unfortunately, Emily also gets asthma and when she has asthma she is not allowed to exercise. Emily finds this frustrating because it means that she can't always join in with what the other kids are doing.

This book is relevant to all Australian children, not just the 350,000 school children who currently experience asthma. It teaches children the most common triggers for asthma, some of which can be avoided. By learning to recognise those triggers, they can be more pro-active about managing their asthma with the help of their doctor.

Emily Eases her Wheezes also aims to remove some of the stigma associated with asthma. By including visual and narrative references to the asthma inhaler or 'puffer', it normalises the experience for kids. Too often, other children will stare and point while a child is using their puffer in the classroom or playground and this can make the child with asthma feel ashamed or embarrassed to ask for their medication. Seeing their medication represented as a helpful tool in the book should help to reduce some of this stigma.

Children with asthma also need to learn to recognise the symptoms and sensations of asthma, as opposed to feeling 'puffed'. Over the course of the story, Emily becomes more confident at recognising when she has asthma and when she is just 'out of breath' due to exertion.

Emily Eases her Wheezes also emphasises the importance of staying active. While there may be times when it is unadvisable for children with asthma to exercise, their asthma should not prevent them from living a healthy lifestyle.

With positive management, children with asthma can live normal, active lives and even excel at sport.

Story Summary

Emily was full of energy.

But sometimes when Emily had asthma she was not allowed to be active.

Nobody wanted to sit next to Emily when she was coughing and wheezing.

'You can't catch asthma,' she'd say.

Sometimes Emily's asthma got worse. Like when she had a cold or when a chilly wind was blowing. On those days, Emily wasn't allowed to exercise.

While the other kids rode their bikes or play basketball, Emily watched from the sidelines. Emily was sick of sitting still. She decided to play too, but soon she was doubled over, coughing and wheezing and needed to use her puffer.

Another day, when Emily woke up, the air was full of smoke. Emily had to stay indoors. She spent the whole morning playing in her room, but by afternoon she was jumping out of her skin. She decided to use her bed as a trampoline. But unfortunately, it stirred up the dust and gave her asthma.

Later that day, Emily's friends come by and ask her to play tip. But Emily wasn't allowed. Her mum told her to sit quietly and have a rest.

Her friends play anyway, but it wasn't as fun without Emily. They decided to find something they can all do.

That's when her friends discovered that swimming can be good for asthma. After consulting her doctor, Emily and her friends decided to take up swimming. They went to the pool every day, Emily had swimming lessons once a week and on weekends they went to the beach.

Soon they were all good swimmers, but Emily was the most excellent of all.

And her lungs grew stronger and stronger.

The friends had so much fun swimming that they decided to race in a relay team together. When the day of the carnival arrived, it was very windy and Emily felt nervous that she might get asthma.

As she swam, Emily thought about nothing but each breath.

In. Out. In. Out.

Emily was fit and full of energy. She breathed deeply and pushed through the water.

When Emily won the race, all her friends cheered. Her Mum came running up with her puffer, just in case.

But Emily didn't need it.

She just needed a little rest.

LEARNING

What is asthma?

One in ten children have asthma. Currently that's over 350,000 school-aged children.

During an asthma attack the airways in the lungs narrow because of contraction of the muscle in the airway wall, swelling of the airway wall and extra mucus inside the airway. Children with asthma have abnormally sensitive airways, which are more likely to narrow when triggered by certain environmental factors.

Symptoms of an asthma attack may include coughing and wheezing, shortness of breath and a tight feeling in the chest.

Asthma is not contagious. Children with asthma do not need to be avoided.

Health and Safety

Learning to recognise asthma triggers can help children to be responsible for their own health.

Common asthma triggers include:

- Viral respiratory infections such as colds and flu
- Exercise
- Inhaled allergens such as dust mites, pollen and mould
- Smoke, including bushfires and cigarette smoke
- Air pollutants
- Some food additives or medications
- Pets.

Children have an important role to play in managing their own asthma

Children with asthma may all have different triggers, treatments and care needs. This is why children need to learn to recognise both their individual triggers and the symptoms and sensations of asthma. Older children should be able to recognise when they need to have their puffer and should know how to administer it.

Friends and family can also help keep children with asthma safe

Being responsible for his or her own safety is a big burden for a small child. There is always pressure to conform and fit in with what others are doing. It's helpful if friends and family can also recognise asthma symptoms and are aware of the appropriate treatment.

Children with asthma should be able to live full and active lives

It is important that children with asthma remain active and continue to exercise. They should consult their doctor for ideas on how to exercise safely. Their asthma should not be used as an excuse to avoid exercise. There is no reason why children with asthma should not excel at sport.

If poorly controlled asthma is preventing a child from being active or results in frequent asthma attacks or hospitalisations, they should consult their doctor for a management plan, which may include preventative medications.

Health and safety – learning to manage asthma

Emily enjoys being active and it's important that her asthma does not prevent her from living a healthy, active life or from having fun with her friends.

Many different people work together to keep Emily safe – her Mum, her doctor, her friends and herself. Emily learns more about the triggers and symptoms of asthma and learns to recognise the difference between experiencing asthma and just feeling out of breath. She gains more confidence in exercising safely and in knowing when she needs her medication.

The importance of being active

Exercise is important to good health and is a great way to have fun with friends. The story demonstrates that there are many different ways to be active and have fun, not just by playing sport. Examples of fun ways to exercise in the book include riding scooters and bikes, dancing, jumping on the trampoline, playing basketball, playing active games like tip, and swimming at the pool or beach.

Friendship and caring for one another

This story stresses the importance of looking after each other. Marty cautions Emily against playing basketball when she is unwell. Then when she experiences asthma, he shows initiative in leading her off the court and helping to administer her puffer.

Including others /problem solving

Emily's friends recognise that it's not as much fun to play together if Emily can't be included. They work together to find an activity they can all enjoy.

Effort produces results

Emily works diligently to improve her health and fitness. She goes to the pool every day, takes swimming lessons and enjoys trips to the beach. She's persistent and doesn't give up. She sets a goal to race in the carnival and she works hard to ensure her success. Her diligence, health and fitness pay off when she wins the race.

Celebrating success

Emily's friends are proud of her when she wins the race for the team. They enjoy her success and derive pleasure from seeing her do well. True friends delight in each other's achievements.

RESOURCES

See the *Notes for Parents and Carers* in the back of the book by Professor Peter van Asperen from the Children's Hospital at Westmead.

Useful websites

For childcare centres and pre-schools:

<http://www.asthmaaustralia.org.au/For-childrens-services.aspx>

http://www.asthmaaustralia.org.au/asthma_in_childcare.aspx

For schools or parents of school-aged children

<http://www.asthmaaustralia.org.au/ThreeColPB.aspx?pageid=17179869788>

<http://www.asthmaaustralia.org.au/For-schools.aspx>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who likes being active? What are some of your favourite ways to be active?
- Does anybody in the class have asthma? Have you ever been to hospital with asthma?
- If nobody in the class has asthma, do they have any siblings, cousins, friends or family with asthma?
- What are the symptoms of asthma? What does it feel like?
- Can you catch asthma from another person?
- If you have asthma, do you know what usually triggers your asthma?
- In the story, what are the triggers for Emily's asthma?
- Which triggers can Emily avoid? Which triggers are harder to avoid?
- What kind of medications have you used for your asthma?
- Have you ever used or seen a person use an inhaler/puffer? Do you know how to use a puffer?
- Has anyone been teased about their asthma or using their puffer? Have they received funny looks or stares from classmates, strangers or friends when using their puffer?
- What are some ways we can all help look after our friends with asthma?