



Sam and Nate

PJ Sarah Collins

illustrated by Katherine Jin

ISBN: 978-1-55143-334-9

About the Book

Sam and Nate is the humorous story of two young boys at school and their friendship as it grows through a year of change. With letters, notebook scraps and several miscommunications along the way, the boys learn more about themselves, the ups and downs of being twins, working with others and helping the new teacher. The book contains six stories, each packed with the grade 2/3 Science, Language Arts and Personal Planning curriculum.

About the Author

If **PJ Sarah Collins** is not teaching children at school or chasing them at home, her favorite way to relax and recharge is to write for them. She thinks investing in children is the best way to spend a life. She's had the opportunity to teach in three school districts: Vancouver, Coquitlam and Northern Ireland. Sarah was born and bred in the Lower Mainland, is passionate about all things green and loves family life with her husband and three young kids. She aspires to be like Sam and Nate in their simplicity and joy of life but is often more like Mr. Tangent.

P.S. One of the Mr. Tangent stories is autobiographical but she's not telling which one!

About the Writing

When Sarah discovered the joy of writing for children, she signed up for every course she could attend offered by her author-friend, Alison Acheson. Sarah took her courses through the Delta School Board night school and the Faculty of Creative Writing at UBC over a period of seven years. When Sarah submitted “Letters from the Mailbox” to her writing group, it was Alison who prodded her to write more stories about Sam and Nate based in the world she knew—the primary classroom—and inspired by her own students. When she writes for this age group, she feels like she’s painting with light brush strokes in watercolor; her YA novels are longer brush strokes in several layers of acrylic paint.

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections**Prereading Idea**

Using the strategy of Think-Pair-Share, have students reflect on where they have met their closest friends. How did they become friends? Was it an easy process or a bumpy one? Have students brainstorm what qualities make up a satisfying friendship. How important is being able to work through misunderstandings with your friends? (Sam and Nate started their friendship with a fight in chapter 1!)

Classroom Discussion Questions

Who are all the people in your school community? How many people help Mr. Tangent in chapter 5?

Is taking a vote the best way for a group to decide what to study? What are some other ways or strategies for groups to make decisions together? (See chapter 2.)

Describe the personality differences between the two main characters, Sam and Nate. (Even though Sam and Nate are trying to be twins in chapter 3, it is also the part of the book where they are least like each other.)

Mr. Tangent used to teach high school before he taught Sam’s and Nate’s class. What do you imagine it will be like when you go to high school?

Sam and Nate encounter communication problems, bossy kids and separation anxiety at school. What are good strategies for solving problems with others?

Suggested Activities

Create a Quiz Show, much like Mrs. Licorice does in chapter 4. Make questions from whatever unit you are studying and put them on index cards. Divide the class into two teams. Then set up a tic-tac-toe grid on the blackboard. Each team wins a spot as “X” or “O” when they successfully answer a question together. If a team gets three spots in a row, they win!

Have students write a Days-of-the-Week story that includes a problem and a solution. “On Monday...On Tuesday...” (In *Sam and Nate*, chapters 1, 2 and 4 are set up that way.)

Read chapter 2 to launch a group research unit about animals. (Sam’s group: Dinosaurs, page 18; Nate’s group: Monkeys, page 19-20)

Study the most fascinating mammals on the planet: whales! In chapter 4, Sam and Nate measure out a Blue Whale in the hallway and create a habitat diorama, among other things. Why not dive right in and do the same?

Rock your classroom like Sam and Nate do in chapter 3! If you’re hesitant to teach your own music class, check out one of the inclusive musical packages below—both are sure to be a bit hit on whatever scale you use them.

Other Titles and Websites of Interest

Find the musical package *Celebrate You and Me—Helping Kids Build Self-Esteem* by Roger Emerson at www.musicfirstexpress.com. It contains the song “R-E-S-P-E-C-T” that Mrs. Licorice used for her students in chapter 3.

Another fun musical for primaries is *Dinostars!* by John Jacobson and Mark Brymer, found at www.musicfirstexpress.com. Great classroom fun for Jurassic lovers like Sam and Nate!

Jeffrey and Sloth by Kari-Lynn Winters and Ben Hodson (Orca, 2007). This is a great picturebook for exploring issues of power and powerlessness and for helping students to solve their own problems (see *Sam and Nate*, chapter 2).

Don’t let Mr. Tangent teach your weather unit (*Sam and Nate*, chapter 6). Get ideas from the pros at www.theweatherchannelkids.com/weather.

Check out my favorite toy company at www.melissaanddoug.com. They have an affordable and adorable wooden mailbox for your classroom (or you could just make your own with a box). Either way, kids just love mail! (*Sam and Nate*, chapter 1.)

Reviews

“It is always a pleasure to read a story that skillfully takes the reader into the heart of a working classroom...much of the humor—while funny to adults—will be found authentic to young readers...Social interactions, friendship, loss, and perseverance are all themes that can be found in this dramatic little window into school life in the elementary grades.”
—*Resource Links*