



Story Summary

Elliot's parents love him very much, but all is not well. When he cries, they do not understand why. When he yells, they do not know what to do. When he misbehaves, they do not know how to react. One day a social worker named Thomas comes to

visit, and Elliot's world turns upside down. The new foster families that care for the little boy are kind, but everything is strange and new, and the sudden changes make him want to cry and yell AND misbehave. Then, when it becomes clear that Elliot's parents will never be able to take care of him, Thomas sets out to find Elliot one last home—a forever, forever home with a family that will love and care for him no matter what.

Julie Pearson conceived of *Elliot*, her first picture book, during her first months as an adoptive mother. She has worked as an educator in child and youth centers for over twelve years, and is passionate about children and their development. Julie lives near Sherbrooke, Quebec.

Manon Gauthier is a graphic artist who made the leap to picture book illustration in 2006. After her first book was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for Children's Literature, she dedicated herself entirely to illustration, and to giving presentations and art workshops in schools across Quebec. A flexible artist, Manon works in many media, including gouache, pencils, and paper collage. She lives in Montreal.

Additional Resources

Pair this book with other books depicting different family situations, such as the ones compiled on these webpages:

www.parenting.com/gallery/divorce-books-children

www.readbrightly.com/books-about-all-kinds-of-families

www.into.ie/lgbt/EducationalResources/ListofPictureBooksforInclusion.pdf

Picture Book Ages 5–8 | ISBN: 978-1-927485-85-9 | Pages: 32

Themes:

Adoption, Family, Acceptance, Feelings

BISAC Codes

JUV013050 JUVENILE FICTION / Family / Orphans & Foster Homes

JUV013010 JUVENILE FICTION / Family / Adoption

JUV039050 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Issues / Emotions & Feelings

Reading Level:

Fountas & Pinnell: N | Lexile: AD530L



Curriculum Connections

This guide contains a read-aloud guide and three extensive follow-up units.

Activity/Unit	Main Subject Area	Specific Skills
Read-Aloud	Oral Comprehension (all primary grades)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activating prior knowledge Visualizing Making connections Making inferences
All Kinds of Families	Belonging and Contributing (kindergarten) Social Studies (grade 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of identity Diversity in families Respect for individual differences People and relationships
Feelings	Self-Regulation and well-being (kindergarten) Healthy-Living Skills (grade 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify feelings in themselves and others Empathy
Timeline of My Life	Social Studies (grade one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restate information from text Gather information from primary sources Understand chronology

THE READ-ALoud

This touching story will introduce the idea of foster families to young primary children who are unfamiliar with the concept, and will affirm those students who have experienced it firsthand, particularly during a study of “My Family,” when these vulnerable children might otherwise feel isolated because their family is not like those of their peers. On some pages, you may wish to interrupt the reading to discuss the suggested comprehension questions, or you may prefer to flip back to those pages after an initial, uninterrupted reading.

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- use comprehension strategies such as activating prior knowledge, visualizing, making connections, and making inferences to understand the text
- gain an awareness of the foster system and adoption

You Will Need

- Elliot*

How to:

Before Reading

Activate prior knowledge by asking “What is a family?” “What does a family look like?” “Who is in a family?” “Are all families the same?” Call on a few different students for each question. “We’re going to read a story about Elliot and his family.”

During Reading

Suggested Questions:

Page 2: “Why might Elliot have cried?”

Page 3: “Why might Elliot have yelled?”

Page 4: “Use your imagination. Think about what happens if you misbehave.”

Page 5: “Who might Elliot’s parents have talked to? Where might Thomas be from?” Children might be familiar with various agencies in their community.

Page 8: “How might Elliot feel?”

Page 9: “What do you need when you are hungry?”

Page 10: “What do you need when you are upset?”

Page 12: “How might Elliot feel?”

Pp. 14-16: “How is this different from the beginning?”

Page 17: “Why do you think Thomas didn’t take Elliot to the same family as before?”

Page 18: “What would you think about that?”

Page 21: Discuss how having playmates fills the need for attention and invite comments around how students can help their peers behave simply by being a friend.

Page 23: “How is Elliot feeling?”

Page 27: “How are this family’s reactions different?” “How would that make Elliot feel?”

Page 29: “What does adopted mean?” “How might Elliot feel?”

After Reading

If you had a friend like Elliot, what could you do? Describe situations in which a student acts out because they are worried or upset. Discuss ways that peers can help (e.g. by inviting them to play).

ALL KINDS OF FAMILIES

This activity celebrates families of all kinds.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity among individuals and families and within schools and the wider community
- demonstrate a sense of identity and a positive self-image
- demonstrate respect and consideration for individual differences and alternative points of view
- identify some of the significant people in their life and describe relationships

You Will Need

- six or more paper circles, each about 18” in diameter
- 25 paper circles (or a class set), each about 10” in diameter
- chart stand, markers

How to:

1. Read a variety of picture books depicting different kinds of families. Websites that list books about different types of families as well as other ways of

being unique are: www.parenting.com/gallery/divorce-books-children, www.readbrightly.com/books-about-all-kinds-of-families, www.into.ie/lgbt/EducationalResources/ListofPictureBooksforInclusion.pdf

Include these types of books in shared, guided, and independent reading lessons too, if possible.

2. Attach a large paper circle to the chart stand. Invite a student to draw Elliot and his parents. “Some families are like this one. They have two parents and one child.” Invite another student to come up and draw, on a new circle, Elliot’s first foster family, including the cat. Repeat with the second foster family (“Some families have three children and a noisy bird!”) and the adoptive family. Ask, “Are there other kinds of families?” Draw a family, for example, that has a grandmother caring for three children who are cousins, and one that includes just one parent and one child, and other sorts of families that might be represented in your community. “If I asked Elliot to draw his family at the end of the story, what do you think he would draw?” Suggest that he might draw his adoptive family but would include his birth parents on the paper since they are still part of his life. Take the drawing a student made of Elliot’s adoptive family and add the birth parents at the edges. This will help students illustrate complex family situations. You will ask them to draw their own family on one of the small circles. They might choose to draw the family with whom they spend the most time (e.g. Mom, step-Dad, sibling) but also include their other family members that they stay with occasionally (e.g. Dad, step-mom, step-siblings and also extended family members). Have them label and color all their family members.
3. Assignment: Have students gather from home, or from extended family members, one family tradition, one family story, and one family recipe. Have them share these with the class.

FEELINGS

Students often have a limited vocabulary for feelings. This activity will help them name and describe a wider variety.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- be aware of and label their own emotions and those of others
- communicate their thoughts and feelings through language and various art forms

You Will Need

- *Elliot*
- poster of various feelings: a montage of a variety of faces (photos or drawings) with a unique facial expression and corresponding label (many are available online)
- chart paper and markers
- paper and drawing supplies

How To:

1. Cut up the feelings poster so that each photo or face drawing is a separate piece with its label attached.
2. Begin an anchor chart with the heading “Feelings.”
3. Re-read *Elliot*, pausing at the end of each page to discuss the feelings represented there. Choose one or two of the best represented feelings for each page and list them on the chart. Beside each, get a student helper to stick on the corresponding picture from the

feelings chart. This will help your non-readers access the anchor chart. You might end up with a list that includes happy, sad, frustrated, angry, confused, worried, homesick, hungry, upset, lonely, excited, scared, comforted, included, unsure, accepted, loved. If your poster does not contain all of these, invite students to act out the feelings, take digital photos, and add them to the chart later. Even if the photos don't depict these tricky feeling very well, they will act as a visual aid to your students trying to read the words.

4. Read the anchor chart every day until students can read or recite it on their own.
5. Select a feeling and ask students to imagine a time when they felt that way. Using a “think-pair-share” technique, have them share with a partner near them what was happening when they felt that way. Have a few students share their experience with the whole group. Repeat with other feelings.
6. Have students choose one feeling and draw about a time they felt that way. Encourage them to label their picture with the feeling word, or write or dictate a sentence like “I felt lonely when my brother was at a sleepover.”
7. Using the artwork, *Elliot*, and other stories as inspiration, have students act out, or use puppets to act out, some of these situations, including acting out how they might help a person who is feeling a certain way.



TIMELINE OF MY LIFE

Students will create a timeline showing significant events in their lives. This activity can stand on its own or be part of a larger project that includes a family tree, family stories, and family traditions (see Activity #1: All Kinds of Families).

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- demonstrate understanding of a text by retelling the story or restating information from the text, with the inclusion of a few interesting details (Reading)
- gather and organize information on significant events, people, and/or places in their lives that contribute or have contributed to the development of their roles, relationships, responsibilities, and identity/sense of self (Social Studies)
- demonstrate an understanding of simple chronology by identifying and organizing chronologically some significant events related to their personal experience (Social Studies)

You Will Need

- *Elliot*
- “Timeline of My Life” blackline master
- Data projector or chart stand

How to:

1. Make copies of “Timeline of My Life” blackline master, enough for one two-page set for each student. Don’t make two-sided copies because the parts will need to be cut out. Using one of the copies, model how to do a timeline, based on Elliot’s life. You and the students will use both explicit and implicit information from the book. You might also extrapolate additional details using the students’ ideas.
2. Say, “Elliot’s teacher has asked him to make a timeline of his life, but he doesn’t know how, so we are going to help him.” Show students the blackline master. Follow the instructions on the master to make the actual timeline and display it horizontally on the data projector or chart stand. Guide students to come up with the title “Elliot’s Timeline” and write that at the top.

3. Ask, “How old do you think Elliot is?” Guide them to agree on a reasonable age and then help them calculate his birth year, based on the current year. Have a student draw Elliot as a new baby bunny in the first box and write the caption “I was born” along with the agreed-upon date. Cut this box out and place it at the beginning of the timeline.
4. Go through the book, choosing several events of Elliot’s life, having students illustrate them and making up dates. Some details will be inferred. For example, on page 1, say “Elliot really seems to like this toy bunny. He has it on every page. I wonder where he got it?” Students will probably suggest that someone gave it to him. Agree on a date and make a box captioned, “I got my toy bunny.” Place it on the timeline. The next event could be “Thomas came to visit.” The next might be “I lived with a foster family that had a cat.” The final event could be Elliot’s adoption party. Students may suggest adding other events that are not in the book, such as Elliot starting school.
5. Tell students that they will make their own timelines, but instead of using all drawings, they will be allowed to include some photographs if they have them. Tell them they may get their caregivers to help them, since it will be hard to remember what they did when they were very young.
6. Send home the 2-page blackline master plus a blank sheet of paper for each child. If you believe that some students do not have scissors and glue sticks at home, communicate with caregivers and see what can be done to provide them. A simple solution is to give the student pre-cut components and give them a glue stick.



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Timeline of My Life

Caregivers are encouraged to work together with their children on this assignment.

1. Cut a blank sheet of paper in half lengthwise. Glue or tape the two pieces together end to end to create one long, narrow sheet of paper. Draw a thick black line down the middle. This will be your Timeline. Place it horizontally on the table and write your name at the top. It should look like this:

Taylor's Timeline

2. Think about the important events of your life. See if you have any photographs of some of them. If not, you can draw the events in the boxes below and write the date and the event in the box too. Or you may use some photos and some drawings. Cut the boxes out. You can include events like your birth, getting a new sibling, moving to a new home, special visits or trips, starting school.
3. Arrange the pictures in chronological order along the timeline. They will fit best if you alternate putting one above and one below the line. Glue them on. Put dates and titles below any pictures that do not yet have them. It might end up looking something like this:

Taylor's Timeline

The diagram shows a horizontal timeline line. Above the line, there are five rectangular boxes. Below the line, there are five rectangular boxes. The boxes alternate above and below the line, starting with one above, one below, one above, one below, and one above.

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