



Casey Keys and Her Powerful Sneeze

Educator Notes



Written by Meg Riley
Illustrated by Garth Cochrane

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Recommended for: ages 3-6
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Plot Summary

Hold onto your hat – you're about to meet Casey Keys and her powerful sneeze!
Meet Casey Keys – the girl with the biggest, loudest, most powerful sneeze the world has ever known!

Casey feels like a walking disaster as her sneezes cause chaos all over town, launching lawn chairs, rattling rooftops and sending cats flying into treetops. Embarrassed and overwhelmed, Casey runs away in search of peace ... but instead discovers a wild, whirling power within her – and a way to turn her stormy sneezes into something truly extraordinary.

Themes

- Allergies
- Feelings and emotions
- Renewable energy
- Problem-solving
- Friendship

Rich and interesting words: wheeze, scent, sturdy, gale, skimming, turbines, handkerchief, expertise



Key Curriculum Learning Areas

Early Years Learning Framework:

Learning Outcome 2 – Children have a strong sense of identity

Even though Casey Keys is a light-hearted, humorous story, it touches on the feelings of embarrassment and overwhelm that can accompany a health condition, especially for children experiencing this for the first time. The storyline shows how with the support and empathy of her friends and family, Casey comes back feeling powerful and confident. It provides children an example of interacting in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

Learning Outcome 4 - Children are confident and involved learners

This story has several examples of problem-solving – not only the grand finale of the sneeze-powered amusement park, but the smaller example of Casey’s friends supporting her with an enormous handkerchief. It also opens up opportunities for further discussion on wind energy, via sailboats, hot air balloons, and wind turbines. Exploring renewable energy through real-world applications makes a tangible, relatable learning experience for children.

Australian Curriculum

Learning Area: English

Foundation

<p>Language: Language for interacting with others</p>	<p>Explore different ways of using language to express preferences, likes and dislikes (AC9EFLA02)</p>
<p>Language: Language for expressing and developing ideas</p>	<p>Explore the contribution of image and words to meaning in stories and informative text (AC9EFLE07)</p>
<p>Literacy: Phonic and Word Knowledge</p>	<p>Recognise and generate rhyming words, alliteration patterns, syllables and sounds (phonemes) in spoken words (phonological awareness) (AC9EFLY09)</p>
<p>Literacy: Examining literature</p>	<p>Recognise different types of literary texts and identify features including events, characters, and beginnings and endings (AC9EFLE03)</p>

Conversation Starters

Before Reading

- What can you see on the cover? What do you think is happening? How do you know this?
- Ask children to make a prediction of what they think might happen in the story based on the front and back cover.
- Take time to explain to children the role of an author and/or illustrator. This general knowledge adds to their print awareness and engagement of reading.

While Reading

- *"When Casey tries to make it stop, her nose goes red, her cheeks get hot."* You may like to use this as an opportunity to discuss the physical sensation that accompanies sneezing. Ask children what it feels like for them – does their nose get itchy or tingly? Do their eyes scrunch up tight?
- *"Her friends all wonder what to do with Casey and her big ACHOO!"* take a moment to discuss how Casey might be feeling on this page. What does her facial expression and body language tell you about how she may feel? What about her friends, how might they be feeling?
- *"Casey is carrying a suitcase – I wonder where she's going?"* Using 'I wonder' statements and open-ended questions allow for language-building opportunities and back-and-forth interactions.
- *"The breezes blow and turbines spin..."* this is an opportunity to introduce wind turbines and their role in wind energy. This could be something you discuss in more depth after the story.
- You might need to explain to children what a handkerchief is. Better yet, have one as an example for children to see the difference between a handkerchief and a tissue (and notice that they are not usually as big as the one in the book!).
- The last page with Casey's sneeze-powered amusement fair is very busy and colourful. Ask children what they notice on this page, and point out some characters/elements featured on previous pages – the wind turbines in the background, the fluffy cat, etc.

After Reading

- Throughout the story, Casey has several allergies that *"itch her nose and make her sneeze"*. This is a great opportunity to talk about how some people are more susceptible to sneezing and allergies, and perhaps discuss some of Casey's allergy triggers throughout the book.
- Ask children to recall some of Casey's allergy triggers – this helps them practice their narrative retell skills.
- Explore the ways that Casey's friends helped her to feel better.
- Spend some time perusing the illustration on the last page. You could ask children: if you came into this amusement park, what might you want to see first?

FURTHER ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS

Some interesting facts about sneezing from Queensland Health:

- Sneezes can expel snot as forcefully as 161 km per hour
- One sneeze can expel up to 40,000 droplets
- You don't sneeze in your sleep – your brain's 'sneeze centre' is also asleep
- Covering your sneezes with your elbow and washing your hands is still the best way to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses

Wind power is a rapidly growing, emission-free, renewable power source that converts kinetic energy from air movement into electricity using turbines. It is one of the cheapest forms of new energy, with global capacity rising over 98-fold since 1997.

You may like to explore more discussions around wind and wind energy, perhaps making a kite craft, a pinwheel craft or a sailboat craft.

Check out the activities on our website littlebookpress.com.au

About the Author

Meg Riley was born in the UK. Her love of language and literature led to an early career teaching English and Drama, but her dream was always to write. She has published poetry, and articles on travel and knitting, while filling countless notebooks with story ideas. After fortuitously emigrating to South Australia, she joined a knitting circle and became one of the founding editors of *Yarn Magazine*. A proud recipient of the Little Book Press Mentorship Program 2025, *Casey Keys and Her Powerful Sneeze* is her debut picture book.

About the Illustrator

Garth Cochrane studied Visual Communications (Illustration) at the University of South Australia and has worked as an animator, freelance illustrator and video game artist for clients including LucasArts, Warner Brothers and Halfbrick. Now a passionate primary visual arts teacher, Garth brings his love of storytelling and creativity into the classroom every day. This debut picture book marks the exciting beginning of his journey as a children's book illustrator.

