



The Thing About Christmas

Educator Notes



Written by Jo Dabrowski
Illustrated by Briony Stewart

Published by Little Book Press, October 2025
Recommended for: ages 3 – 7 (lower primary)
ISBN (Aus): 978-1-923141407

Plot Summary

The Thing About Christmas is a warm and joyful picture book that reminds us of what really matters during the holiday season.

Brimming with festive spirit, it celebrates love, togetherness and the magic of making the season your own – no matter how big or small.

Perfect for families starting new traditions or cherishing old ones, this modern holiday tale carries a timeless message at its core.

There's no right or wrong, whatever you do – Christmas in your home is unique, just like you.

Themes

- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Celebration & traditions
- Family & friendship
- Love

Rich and interesting words: telly, mistletoe, grand, wreath, unique

Key Curriculum Learning Areas

Early Years Learning Framework:

Learning Outcome 1 – Children have a strong sense of identity

Belonging, being and becoming are integral parts of identity. This inclusive story showcases many diverse families and lifestyles. Educators can use this book to show and teach respect for diversity, and discuss the varied and unique ways that people live and celebrate.

Learning Outcome 2 - Children are connected with, and contribute to their world

Children develop a sense of connectedness and belonging to a group when they attend preschool/kindergarten/school and are with their peers regularly. In this story, the common theme of Christmas is intertwined with a focus on individual traditions, helping children become aware that diversity presents opportunities for choices and new understandings. This, in turn, leads to increased empathy when interacting with the world around them.

Learning Outcome 3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Sub-outcome 3.1 - Children become strong in their social, emotional and mental wellbeing

This is evident when children communicate their physical and emotional needs. This story has various examples of communicating different emotions, both directly (it makes you feel shy) and indirectly (Christmas just can't have the usual cheer). Use this book in conjunction with discussions around feelings and emotions. The subtle illustrations throughout the book do an excellent job portraying a range of scenarios and building awareness of different emotions.

Australian Curriculum

Learning Area: English

Foundation

Language: Language for expressing and developing ideas	Explore the contribution of image and words to meaning in stories and informative text (AC9EFLE07)
Literature: Literature: Engaging with and responding to literature	Respond to stories and share feelings and thoughts about their events and characters
Literacy: : Interacting with others	Interact in informal and structured situations by listening while others speak and using features of voice including volume levels (AC9EFLY02)

Year 1

Language: Language for expressing and developing ideas	Understand how language, facial expressions and gestures are used to interact with others when asking for and providing information, making offers, exclaiming, requesting and giving commands (AC9E1LA01)
Literature: Engaging with and responding to literature	Discuss literary texts and share responses by making connections with students' own experiences (AC9E1LE02)
Literacy: Interacting with others	Use interaction skills including turn-taking, speaking clearly, using active listening behaviours and responding to the contributions of others, and contributing ideas and questions (AC9E1LY02)

Conversation Starters

Before Reading

- The front cover is very bright and colourful. What can you see on the cover?
- This book is called *The Thing About Christmas*. What is the first thing you think of when you think about Christmas?
- Make a prediction. What do you think the story is about?

While Reading

- This book uses a lot of Australian slang and shortened words, such as 'spuds,' 'chook,' 'telly' and 'veggies'. Take time to go through these slang words with children, do not assume everyone knows them.
- The illustrator uses warm and cool tones as contrasts throughout the book. Take a moment to talk about these with children. For example, it looks warm and cozy on this page.
- The illustrations convey many different emotions and scenarios. Take time to talk about what is happening on each page, and how the children may be feeling based on their facial expressions and body language.
- "But none of your friends quite understand why. And when you explain it, it makes you feel shy." Use this illustration as an example of what 'feeling shy' may look like. Discuss why children might feel shy in a situation like this - where they possibly feel left out, isolated, or like they do not fit in with others.

• After Reading

- On the last page, there is a home-made Christmas ornament with "I love you" written on it. Use this as a tool to discuss ways you could show your love to people you care about, or as an opportunity to create some home-made crafts.
- "Christmas in your home's unique, just like you." Discuss how every family is unique, and comes with different traditions and celebrations. You may like to utilise a group discussion, or have children share something special about their family.
- Although this story is about Christmas, the learning can be extended to all celebrations and special occasions. Use this as an opportunity to talk about ways that children celebrate other occasions. What is something special that you do to celebrate your birthday? I wonder what other special occasions people celebrate?
- The themes of celebration and family can be combined in a conversation about planning a special occasion. Who in your family would come? Where would it be and why? What food would you have?
- The story showcases a diverse range of landscapes and families. Use this as a tool to explore various traditions in different countries around the world, not limited to Christmas.

About the Author

Jo Dabrowski is a Melbourne-based children's author and illustrator with a background in advertising. Her titles include the middle-grade novel *Get Your Act Together, Doris Kozlowski*, shortlisted for the 2024 Readings Prize, and children's picture book *Higher!* Jo currently runs a creative agency with her husband from home, where she continues to contribute heartwarming words and pictures to modern children's books.

About the Illustrator

Briony Stewart is an award-winning author and illustrator of over 25 children's books. She wrote and illustrated the 2025 CBCA Shortlisted *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Tooth Fairy*, the 2020 CBCA Honourable *We Love You Magoo*, and illustrated *Mina and the Whole Wide World*, which won the 2022 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Children's Fiction.

