

Happy Hearts Teacher's Notes

About the Book

Title: Happy Hearts

Author: Jevita Nilson

Illustrator: Marina Zlatanova

Publisher: New Holland Publishers

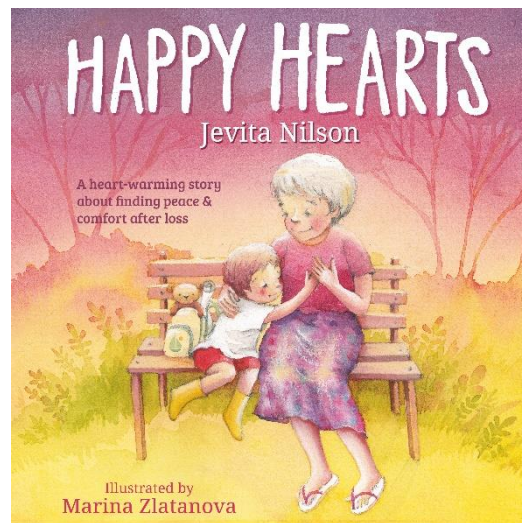
ISBN: 9781760791445

Year Level: K-3

Themes: Grief/loss, emotions, imagination, family, love.

Key Curriculum Areas:

- **English** (Language, Literature, Literacy)
- **The Arts** (Visual Arts)
- **Health and Physical Education** (Personal, Social and Community Health)



Synopsis

Zachary's heart is full of sadness...he misses his Nanna and he wonders what it's like in heaven. Determined to find out, Zachary embarks on a magical adventure with an extra special person to guide him.

Happy Hearts is an uplifting story to help children navigate their emotions and find comfort after the loss of a loved one.

About the Author

Jevita Nilson is a children's author from Perth, Western Australia. She writes meaningful and uplifting stories for young children and is passionate about creating stories that inspire readers to discover their imagination and creativity. She was inspired to write *Happy Hearts* after the death of her mother and the main character, Zachary, is based on her young son. Jevita also works as an Organisational Development Consultant in the Public Sector and is a busy mum of two young children.

About the Illustrator

Marina Zlatanova is a children's author and illustrator from Melbourne, Victoria. *Charlie's Shell*, her debut picture book as author/illustrator was shortlisted for the 2020 Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year Awards. She has also illustrated several self-published children's books including *Tommy and the Magic Paintbrush*. When she's not creating children's books, Marina works as a digital designer.

Themes

- **Grief / Loss:** The story allows children to discuss death and the emotions they may feel after losing a loved one. Children can explore how imagination can assist with understanding grief and loss.
- **Emotions:** Using the language and the events in the story, children can learn about emotions and discuss how different emotions make them feel physically and how they might show on your face and in your body language.
- **Imagination:** Using the story of Zachary's adventure to heaven, children can discuss what imagination is and explore their own unique imaginations. They can consider how Zachary's imagination helped change his emotions, and how they could use their imaginations to feel happy.
- **Family and love:** Discussing the connection between Zachary and Nanna, children can talk about their family and the unique connections they have with each of these people.

Pre-Reading Questions

- Look at the front cover of the book and read the title. What do you think the book might be about? How does the illustration on the front cover make you feel?
- How do you think the two characters on the front cover are connected? What emotions do you think these characters are feeling?
- Read the blurb on the back of the book. What does this tell you about the story? Is this different to what you thought when you saw the front cover?
- Looking at the cover and reading the blurb, what questions do you have about the book?

Discussion Questions

- Who are the different characters in this story? Who do you think is the main character?
- Why do you think the author wrote the story?
- How would you describe the main character, Zachary? How does the text and illustrations help convey Zachary's personality and qualities?
- What different emotions does Zachary feel throughout the story? Explore why Zachary is feeling these different emotions. How is he feeling at the beginning of the story and how does he feel at the end? Why do you think his emotions have changed at the end?
- Has someone you loved died? How did this make you feel?
- What do you think imagination means? Have you ever had trouble imagining something you haven't seen before?
- When Zachary described the place filled with all the things that would make him smile, laugh and dance, how did you imagine this place? Was it the same as how the illustrator imagined this place?
- What style has the illustrator used for the illustrations? What mediums do you think the illustrator has used? How do the illustrations make you feel?

Suggested Activities

- Activity Sheet 1 – English Comprehension Questions
- Activity Sheet 2 – English Vocabulary
- Activity Sheet 3 – Sequencing Activity
- Activity Sheet 4 – Emotion Recognition
- Activity Sheet 5 – Things I Love
- Activity Sheet 6 – Word Search
- Other suggested activities:
 - Create a story map and have the children recreate *Happy Hearts* through their own drawings.
 - Focusing on the wonderful bond Zachary has with Nanna, ask the children to think about a family member they love. Explore the emotions they feel for this person and the things they like to do together.
 - Ask the children to imagine a place filled with all the things they love. Give the children a shallow box, different craft items and toys to create a diorama of their imaginary place.

Resources

Author / Illustrator Resources:

- Jevita Nilson's website: www.jevitanilson.com
- Jevita Nilson's Instagram: @jevita.nilson.writes
- Marina Zlatanova's Instagram: @marinazart

Grief Resources for Children:

- Australian Centre of Grief and Bereavement
<https://www.grief.org.au/>
- National Centre for Childhood Grief
<https://www.childhoodgrief.org.au/>
- Good Grief
<https://www.goodgrief.org.au/>
- Kids Helpline - Supporting a child through grief and loss:
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/supporting-child-through-grief-and-loss>
- Raising Children – Death: How to talk about it with children
<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/connecting-communicating/tough-topics/death-how-to-talk-about-it>
- Maggie Dent – Death Through the Eyes of a Child
<https://www.maggiedent.com/blog/death-through-eyes-child/>
- Maggie Dent – Children's books to help with death, dying and illness
<https://www.maggiedent.com/blog/books-death-loss-and-illness-children/>



Happy Hearts Activity Sheet 1

English – Comprehension Questions

Where does Zachary's Nanna live now?

How does Zachary's mum describe heaven?

Why does Zachary struggle to imagine heaven?

What items does Zachary pack in his bag before he goes searching for heaven?

Why does Zachary feel scared after he climbs out the window?

When Zachary is asked to imagine a place filled with everything that makes him smile, laugh and dance, what things does he imagine? Name three.

Can you name three things in Nanna's special place?



Happy Hearts Activity Sheet 2

English – Vocabulary

Can you find any words in this book that are new to you? What do you think they mean? (Hint: look at other words around them and how the author uses them in the story.)

Word	Meaning

Are these words used as nouns (people, places, things), verbs (happenings and states) or adjectives (qualities) in Happy Hearts? Write the words in the correct box below.

rainbows
buries
ocean

smile
jumps
gasps

shimmering
eagles
rugged

Nouns

Verbs

Adjectives



Happy Hearts Activity Sheet 3

Sequencing Activity

Cut out the sentences and put the story in the correct order.

Zachary sees Nanna sitting on the bench.

Zachary visits Nanna's special place.

Zachary asks Nanna if her heart is happy.

Zachary asks his mum what it's like in heaven.

Zachary knows Nanna's heart is happy, and that makes his heart happy too.

Zachary hugs Nanna extra tight and she disappears into the night.

Zachary imagines a place filled with everything that makes him smile, laugh and dance.

Zachary climbs out the window in search of heaven.



Happy Hearts Activity Sheet 4

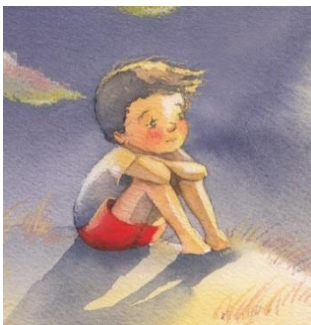
Emotion Recognition

Describe how you think Zachary is feeling in each of these illustrations. What features of the illustration shows he is feeling this way?













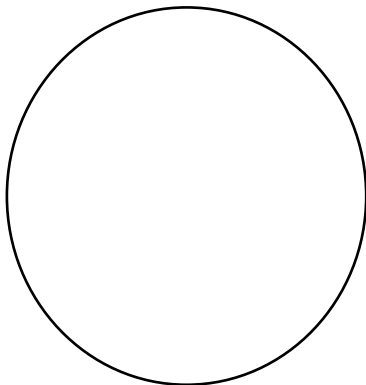
Happy Hearts Activity Sheet 5

Things I Love

Draw a picture of a place filled with all the things you love.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the child to draw a place filled with things they love.

How do you feel when you think about the things you love? Draw how these emotions would show on your face.

Four horizontal lines, one above the other, intended for the child to write their answers.



Happy Hearts Activity Sheet 6

Word Search

Can you help Zachary find all the words in the grid below?

 H L Z E S G
 A E O B U H C A E B
 H Y A V W K L P Z R N B P J
M A D V E N T U R E T A P P L E S
H P A E J S T O O B M U G H G A P
S P I N S V R X P Q S T E S N U S
V Y N E T M A G I C A L I M L W I
I R T R D E W O D C M D I O K
 I M A G I N E R A S J L Y
 S E Z A C H A R Y D E
 H X F Z B G U Y P
 J S K O O B E
 N A N N A
 O B S
 P

Word List

Adventure

Apples

Beach

Books

Dragons

Gumboots

Happy

Hearts

Heaven

Imagine

Love

Magical

Nanna

Smile

Sunsets

Zachary