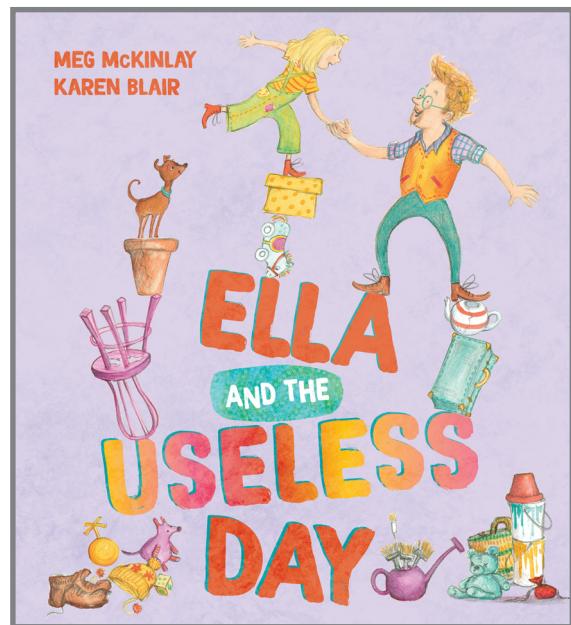


Ella and the Useless Day

AUTHOR**MEG MCKINLAY****ILLUSTRATOR****KAREN BLAIR****SCIS:** 5414619**ISBN:** 9781760653095**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Lower Primary**SYNOPSIS**

Ella's house is full of things...useless things! At least that's what she and Dad think. But when they decide to have a clean-up day, something very curious happens. Maybe what is useless to them is treasure to someone else?

A heartwarming picture book about community, sustainability and how one neighbour's rubbish is another's treasure.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Meg McKinlay is the author of eighteen books ranging from picture books and young adult fiction through to poetry for adults. Raised in central Victoria, in a TV-and car-free household, Meg was a bookish kid, in love with words and excited by dictionaries. On the long and winding path to becoming a children's writer, she has worked a variety of jobs including swim instructor, tour guide, translator and teacher. Meg is now a full-time writer and lives near the ocean in Fremantle, Western Australia, where she is always busy cooking up more books.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Karen Blair grew up in Perth, Western Australia. She loves to illustrate the joys and adventures of childhood. She lives in Fremantle with her husband and two children and works part-time as a primary-school art teacher. Her characters are often inspired by her students and her own children. Her award-winning books include *Something Wonderful* and *Hello From Nowhere* by Raewyn Caisley, *With Nan* by Tania Cox, *Granny Grommet and Me* by Dianne Wolfer, *Me and You* by Deborah Kelly, *Baby Beats*, and *Baby Animal Farm*.

THEMES

- Upcycling
- Sustainability
- Community
- Family

STUDY NOTES

- View the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:
 - The title
 - The author and illustrator

- The publisher
- The blurb.
- What do you think the story might be about from looking at the title only? Do your ideas change after seeing the cover?
 - Write your own story using the title *Ella and the Useless Day*.
- Who do you think the audience for this book is? Why?
- Write a book review on *Ella and the Useless Day*. Include what you liked about the book, who you think would enjoy it the most and mention any other books you think are similar.
- On the whiteboard or on a large sheet of paper, place an image of the cover of *Ella and the Useless Day* and surround it with words that describe the book. Include words that describe what you liked and what you disliked about the book.
- In the story, Ella and Dad ‘searched and scrambled and sorted’, ‘poked and picked and piled’, ‘hunted and hoisted and heaved’. Why do you think these words have been grouped together? Alliteration is words that repeat the same letter or sound at the beginning. Why do you think the author chose to use alliteration in the book?
- Have you ever had a clear out at home like Ella and Dad? What are the reasons you needed to do a clear out (old, broken, outgrown, etc)? Do you think that all the items you cleared out were useless or are the items only useless to the person who doesn’t want them anymore? What did you do with all the things that were cleared out? After reading the story, are you inspired to look for other ways to clear out unwanted or useless belongings?
- As a class, brainstorm as many options as you can think of to reuse ‘useless’ items rather than taking them to the tip (i.e. selling, donating, recycling, upcycling, trading, refurbishing, etc). You may like to explore the library resources and learn more about recycling. Can you find a book on upcycled arts and crafts?
- As Ella and Dad move through the town towards the tip, their neighbours ask for the useless things and seem very excited to have them. Without looking at the end papers, can you think of reasons why each person wanted an apparently useless thing? Use your imagination and be creative! Once you have some ideas, look through the end papers to discover what everyone did with their useless things. Did you have the same ideas or were they all very surprising creations?
- Analyse one of the double-page spreads from the book. Questions to ask could include:
 - What do you look at first? Why? How does your eye travel around the page? (This is called the “reading path”.)
 - What techniques and materials has Karen Blair used? (For example, pencil, watercolour, ink.)
 - What perspective has she used? Is the picture shown close-up or from a distance?
 - What objects are big and small? Why are they shown this way?
 - What objects are in the foreground (front) of the picture? The background? Midground?
 - What are the dominant colours? What mood (feeling) do these colours create?
 - Where are the people in the picture looking? Why are they looking there? What effect does this have?
 - How do the illustrations add to the story? How would the story be different if there were no illustrations?
- Imagine you received one of Ella and Dad’s useless things. What would you turn it in to? Draw a picture of what you would turn your useless item into.
- How do you think the useless thing came to belong to Ella and Dad in the first place? What do you think they used it for and why? Write a paragraph about the origins of your useless item.
- What does the inside of your house look like? Draw yourself at home with your family: and make sure to include lots of objects and belongings that can be found in your house too!
- Do you know the people who live in your neighborhood? Think of something kind you could do for a neighbour, such as baking, writing a letter or drawing a picture. Ask an adult’s help to deliver your gift.
- Have you ever had an adventure in your community with a parent or a family member? Write a story or draw a picture about an adventure you would like to have.