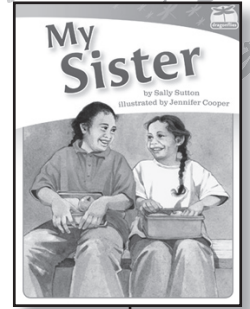


# My Sister

by Sally Sutton

illustrated by Jennifer Cooper



## Overview

A young girl, who has just started school, is too scared to go down the slide. Her older sister describes how they finally solve this problem.

## Suggested purposes

This book supports the comprehension strategies of making connections with real-life experiences and identifying the main ideas. The high-frequency words repeated in different sentence structures provide opportunities to practise rapid word recognition and develop fluency. The lively dialogue supports expressive reading. This text is a good model of personal experience writing.

## Text features (Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the theme of overcoming fear and the idea that people can help when you're feeling scared
- the sisters' relationship
- the way that the big sister solves the problem
- the feelings of the characters conveyed through the expressive dialogue and illustrations
- the large amount of dialogue, including some that isn't explicitly attributed to a particular character
- the first-person narrator
- the high-frequency vocabulary
- the initial consonant blends – *cl, cr, pl, sl, st*
- the digraphs -th – *the, they, thanks*; -ch – *teacher*; -sh – *shouted*
- the verbs ending in -ed – *played, started, shouted*
- the imperative verbs – *come, help, jump, don't, hurry*
- the use of the adverb "too" for emphasis
- the contractions – *can't, it's, I'm, I'll, don't*
- the rimes -y – *my, cry*; -ound – *ground, around*
- the use of exclamation marks and upper-case letters for emphasis

## Setting the scene

Introduce the cover. *I'm wondering why these two girls are sitting together ...* Draw out the idea that they are sisters, and ask the students to read the title to confirm that. *If the word was "sister", what letters would you expect to see? Which sister is older? How do you know?*

## The first reading

As this story unfolds, the students may like to share any similar experiences. Encourage them to use these connections to reflect on what is happening, evaluate the big sister's ideas, predict whether they will work, and suggest solutions. Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

**Back cover** – Read aloud the preview question. Help the students to make connections with the preview question and their own experiences.

**Title page** – *What are the sisters doing?* Draw out the idea that the big sister is helping the little sister by pushing her on the swing.

Listen to the students read the text, offering support as necessary.

**Page 2** – Help the students to set the scene. *When is this happening? What’s the problem? Who do you think is telling the story?*

**Page 3** – Briefly discuss the little sister’s problem. *Has this ever happened to you?* Encourage the students to predict what the big sister might say.

**Pages 4 and 5** – Have the students review their predictions. *Did the big sister’s ideas work?* Make sure they realise that the last line of dialogue on each page is spoken by the little sister. *What words tell you the big sister’s ideas are not working.*

**Pages 6 and 7** – If the students need support with “bell”, prompt them with a meaning cue (*What happens at the end of playtime?*) and have them cross-check using visual information. If that word was “bell”, what letters would you expect to see?

Review the situation – not only is little sister stuck, but there is also the pressure of getting back to class. *I wonder how big sister is feeling ...* Encourage the students to predict what might happen next.

**Pages 8 and 9** – *How does the author want you to read the words in capitals?* Encourage expressive reading of the dialogue to help the students feel the increasing tension. Pause to recap the full extent of the problem. *They have to go back to class. What are they going to do?* The students could get into pairs to share possible solutions.

**Pages 10 to 12** – *Is this what you thought would happen? Do you think the little sister will go on the slide again?*

**Ideas for revisiting the text** (Choose only one or two per session.)

- Listen to the students reread the text, observing their integration of strategies and use of expression, especially when reading the dialogue.
- Encourage the students to share their experiences when they felt scared. *Who helped you?* Talk about the characters’ feelings and their relationship. The students could suggest thought bubbles for the big sister on page 8 or for both sisters on page 10.
- Explore the author’s style. *How does the author make this story exciting?* You could talk about the structure; the climax on page 9; the short, punchy sentences; the imperative verbs; the dialogue that shows the sisters’ feelings; the use of contractions to make the dialogue sound natural; the use of the word “shouted” to create tension; the use of the adverb “too”; and the use of exclamation marks and upper-case letters for impact.
- Focus on the narrative structure. Identify the introduction, the problem, the added pressure of time from page 6, and the ending. Talk about how the dialogue and the illustrations reflect the characters’ feelings and build tension.
- Review the purpose of the speech marks. Focus on the dialogue and draw out the idea that “said” or “shouted” do not always come at the beginning or end of a section of dialogue. You could discuss alternatives to “said”, for example, “cried”, “whispered”, or “whimpered”.
- Focus on any initial consonant blends or digraphs that caused difficulty. Locate examples in the text and list other words that start the same way or contain the same digraph.

- List the verbs that end in “ed”. Experiment with adding other endings to the root verbs (“shout”, “shouts”, “shouting”, “shouted”) and use the words orally in sentences.
- Focus on the contractions “can’t” and “don’t”. Identify their opposites and list others that are formed the same way, for example, “is” and “isn’t”, “was” and “wasn’t”.
- Generate a list of words using the “y” and “ound” rimes. Encourage the students to substitute initial blends as well as single consonants.

### **Suggestions for further activities**

- Read or reread other examples of writing about family relationships, such as the Dragonflies titles *Keep Trying* (emergent), *My Brother* (early), and *The School Band* (early).
- Use the text for readers’ theatre.
- Use this text as a model for shared personal experience writing. Include dialogue, using features such as contractions and punctuation for emphasis.
- Add thought bubbles to the illustrations on pages 8 and 10.
- Take digital photos of the students helping each other and add speech bubbles or captions with dialogue.
- BLM word activity: practise using blends

The students can practise saying the blends to a partner. They can complete the words by writing the correct blends in the spaces. They can then write three verbs from the story that end in “ed”.

- BLM comprehension activity: relate the story to own experiences

The students can identify why the girl is crying and write the reason in the box. They can write about a time when they felt sad and how the situation was resolved. They can then draw a picture in the box.