

Do Not Push

Author: Kyle Mewburn

Illustrator: Sarah N. Anderson

Synopsis

Cam is a curious boy who loves exploring the woods behind his home. One day he discovers a button that says "DO NOT PUSH". Despite what his mother says about always obeying signs, Cam pushes the button. After all, what's the worst that can happen? Cam arrives home to find that the whole world has been turned upside down. There are no longer any rules. Everybody does whatever they want. At first this seems like a dream come true to Cam - he experiences a freedom he's never felt before. But he soon realises that having no rules leads to chaos and can actually be quite dangerous. Will Cam be able to change things back or will he be doomed to live a life of pandemonium?

Text Type

Do Not Push is written by Kyle Mewburn, an award-winning New Zealand based author. Set in New Zealand, *Do Not Push* is a very funny junior Chapter book with wide appeal to both girls and boys. Written in easy to understand colloquial language the story is fast-paced and humorous. The illustrations by Sarah N. Anderson help reinforce the storyline and add interest to ensure that readers are engaged.

The main character Cam is extremely likeable and readers will be able to relate to his experiences. Initially Cam is thrilled to be able to do whatever he wants without consequences; but after a day of making his own meals, having no clean clothes and nearly getting killed on the way to school he begins to wonder if having rules might be a good thing after all.

Themes include the chaos that would ensue if there were no rules, the dangers that exist when a society lives in anarchy and the fact that we have rules for good reason.

Sharing the Novel

The novel has been divided up as follows: Chapters 1-3 (pp. 5-15), Chapters 4-6 (pp. 16-30) and Chapters 7-11 (pp. 31-56).

During the shared sessions encourage students to discuss their ideas and ask questions to clarify their understanding of words and concepts presented in the story. Have them make inferences and predict what is going to happen next in the story. Wherever possible, have students relate Cam's adventures to their own experiences and broader knowledge.

Introducing the Novel

Have students study the front cover of the novel and read the blurb.

- Why is the novel called *Do Not Push?*
- Why do you think people are tempted to do things that they are told not to?
- Who is the main character in the novel?
- What do you think happens when Cam pushes the button?

Teacher reads Chapters 1-3 (pp. 5-15) aloud. Students follow along in their books.

Comprehension Chapters 1-3 (pp. 5-15)

- Why does Cam enjoy exploring the forest so much? What is his favourite place in the forest? What is strange about the forest?
- Why does standing at the edge of the gully feel like "walking through a magic door"?
- What happens to Cam when he slides down to the bottom of the gully? Why is he surprised when he reaches the bottom?
- Where does Cam find the red button?

Discussion

- Cam tells his mother a lie so that she won't worry about him. Have you ever lied to your parents? If so, what about? Is it ever alright to tell a lie? Justify your answer.
- What clues are there in the story to suggest that the woods might be magical?
- Would *you* push the button? Why/why not?
- Predict what will happen next in the story.

Students read Chapters 4-6 (pp. 16-30) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 4-6 (pp. 16-30)

- Why does Cam think that pushing the button is an anti-climax?
- Why does Cam decide to go home right away?
- What does the red button turn into?
- How does Cam feel as he makes his way home? What does he notice when he climbs the fence into his yard? Why is he surprised to see all of the doors and windows open?
- What is Cam's mum doing when he enters the house? Why is she surprised to see him back?
- What does Cam's mum say they are having for dinner? Why does Cam think that she isn't his *real* mum?
- Why does Cam think that he is going to be in trouble with his mum?

Discussion

- Why do you think Cam chooses not to pull the lever? What do you think might have happened if he did?
- Many things are strange and unusual when Cam arrives home. What do you think happened when he pushed the button?
- Predict what will happen next.

Students read Chapters 7-11 (pp. 31-55) independently before the next shared session.

Comprehension Chapters 7-11 (pp. 31-55)

- Why is Cam so surprised when his parents tell him that they are going dancing? What do they give him before they leave?
- Why does Cam decide to follow his parents out of the house? Why does he decide to leave everything at his house as it is?
- How does Cam know that it is not just his parents who aren't following the rules?
- Why does Cam decide that it is too dangerous outside?
- What time does Cam wake up the next day? What is his mother doing when he goes into the kitchen?
- Why is Cam looking forward to going to school?
- What does Cam have for breakfast? Why isn't he happy about this?
- Why does Cam have to wear dirty clothes to school?
- Why does it take Cam so long to get to school? What does he find when he enters his classroom?

- What are the teachers doing in the car park? Why is Cam surprised at what the teachers are saying? What sudden realisation does Cam come to when he is told that there aren't going to be any classes?
- Why does Cam run away from the teachers?
- What are the kids playing on the field? How do they react when Cam asks them if he can join in? Why does Brandon Thugly get so angry with Cam?
- What does Cam notice about the people that he sees on the way home?
- What does Cam fall into at the bottom of the gully? What does he do when he can't find the lever? How does Cam know that something has changed? Why is he so eager to pull the lever?
- How does Cam know that everything has returned to normal when he gets home?
- Why do you think Cam only pulled the lever halfway?

Discussion

- What aspects about living in a world without rules bother Cam the most?
- What would the advantages and disadvantages be of having no rules?
- Why is it important to have rules?
- What do you think Cam learns from his experiences?
- Identify the climax of the story. Why is this event important?
- Identify a main theme or idea presented in the story. How is this idea developed by the author?

Activities

Plot - Identify 10 important events that occur in the novel and complete a plot graph for them. List the 10 events in the order that they occur on the horizontal axis. Label the vertical axis "Level of Excitement". Plot each event on the graph according to how exciting it is. Remember to label the climax clearly.

Writing - Imagine that you are Cam. Write a diary entry for the night after your amazing experience. Describe what has happened to you during the day and your thoughts and feelings about it. Explain why you only pulled the lever halfway.

Character - Complete a character report for Cam. Include information about his attributes, important decisions that he makes and how he develops and changes as the story progresses. Include 5 important quotes from the novel that back up your ideas.

News report - You are a television news reporter. Write and present a story about the day when there were no rules.

Drama - Choose an exciting event that occurs in the novel and write a script for it. Remember to include a cast list and stage directions. Practise your scene and present it to the class.

Theme - Design a static image that depicts an important theme from the story. You may wish to design a collage that uses words and images from the text, make a poster or use the computer.

Oral Book Report - Present an oral book report to the class about *Do Not Push*. Include information about the setting, characters, theme and important events that occur. Explain to the class why you liked the book and why they should read it.

Notes written by Vicki Ladd