

# Big Little Blue: SandyPants!

By Raymond McGrath



• Reading • Writing • Thinking Skills • Friendship • Art

## Synopsis

Written in graphic novel format for younger readers, this first book in the new Big Little Blue series is titled *SandyPants*. There are three simply illustrated stories in the book, each one featuring two friends, Big Blue and Little Blue, nicknames Bigsies and Littles. Each story is connected by a well-being theme, and is designed to offer children coping strategies for navigating friendships, understanding emotional responses, and the importance of mindfulness and being yourself. Each story finishes with a few simple maxims in child-friendly language to explain some things about friendship and being a friend.

In the first story, Big Blue and Little Blue profess that each is the other's *best* friend, but they go on and on, taking it to the nth degree of best-ness! They are interrupted by a wee hermit crab who comments that she wishes she could be a best friend too ... so the penguins include her in their best friend collective. Moral: You can have more than one best friend.

The second story explores how sometimes people need a little time to themselves ... and that's okay. Moral: You can still be friends without having to be together all the time.

The third story looks at how sometimes a friend may need to go away, but that's how it is with friends – they are always coming and going out of your life. Moral: Good friends always come and go.

## About the Author

**Raymond McGrath** is an award-winning animation director, illustrator, designer and writer who has been working in children's television and advertising for around 20 years. As well as illustrating books for other authors, such as the award-winning *The Little Ghost Who Lost Her Boo!* and Susan Brocker's true-life animal stories, he has written and illustrated several books himself, including *That's What Dragons Do!* Raymond lives in rural Auckland with his wife and four children, some cats and a Schnauzer.

# Writing and Illustration Style

*SandyPants!* is the first book in the graphic novel Big Little Blue series for younger readers. Graphic novels are often targeted at older readers, but the simple layout, super-cute characters, and accessibility of dialogue in *SandyPants!* are a winning formula and a fantastic introduction to graphic novels for younger tamariki. The illustrations are lively and detailed and, paired with the immediacy of direct speech, make this graphic novel feel more like an animation, with text that pops off the page. White space and a restrained colour palette is utilised well, resulting in a clean, uncluttered read. The inclusion of a contents page, three separate stories, and the portrait format all give the book a “big kid” feel, while still being welcoming to younger readers. Three pages of ‘Fun Friend Facts’ that explicitly teach age-appropriate responses to friendship issues and concerns make this book a must-have for navigating the sometimes confusing world of childhood relationships. Most importantly, however, this book is fun, fresh, and child-centred with beautiful artwork that children will love.

## Shared Learning and Discussion Points

During the shared sessions, encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make predictions and inferences and relate these to their own experiences. Read the book aloud and, if appropriate, have students read alongside or by themselves. Use all or some of the questions below for discussion, comprehension checks and making connections.’

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb then turn to the title page.

- Why do you think the book is called *SandyPants!*?
- What kind of book do you think this is? Share with the students that it is a graphic novel, which means that the story is told through both pictures and words. If necessary, review how in a graphic novel the text and images on the left-hand page are read from the top to the bottom before moving on to the right-hand page.
- What do you think Big and Little Blue will say to the hermit crab?

### Comprehension

#### Story #1 - ‘Besties’

- What is a ‘bestie’? What do you think this story will be about? (p.5)
- What do you think Little Blue wants to say to Big Blue? (p.6)
- Was your prediction correct? (p.9)
- Why does Little Blue say, “Hang on! Stop the Bus!!” (p.10)
- How is Big Blue feeling when she says, “Oh.” How can you tell? (p.11)
- What are Little Blue and Big Blue trying to do? (p.16)
- What do the ‘. . .’ mean? (p.18)
- How is Helen feeling? How are Little Blue and Big Blue feeling? (p.19)
- What do you think Little Blue is whispering? (p.21)
- Was your prediction correct? (p.23)
- Do you think it is possible to have hundreds or thousands of best friends? Why/why not?
- What is Little Blue doing when she says, “I like the way you think!” to Helen? (p.26)
- Do you agree with Fun Fact #1? Why/why not? What’s the difference between having lots of best friends and being a best friend to many others?

#### Story #2 - Space

- What does Little Blue mean by, “I can’t wait to go for a swim”? (p.36) How does this contrast with, “Guess I’m just going to have to wait”? (p.37) How do the illustrations show that her mood has changed?
- Has Little Blue really chosen the ‘perfect spot’ to sit and wait? Why/why not? How long will she have to wait for the tide to come in?
- How does Little Blue feel when Big Blue doesn’t sit next to her? (pp.40–41)
- What is ‘me time’? Is Big Blue being fair to Little Blue? Why/why not?
- Do you agree with Fun Fact #2? Why/why not? What can you do if your best friend needs a little space? What can you do if you are feeling crowded by your friends?

#### Story #3 - Fred

- How does Little Blue solve the problem of Big Blue needing ‘me time’? Does that work for her?
- What does ‘the tide is out’ mean?
- How is Little Blue a good friend to Fred?
- Do you agree with Fun Fact #3? Why/why not? Do friends always have to be forever? How are strong friendships like the tide?



# Activities

## ACTIVITY 1: MAKE A DIORAMA

Use a shoebox or similar to make a diorama of Little Blue and Big Blue's world. Paint a background beach scene inside the shoebox, use collage to add rocks of different textures, or add real stones and shells. You could make Little Blue and Big Blue out of air-dry clay, salt dough or play dough. You could include Helen the hermit crab, Fred, seagulls, oyster catchers and Shaggy the shag. You could even make new friends for Bigsies and Littles.

## ACTIVITY 2: CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER

Who are you most like, Big Blue or Little Blue? Or are you Helen the hermit crab? Pick your favourite character and role play one of the stories with your friends. Then swap characters to see things from a different perspective.

## ACTIVITY 3: THE NEXT STORY IS CALLED . . .

Make up your own story about Bigsies and Littles. You could write your story or present it as a comic strip with speech. Try introducing a new friend into their world.

## ACTIVITY 4: FUN FACTS

Write your own Fun Facts about friendship. Share your thoughts on how to be a good friend, how to make a new friend, or how to support a friend who is feeling blue or needs a little 'me time'.

## ACTIVITY 5: SHARE THE LOVE

Make a compliment card to brighten someone's day. Try to make your compliments based on actions and behaviour. 'You are kind', 'You are patient' or 'I like how you always help others' gives a person a boost for something good that they do.

Written by Frances McBeath



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC