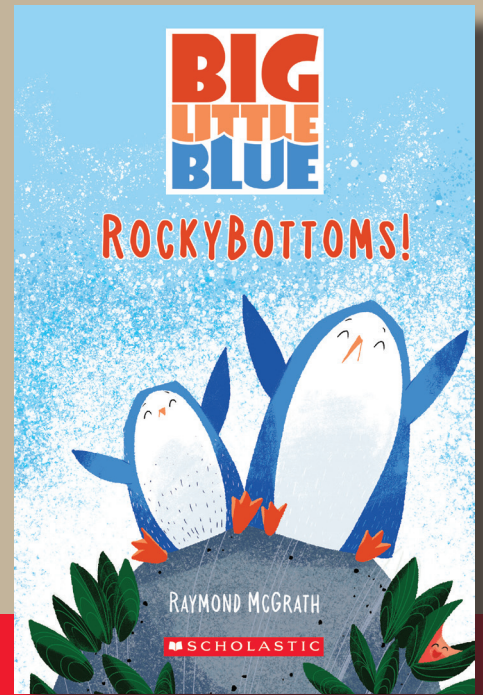


Big Little Blue: RockyBottoms!

By Raymond McGrath

• Reading • Writing • Wellbeing • Friendship • Art



Synopsis

Written in graphic novel format for younger readers, the second book in the new Big Little Blue series is titled *RockyBottoms!*. 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 wellbeing 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, called SOMETHING, Bigsies is laying down doing nothing. Littles is upset because he feels that they should be doing something. Bigsies assures Littles that sometimes doing nothing is the best thing to do and encourages Littles to give it a go. After much tossing and turning, Littles declares that doing nothing doesn't feel great to him. *Moral: It is really important to take time out to relax.*

The second story, called NOTHING, explores the concept of being an active relaxer ... and that's okay. *Moral: You can take time out and still be busy but try focusing your mind on one thing.*

The third story, called BUBBA LUBBA, we are introduced to a new character who is laying on a rock searching for his one true love – except, as Littles points out, laying on a rock is hardly searching and Littles encourages him to get off the rock and do something more proactive to find his mermaid love. *Moral: Doing nothing is good for a while but once you've had a break, it is good to do something again.*

The first book in this series is called *SandyPants!*

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 30 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 Labrador.

Writing and Illustration Style

RockyBottoms! is the second book in the graphic novel Big Little Blue series for readers in the 5–8 age group. Uniquely conceived and beautifully executed, the book comprises a contents page and three playful stories, which are all connected by a wellbeing theme. The theme for Book #2 is the importance of taking time out to relax. The graphic novel style will appeal to young readers who are beginning to delve into the world of graphic novels and early chapter books. The adorable protagonists, Big Blue and Little Blue, along with their delightful friends, entertain the readers with their matter-of-fact conversations and quirky sense of humour. Lots of white space and well-placed text allow the readers to navigate their way around the pages and take in the author’s message with ease. Raymond McGrath is a wonderful storyteller and artist. His carefully chosen words and dialogue coupled with expressive and deceptively simple pictures and limited colour palette, are a successful combination. Three pages of ‘Magic Mindful Messages’ provide an explanation of the importance of mindfulness, being yourself and how ‘doing nothing’ can be ‘doing something’. These messages are expertly woven into the stories in a subtle but positive, fresh, and fun-filled way.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

Read the book aloud and, if appropriate, have the students read alongside or by themselves. Use the questions provided to encourage the students to engage with the text and promote discussion. Open-ended questions have more than one answer, so students can draw on their own personal experiences and prior knowledge to answer them. Have the students explore how Little Blue and Big Blue approach relaxation in their own way and how there’s no right or wrong way to relax. Everyone is different.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the front cover and read the blurb on the back cover. Then turn to the title page.

- Why do you think the book is called *RockyBottoms!*?
- Do you like doing nothing or do you prefer doing something? Why?
- Why does Big Blue say they are doing something when they are lying down doing nothing?
- Do you always agree with your best friend? Why or why not?
- Do you and your best friend like doing the same things or different things?

COMPREHENSION:

Story #1 – Something

- What do you think the author is going to write about? (p.5)
- What do you think Little Blue is looking for? (p.7)
- Can you guess what Big Blue is doing? Is she doing something or nothing? Explain your answer. (p.9)
- Why does Little Blue gasp? (p.11)
- Why does Little Blue yell the word “Nothing!”? Do you think that Little Blue likes to do nothing? (p.11)
- Do you think Big Blue enjoys lying on the beach? Why? (p.11)
- How does Little Blue feel about Big Blue lying on the beach? (p.12)
- Little Blue thinks it’s a beautiful day, so she wants to do something. Big Blue thinks it’s a beautiful day, so she wants to do nothing. Can both be right? Why? (p.13)
- Do you agree with Big Blue? Is she doing something when she is lying down doing nothing? Why? (p.15)
- The words ‘plop’ and ‘flop’ are words that sound like the noises they describe. What other words could the author have used? (pp.18–19)
- Do you think that doing nothing is going to be easy-peasy for Little Blue? Explain your answer. (p.20)
- How does the author show that Little Blue is not finding it easy? (p.21)
- Why is Little Blue feeling weird? Do you feel weird when you lie still and do nothing? Why or why not? (p.22)
- Do you think Little Blue’s mind is doing nothing? Explain your answer. (pp.23–24)
- Do you think Big Blue really saw a purple dragon over by the rock pools? Why does Big Blue tell Little Blue that? (p.26)
- What do you notice about all the words that the seagulls are saying? Why has the author used exclamation marks? (p.28)
- Little Blue doesn’t find the purple dragon. How does Little Blue spend the rest of the day? (pp.28–30)
- Do you agree with Magic Mindful Message #1? How do you take time out to relax? (p.31)

Story #2 – Nothing

- What do you think Little Blue and Big Blue are looking at on page 34? (p.34)
- Why do Shaggy’s words ‘Busy doing nothing’ sound strange? (p.38)



- Do you think Little Blue agrees with Big Blue and Shaggy when they say it's the perfect day for doing nothing? (p.39)
- Shaggy, Helen, Whetu, the starfish, crabs, and seagulls are all doing nothing. What do you think Little Blue is going to do next? (p.45)
- Was your prediction correct? (p.46)
- How is doing nothing going for Little Blue? (pp.46–48)
- Why do you think the illustrator has drawn three pictures of the beach and sky? (p.47)
- On page 48, the illustrator has put a sideways picture of the beach and sky. What does this tell you about how Little Blue is coping with doing nothing? (p.48)
- How does Little Blue's expression at the top of page 49 show you what she's feeling? (p.49)
- Do you think the sand pillow is going to help Little Blue relax better? (p.49)
- What do you think Little Blue is going to do next? (p.49)
- Was your prediction correct? (p.50)
- Little Blue's sand creation gets bigger and bigger. Do you think Little Blue is starting to feel better? Why? (p.51)
- Why does Little Blue sing while she works? (p.52)
- What do Fish and Chips mean when they say, "It's really quite something!"? (p.55)
- Why does Little Blue cry out, "Oh no!"? (p.55)
- It's important to be yourself. Would you be like Little Blue, or would you be like Big Blue and the other characters who like to do nothing? (p.59)
- Do you agree with Magic Mindful Message #2? How do you relax your mind and body? Are you an active relaxer? (p.61)
- Do you think Bubba Lubba sees a mermaid? Why or why not? (pp.78–79)
- Do you think it's sensible for Bubba Lubba to be staying in one spot waiting for his true love to find him? What might happen if they both searched for each other? (p.85)
- Little Blue says that Bubba Lubba has got to do something to find his one true love. She thinks that lying on the rock searching is doing nothing. Do you think Big Blue would agree with her? Why or why not? (pp.83–87)
- How is Little Blue feeling when Big Blue is finally ready to do something? (p.90)
- Do you agree with Magic Mindful Message #3? Why is doing nothing for a long time not such a good idea? (p.93)

Story #3 – Bubba Lubba

- Why would a penguin mistake a seal for a rock? (p.67)
- What does the word 'stern' mean? (p.67)
- Bubba Lubba is a pirate seal. How do some of the words tell you that? (p.67)
- How do the pictures reveal that Bubba Lubba is a pirate seal? (p.68)
- How do you know that Bubba Lubba is enjoying lying on the rock? (p.69)
- Bubba Lubba thinks he's busy searching. Do you think that Little Blue agrees with him? Why or why not? (p.72)
- Bubba Lubba says the night was 'black as coal'. How else could the author describe the night? (p.76)
- What rhyming words describe the way the waves are on the night Bubba Lubba finds his true love? (p.77)
- The waves are like mountains. What do you picture in your mind? (p.77)



Activities

ACTIVITY 1: SOMETHING OR NOTHING?

When life gets really busy, do you take time out to relax? Do you like to do something or nothing? Create a chart with two columns. In the first column headed 'Relaxing Things', list all the things that you do to relax, such as watching the clouds, lying under a tree, listening to the birds, reading a book, biking, walking, swimming, and so on. In the second column entitled 'Something or Nothing?', write beside each relaxation activity if you think you are doing 'Something' or 'Nothing'. Everyone will be different. Some students will think that watching the clouds is doing something, while others will think it's doing nothing. Encourage the students to celebrate their differences.

ACTIVITY 2: MISSING OUT

Little Blue struggles to relax. She thinks if she does nothing that she'll miss out on some exciting things, such as a giant rainbow bird swooping down from the sky or a giant sea monster offering rides through the seven seas on its back. Imagine that you went for a walk with Little Blue and found a bottle with a treasure map inside. As a class, create a giant comic strip together using a very large piece of paper. (A big roll of paper is ideal.) Brainstorm what you and Little Blue would do with the treasure map. Plan out your story in the panels of the comic strip (one panel per group). Now divide the class into groups, and have each group draw the scene for its panel. Once finished, write some speech bubbles and thought bubbles together that help to tell the story. Then read your comic strip aloud and enjoy your creation.

ACTIVITY 3: A SANDY MINDFUL MESSAGE

On page 30, Little Blue uses a stick to make a squiggly line in the sand. Imagine that you wanted to leave a mindful message or picture in the sand for the next visitor to see. With a pencil, draw your picture or write your message (such as *Doing nothing is doing something.*) on a piece of paper. Go over your picture or words with PVA glue. You could also create a beautiful border pattern with glue around the edge of the paper. Sprinkle sand over the wet glue and leave it to dry. Once completely dry, carefully shake the loose sand off the paper. If you don't have access to sand, you could use sand-coloured glitter. Share your work with the rest of the class.

ACTIVITY 4: ACTIVE ART

Active relaxers struggle with doing absolutely nothing. Often they have to keep their minds and bodies busy. Art is a great way to relax in an active way. On page 43, Little Blue talks to the starfish and crabs on the rocks. Create your own rock animals. You will need some smooth rocks, such as river stones, and different-coloured paints. First paint some white and blue frothy waves on the rock. Then paint a crab or a starfish with little dots on its five arms. Add smiley faces to your animals to make them look super cute and friendly. You could even name your rock animal. Display all the rock animals in the classroom.

ACTIVITY 5: BUBBA LUBBA'S SONG

Little Blue encourages Bubba Lubba to go do something. Your class can also get going and get busy. Divide into groups and practise singing Bubba Lubba's song that features on pages 74–80. Add actions to the song. You could also add some props and costumes. Then perform your version of the song to another group or the rest of the class.

Written by Janine Scott

