

Your Next Read

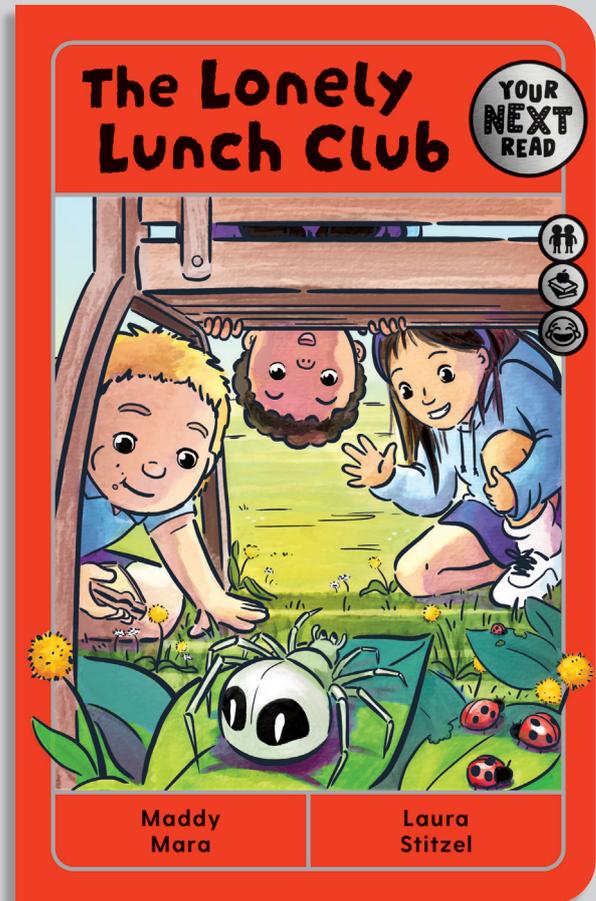
Teaching Notes



The Lonely Lunch Club

Written by Maddy Mara

Art by Laura Stitzel



Teaching notes by Megan Daley

As a teacher librarian and passionate advocate for reading, I created the *Your Next Read* teaching notes to be both curriculum-connected and educator-useful. Each set of notes is grounded in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA V9) to ensure teachers can confidently link quality literature to learning outcomes across key learning areas. My aim is for these notes to do more than tick curriculum boxes. I want them to help educators create rich learning experiences and bookish conversations sparked by stories that act as windows, mirrors, and sliding doors and invite every child to see themselves and others in new ways.

The *Your Next Read* framework also intentionally incorporates the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (PYP). Many Australian schools draw on both ACARA and PYP approaches, and I see great value in including both. The PYP focus on inquiry, conceptual understanding, and learner agency complements ACARA's emphasis on critical and creative thinking. Together, they provide a holistic way of engaging with stories, encouraging children not only to learn to read but also to choose to read with purpose, joy, and connection.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Daley".

Megan Daley

Curriculum Framework

- The Your Next Read teaching notes are designed to align with the Australian Curriculum (ACARA) and the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) learning areas and outcomes. All literature and recreational reading also supports both the PYP Approaches to Learning and ACARA General Capabilities and Cross-curriculum Priorities, encouraging students to think critically and creatively, allowing them to view learning as an active, dynamic process. The Your Next Read series aims to nurture the joy of reading, with educators playing a key role in the development of the knowledge and skills needed to access text.

These teaching notes aim to:

- Connect *The Lonely Lunch Club* to curriculum for meaningful classroom use and real-world connection.
- Prompt student inquiry, discussion and creative response.
- Foster independent, confident readers who read for purpose and pleasure.

By linking stories to meaningful learning experiences, these notes encourage students to inquire, reflect and create, building the bridge between reading in school and choosing to read beyond it.

Synopsis

Benji usually spends his lunchtimes playing football, but one day, he sits at the school's wobbly old bench. There, he meets Alice and they create the Lonely Lunch Club. Other students soon join, and they begin working to save the old bench. Then Benji's football friend Aziz shows up with a cast on his arm. Benji is shocked, and the reader learns that Benji stopped playing football because he blames himself for Aziz's broken arm. After Aziz explains that he's not angry, the students work together to fix the bench. Benji decides to split his lunchtimes between football and the Lonely Lunch Club from now on.

From the Author

In this story we wanted to explore the ways different kids experience loneliness and make friends. In the connection between Benji (a sporty, popular kid who mysteriously stops playing football with his friends), and Alice (who spends her lunchtimes with Mabel, the spider she's befriended), we see an unexpected friendship blossom – spreading kindness and ingenuity throughout the school.

From the Artist

I created designs for each character that reflected their unique personalities, in the way they hold themselves and wear their hair and uniforms. I also made a map of the school so I could keep track of where everybody was! I created the illustrations with a combination of digital linework and real watercolour paint.

Themes

Friendship: making new friends, being welcoming, creating inclusive, shared spaces.

School community: students, staff and even wildlife are part of our school community.

Loneliness: seeing when someone is left out and taking steps to be inclusive.

Working together: collaborating with others on creative projects.

Concepts

Responsibility: caring for friends, wildlife and items in our playground.

Perspective: recognising and understanding the views and the feelings of peers.

Change: friendships, lunchtime routines and even old benches can change.

Community: building something together that matters to everyone (a friendship and/or a physical item).

Identity: recognising that we can enjoy different roles at different times (footballer, club member, reader, creator).



Getting to Know the Book (dialogic questions)

Pre-reading

- Point to the parts of the book when I call them out: spine, front cover, back cover, blurb, title, series icons.
- Can you find the author's name on the cover? The illustrator's name?
- What does the title tell you about this book? What might the Lonely Lunch Club be?
- What do you do at lunchtime?
- What clues does the cover illustration give you about the setting of this book?
- Read the blurb – what do you now know about the story? Predict what the story might be about.
- This book is part of a series, *Your Next Read*. What is a series? Does Maddy Mara write another series?
- What might the series title *Your Next Read* mean? Do you know any other books in this series?
- What do the icons on the cover refer to? Which icon do you most connect to and why?



Post-reading

- Why do you think Benji chose to sit on the bench instead of playing football on Monday?
- Why do you think so many children wanted to join the Lonely Lunch Club by Friday?
- What might happen to the Lonely Lunch Club next week?
- What reads might you suggest after this one?
- If you were the author of the story, would you have finished it the same way? How would you change the ending?
- Who would you suggest this book to as a 'next read' and why?

English Year 1: AC9E1LY05, AC9E1LY03

English Year 2: AC9E2LY05, AC9E2LE02

Vocabulary Words

Pulling out rich vocabulary from *The Lonely Lunch Club* gives students the opportunity to notice, discuss and use new words in meaningful contexts. The following words from *The Lonely Lunch Club* can be used for word walls, oral language discussions, writing prompts or vocabulary notebooks, helping children deepen comprehension and transfer new vocabulary into their own speaking and writing.

- Scratchy (p.5 & p.14)
- Wobbly (p.5, p.29, p.30, p.48 & p.72)
- Excited (p.9 & p.39)
- Swirl (p.42)
- Gasp (p.56 & p.57)
- Lonely (p.74)
- Wondering (p.88)



The Lonely Lunch Club

Curriculum Connections

ACARA Australian Curriculum Version 9

Learning Areas:

English – Literacy; Literature; Language
Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)
Health and Physical Education (HPE)

General Capabilities:

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding

Cross-curriculum Priorities:

- Sustainability (reusing, repairing, valuing resources)

Content Descriptors:

The Lonely Lunch Club sits most strongly with **English** (Year 1/Year 2), **Geography** (Year 1) and **Health & Physical Education** (Years 1-2) in ACARA V9.

English Year 1: AC9E1LA0, AC9E1LE02, AC9E1LE03, AC9E1LE05

English Year 2: AC9E2LE02, AC9E2LA08, AC9E2LA02

HASS Geography Year 1: AC9HS1K03, AC9HS1S05

HPE (Years 1-2): AC9HP2P01, AC9HP2P02

International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP)

Transdisciplinary Theme: *Who we are* (exploring relationships, belonging and community)

Key Concepts:

- Responsibility (Fin and Lavender make decisions that affect others).
- Perspective: Understanding how different characters feel.
- Change (Lavender moves house; Fin's understanding of success changes).
- Connection: Friendships connect actions, choices and outcomes.

Approaches to Learning (ATL) Skills:

- Social Skills: Taking turns, including others, supporting new classmates
- Self-management Skills: Persistence, emotional regulation
- Thinking Skills: Predicting, problem-solving, cause and effect
- Communication Skills: Retelling events, discussing feelings, describing actions

Learner Profile Attributes:

- Caring: Fin helps Buddy and supports Lavender
- Risk-taker: Fin tries new challenges (racing, helping the puppy)
- Communicator: Making new friends, expressing feelings
- Balanced: Learning about strengths beyond competition
- Reflective: Fin considers what winning really means
-



Features of Places

Label each of the following on this bird's-eye view map of the school and playground in *The Lonely Lunch Club*:

- Classroom buildings
- Bag rack
- Paths
- Taps
- Scratchy bushes
- Trees
- Monkey bars
- Climbing frame
- Bench
- Oval
- Art building
- Administration building
- Toilet block

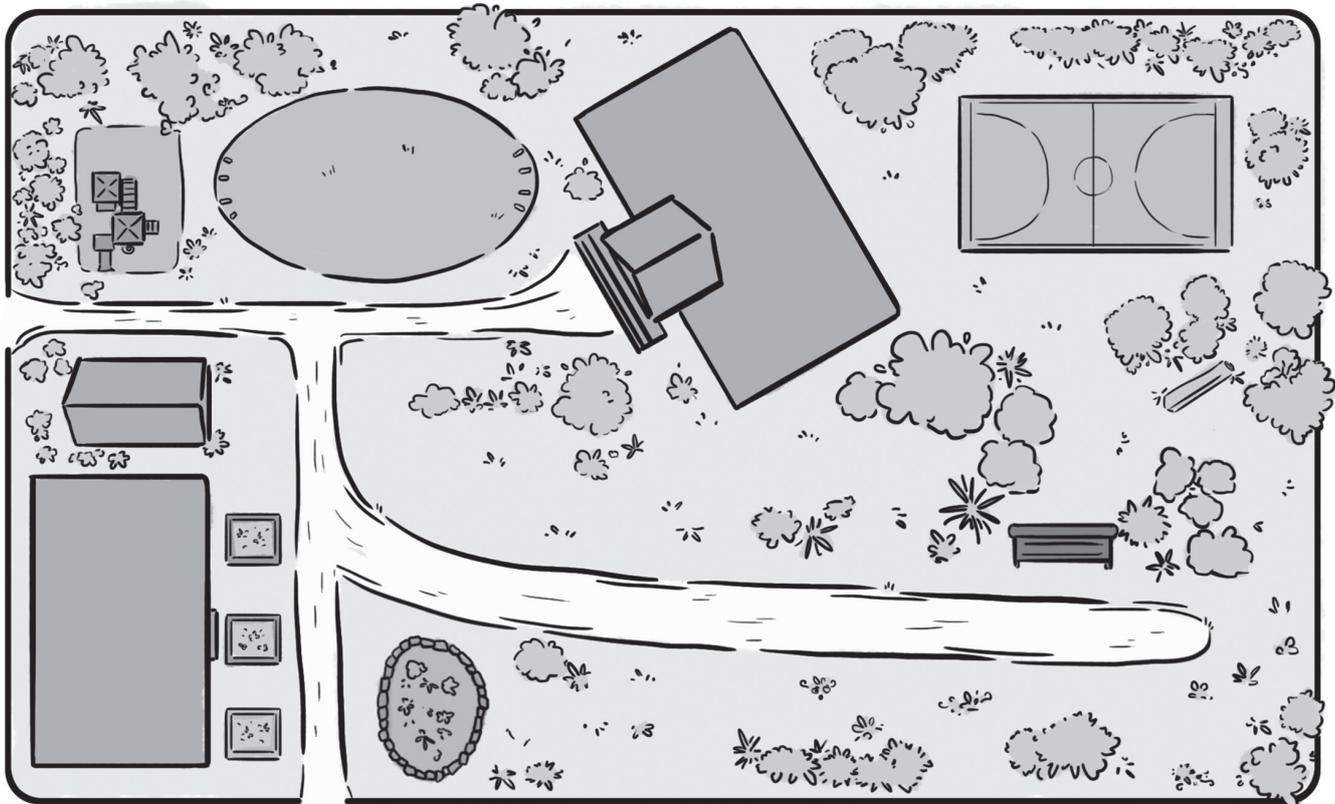
Choose a different coloured highlighter or pencil to identify natural features, managed features and constructed features in this list and on each label.

Learning Area: HASS Geography Year 1

Content Descriptors:

AC9HS1K03 The natural, managed and constructed features of local places, and their location identifying natural features (for example, hills, rivers, native vegetation and weather), managed features (for example, farms, parks and gardens) and constructed features (for example, roads and buildings) and locating them on a map

AC9HS1S05 describing features of a space or place that is important to them and explaining what they could do to care for it; for example, a chicken coop, a play area, their bedroom, the reading corner, the beach



Activity Cards

Use these cards as response prompts for individual students, reading groups or as homework tasks. Responses could be recorded on mini whiteboards, in writing journals, shared butcher's paper or as recorded voice notes to capture evidence of comprehension.



List some lunch club ideas.

Design a poster to advertise the Lonely Lunch Club.

What would be the best thing to find in your lunchbox?

What are ways to help someone feel included?

Plan a Lonely Lunch Club bench.

Write or draw the tools and equipment needed to fix a bench.

What questions do you have after reading *The Lonely Lunch Club*?

Scan the text for words which express emotions. List them here.

**YOUR
NEXT
READ**

Building Our Own Lonely Lunch Club

Learning Area:

Health and Physical Education | Strand: Personal, Social and Community Health

Content Descriptors:

- AC9HP2P01 – Describe their personal qualities and those of others, and explain how they contribute to developing identities.
- AC9HP2P02 – Identify and explore skills and strategies to develop respectful relationships.

Learning Intentions:

- Identify the personal qualities of characters in *The Lonely Lunch Club*.
- Compare these qualities with their own.
- Practise and role-play respectful communication strategies to build inclusive relationships.

1. Revisit the Story

- Revisit a key scene (e.g., when Aziz joins the bench, or when Benji is forgiven).
- Ask: ‘What qualities did Benji, Alice, Aziz, or Felix show in this part of the story?’ (kindness, courage, honesty, creativity, helpfulness).

2. My Qualities, Their Qualities

Students choose one character from the story. Write or draw their personal quality, then write or draw one of your own. Are they the same or different? Example: ‘Alice is kind. I am kind when I help my brother.’

3. Respectful Relationships Role-Play

- In small groups, children role-play a playground scenario as seen in *The Lonely Lunch Club*:
 - » inviting someone to join a game,
 - » apologising if an accident happens,
 - » encouraging someone who is shy.
- Each group practises respectful language, tone, body language and gestures (smiling, open posture, gentle voice).
 - » Groups perform short skits for the class.



YOUR
NEXT
READ

Educator Bookmark

Note to educators: this bookmark is designed to be used as a quick prompt card for you or an adult helper. Consider it a summary of much of the content of these teaching notes to have beside you while reading.

This educator bookmark could also be sent home with a copy of *The Lonely Lunch Club* as a homework task and as a guide to parents or

caregivers as to how to extend the book reading experience.

Learning Area: English

Content Descriptors:

Year One: AC9E1LA01

Year Two: AC9E2LY04, AC9E2LY05



Before Reading

- Point to the parts of the book when I call them out: spine, front cover, back cover, blurb, title, series icons.
- Can you find the author's name on the cover? The illustrator's name?
- What does the title tell you about this book? What might the Lonely Lunch Club be?
- What do you do at lunchtime?
- What clues does the cover illustration give you about the setting of this book?
- Read the blurb – what do you now know about the story? Predict what the story might be about.

After Reading

- **Page 6:** Look at the illustration. How would you describe the expression on Alice's face? Show a partner or adult helper this expression.
- **Page 12:** Alice and Benji are happy. Show this expression on your face. What would be the best thing to find in your lunchbox?
- **Page 19:** Felix is sad and wants to be left alone. What is another nice way you can ask for some time alone?
- **Page 60:** What is the emotion that Benji might be feeling? What clues are there in the text?
- **Page 62:** Why does Benji use a tiny voice? What emotion might he be feeling? What clues is there in the text?

What was the main idea of this text?

Can you retell *The Lonely Lunch Club* using each of the days of the week as a guide?



Student Bookmark

Note to educators: this bookmark is designed to be photocopied (2 to an A4 page) and placed inside the front cover of *The Lonely Lunch Club* and is for independent use by a student or reading group.

If you have class sets or multiple copies of *The Lonely Lunch Club*, a laminated bookmark could be added to each copy for use in small group sessions.

Laminated bookmarks can be sent home with a copy of *The Lonely Lunch Club* as a homework task.

Learning Area: English

Content Descriptors:

Year One: AC9E1LA01

Year Two: AC9E2LY04, AC9E2LY05



Keep this card alongside you as you read

The Lonely Lunch Club

Before You Start

- Read the title and scan the front cover of this book for clues about the story. What do you notice?
- Turn the book over. Read the blurb and scan the back cover of this book for clues about the story. What do you notice?
- Read the first page of *The Lonely Lunch Club*. Are there words that do not make sense? Do you need to re-read the page?
- As you read, look out for the following animals in the illustrations: lizard, butterfly, bees, spider, frog, birds.
- As you read, look for words you do not already know, note them down.

After Reading

- Scan the text. Write a list of interesting words.
- Scan the text. Write a list of all the **feelings and emotions** words.
- Scan the images. Write a list of all the wildlife you can find.

