

***Super Nicholas* by Michelle Worthington and Sandra Noa — Teacher Notes**

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Recommended for 3–6-year-olds/

Pre-school to lower primary

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About *Super Nicholas*

Super Nicholas is about a little boy with alternate abilities who is born into a family of superheroes. While he may not have the might and skills and super stretchy pants like his other family members, he does have one very important superpower. Using his strongest muscle, his heart, he shows that kindness can be the best superpower of all.

Themes

Kindness, generosity, friendship, problem solving, alternate abilities, difference, social emotional development

About the author Michelle Worthington

Michelle Worthington is an international award-winning author and screen play writer. Two-time winner of the International Book Award and finalist in the USA Best Book Awards, Michelle also received a Gellett Burgess Award and a Silver Moonbeam Award for her contribution to celebrating diversity in literature. Michelle addresses mental health through literacy with her picture books.

Find out more about Michelle Worthington from her website: michelleworthington.com.

Links to the Australian Curriculum

Super Nicholas is a useful resource for teaching in the three strands of the English Curriculum (language, literature and literacy) and can be used as a springboard for developing skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing and creating as children listen to and engage with texts for enjoyment.

Key Curriculum Areas

Learning Areas: English, HASS (families)

General Capabilities: Literacy,

Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability

Activities

Before reading

One of the great things about this book is that it challenges the superhero stereotype and suggests to children that showing kindness to others can be the most effective superpower.

It also shows the importance of accepting and appreciation difference in others, as well as ourselves.

It is useful to find out what understanding children already have about superheroes and superpowers before you introduce the book to them.

Draw up a chart with 'Superheroes' written on one side and 'Superpowers' on the other. List children's ideas and contributions.

Superheroes	Superpowers

Introducing the book

Before showing the children the front cover:

- Tell them the title and ask them what they think the book might be about.
- When they hear the words 'Super Nicholas', what do they think Nicholas might be like? What do they think he might be able to do?

Children may suggest some super powers that Nicholas might possess. You could list these on a chart, refer to the list of superpowers if you have made one, or leave it as a discussion.

The front cover

Show children the front cover of the book. Tell them the title and the names of the author and illustrator.

Ask, "What can you tell me about Super Nicholas now?"

Encourage them to comment on physical traits as well as personality and feelings.

Depending on the age of your class, you may wish to note their thoughts.

e.g.

What does he look like? / Physical traits	What sort of person is he? / Personality	How is he feeling?

Ask, "What do you think might happen in the story?" Accept all ideas.

The back cover

Show children the back cover. Read the blurb. Explain any terms that may be unfamiliar to the children; for example, ‘alternate abilities’.

Ask children if the blurb and the illustrations give any clues as to what might happen in the book.

How could kindness be the most powerful superpower? How could kindness save the day? How do most superheroes they know ‘save the day’? Do they use kindness?

Reading the story

Read through the story. Stop to point out parts of the story of interest or to draw children’s attention to events; for example:

- The description of Nicholas’s family known ‘*for their might and skill and super stretchy pants*’.
- The competition that Nicholas was entered into — what does it mean to ‘*prove your worth*’? — what might a little superhero have to do to prove his worth? — what might a ‘*protector of the playground*’ have to do?
- Why was Nicholas worried? Nicholas’s actions also tell us that he was worried. What action shows you that? (he dropped to the ground and covered his head with his hands).
- Does Nicholas really have two left feet? What does it mean that he has two left feet? Do you ever feel like you have two left feet?
- Explain that the heart really is a muscle that works to pump our blood around our bodies. But we often talk about loving with our heart. What does the author tell us about Nicholas when she says he has a strong heart?
- What do the creatures do when they ‘*nestle beside him*’? How do they ‘*bask in the beam of his super heart*’?
- At the mouth of the dark, damp cave, what do you think might be making ‘*the puff of white smoke (that) billowed into the damp cold air*’?
- At the start line, what do you think the children might have to do in the competition?
- How do you think the Little Supers felt when they realised there was dragon in the cave making the puffs of smoke? What does it mean, ‘*The dragon followed them with his beady red eyes.*’?
- What does it mean, ‘*the Little Supers punched, kicked and karate chopped their shiny underpants off*’?
- Explain *Lycra* and *defeat* if necessary.
- How does the dragon feel when the Little Supers attack him?
- Did Nicholas join in the attack? What did he do? Why do you think the dragon was annoyed and grumpy? How did Nicholas ‘save the day’?

Discuss

- Do you agree with Nicholas’s mother that ‘*Sometimes the best way to win is to be kind and share the love from your super heart.*’? (That quote would make a lovely poster for the

classroom wall.) When has someone been kind to you and it changed how you were feeling?
How can you be kind to others to change the way they are feeling?

- Will Nicholas be a good Protector of the Playground?
- How could you be a good Protector of the Playground?

After reading

Make a chart. On one side list characteristics of other superheroes. On the other side, list Super Nicholas's characteristics. (Print Sheet x on A3 or draw up one of your own.)

Superheroes	Super Nicholas

Returning to the text

You may not wish to re-read the text immediately, but you may return to it over successive days to explore different aspects of the written and visual texts as well as to re-read it.

At all times, when returning to the text, it is important to ensure that children are engaged and that their enjoyment of the story is not spoiled by studying it too closely. Remember, we are reading for enjoyment and entertainment.

Phonics and word knowledge

You may wish to draw children's attention to language features used in the text, for example:

Alliteration —

super stretchy pants

protector of the playground

clashing/clunked

swooshing/slipped

dodging/dropped

bask in the beam

dark damp cave

pesky little people

smiled and slipped off to sleep

Action words, for example:

clashing/clunked

swooshing/slipped

dodging/dropped

punched/kicked/karate chopped

smoking and roaring and grinding his teeth

tottered

steal out of the cafe

Descriptions

super stretchy pants

arms of steel

two left feet

dark damp cave,

puffs of white smoke billowed

beady red eyes

Metaphors

arms of steel

two left feet

bask in the beam of his super heart

Extension

Express and develop ideas

- Invite children to draw and write about their favourite part of the story or what they think of the story.
- Invite children to contemplate an alternative ending for the story. e.g. What if the dragon hadn't gone to sleep?
- Ask children if the events in the story could have really happened and invite them to give reasons for their assessment. Refer to the author's inspiration for writing the book and have them consider if telling the true story would be as much fun as the fictionalised story.
- Discuss what it might mean to be a 'protector of the playground'. Create a role description and add the role to your list of classroom helpers or jobs. Alternatively, make a 'Protector of the Playground' award to give to children who show kindness towards others in the playground.
- Discuss what superpowers the children would choose for themselves. Encourage them to write about their superpower and to write a story about them using their superpowers.
- Encourage children to think about characteristics of their family — things that are the same about most and things that are different; for example, most could like soccer but one likes tennis; most could have long hair but one has short, most have cereal for breakfast, one has toast. Do the differences matter? Families love each other despite the differences.
- Discuss the importance of being kind to others. List ways that children can show kindness to each other.

Art

Children draw or paint themselves as a superhero.