

Teacher/Parent Notes

RECOMMENDED FOR:

Early childhood, pre-primary to lower primary students; appropriate for 0-6 years.

CONTENTS:

- Plot summary
- About the Author
- About the Illustrator
- About the Series
- Inspiration for the Character
- Partnering Charity
- Themes of the book
- Teacher/Parent Guidelines on helping children identify and build their strengths
- Activity Sheets

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS:

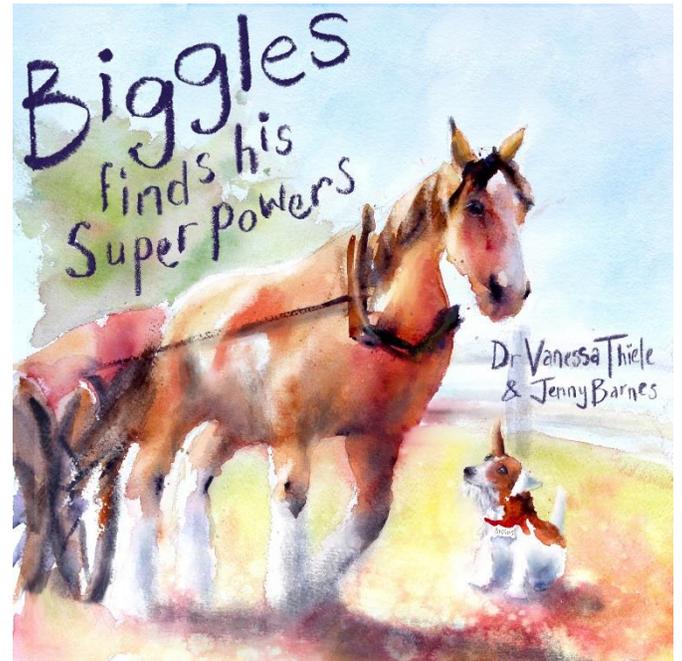
- English Literacy
- Social and Emotional Literacy
- Maps to the Berry Street Education Model

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK:

This book is a heartwarming tale about a little Jack Russell who lives on the farm and learns his superpowers thanks to the support from his friends. The book aims to foster an understanding of character strengths and help children recognize what is unique about them.

THEMES:

- Character strengths
- Friendship and kindness
- Emotional intelligence
- Farm life



Plot Summary

Biggles Finds his Superpowers is the second in the series following on from Biggles Goes to Work. This book uses delightful rhyming verse and stunning watercolour illustrations to tell the tale of friendship and self-discovery as a little dog learns his superpowers (aka, character strengths).

On a lovely summer's day, Biggles is out visiting his farm friends, Lochie the Clydesdale, Sheri the sheep, and Tiddles the cat. He sees that each of them has a special quality that he admires. In comparison, he feels like there is nothing special about him. With the help of his friends, Biggles learns that he does indeed have special strengths. He is kind, and courageous, and most of all, his greatest superpower is being a good friend. Biggles finally sees himself in a different light, and feels proud of his uniqueness.

About the Author

Dr Vanessa Thiele is a Psychologist who dedicates herself to changing people's lives through positive psychology and resilience strategies. Finding herself with two young children of her own and a mutual love of children's literature, she decided to try her hand at writing some herself.

Vanessa aims to give her children the mindset skills to master the struggles of childhood and flourish in later life, and she hopes her dalliance into writing will do the same for your special little people too.

About the Illustrator

Jenny K Barnes is an artist living in Melbourne, Australia with her partner and two young children. From a young age Jenny loved drawing and painting and having left a corporate career behind has returned to the paintbrush to follow her creative passions.



About the Series

The Biggles series is an illustrated picture book series for children aged 0-6. The central character is Biggles, a little Jack Russel who works on the farm and has lots of farm friends. The books appeals to children through its delightful farm characters depicted in watercolour and digital illustration, and its playful rhyming verse.

This series captures hearts of parents and teachers alike with the underlying theme of altruism and helping others. The Biggles Book series can be compared with Hairy McLary and other Lynley Dodd books.

Inspiration for the Character

The Biggles Book series is based on the real Biggles who spent his life working on farms in the Author's husband's contracting business on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria Australia. The Author was so captivated by all the adventures he had that she vowed to write a book in his honour.

What eventuated was a four-book series incorporating tales of work ethic, kindness, resilience, emotional intelligence, gratitude, character strengths and friendship. The aim of the series is to delight young readers while instilling powerful life skills to enable them to flourish into their adult lives.

Partner Charity

Biggles supports our children!

We have partnered with Berry Street to support Aussie children. One dollar from every book helps children be safe, hopeful and thriving.

Further donations would be appreciated through www.berrystreet.org.au.

Themes of the Book

The four books in the Biggles series aim to foster key positive mindset and social skills that map to the Berry Street Education Model, such as:

- Identifying their individual character strengths
- Resilience and perseverance to work through challenges and setbacks
- Growth mindset and viewing failure as learning
- Work ethic and finding joy in contribution
- Social intelligence and friendship skills
- Empathy and compassion for others

All of the books can be used to start discussions with children that influence their attitudes and thinking.

Biggles Finds His Superpowers aims to create an awareness of character strengths and help children identify the unique qualities in themselves and others. In particular, this book focuses on the strengths of kindness, bravery and social intelligence, which all support kids to thrive through childhood.

Order at www.bigglesbooks.org

*"I am not afraid of storms,
for I am learning to sail my ship".*

-Louisa May Alcott



Teacher/parent guidelines – What are character strengths

Renown researcher and father of the positive psychology movement, Dr Martin Seligman, defines character strengths as positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

Character strengths are different than talent-based strengths because character strengths reflect the “real you” – who you are at your core. According to extensive research conducted by Seligman and his team, everyone possesses all 24 character strengths in different degrees, giving each person a unique character profile. The VIA Survey is regarded as a central tool of positive psychology and has been taken by over 5 million people.

Character strengths can be developed through their exercise and use, and their development pave a path for personal thriving, by enhancing wellbeing, personal growth, engagement and performance. Creating a strengths language and helping children recognize when they use their strengths also equips them to overcome challenges they face in life.



For more information see www.viacharacter.org

Tips to help children identify and build their strengths

1. Use children’s books as an opportunity to talk about character strengths. Any kid’s books with an underlying positive message or central character who displays strengths and virtues can be used to create an awareness of strengths. In *Biggles Finds His Superpowers*, Biggles does nice things for his friends and defends Tiddles the cat from the mean mog who chased her up a tree. Biggles displays kindness and bravery in the book. At the end of the tale, he realizes that being a good friend is a superpower too. Being a good friend can be related to the Social Intelligence strength. As you read these stories to your children, help them recognize and link different strengths to the behaviours. For instance, you could say “Oh, that is so kind of him to do something nice for his friend!”, and “Wasn’t that brave of him to help the cat get away!”.

2. Help children self-reflect on their character strengths. With young children under around 8, I would encourage a modified strengths language where appropriate. To keep it simple and interesting for kids you can use the term ‘superpowers’. Because superpowers are fun, and they can be anything at all! At the end of the *Biggles* books, the dog says “I’m not like horse or sheep or cat, but now I know what I’m good at. I’ve got superpowers too, and I bet, so do you”. This is a great opportunity to ask your kids what they think their superpower is. Let them have fun with this!

3. Practice strengths spotting and give character strengths-based praise. Being aware of the 24 strengths makes it easier to spot them when your children display them. When you do see demonstration of strengths, give them some positive feedback that helps them link their behaviour to the strength. For instance, say things like “Look at all the colours and shapes in that picture! You have used your creativity there”; “Thank you for helping to set the table – you showed great teamwork”; “Wow, so many questions show me that curiosity is one of your superpowers!”; “When you gave your sister a cuddle when she was sad, it showed her love, and made her feel better”; “Thank you for telling me the truth. That shows me that honesty and bravery are your strengths.” Giving strengths-based praise not only reinforces positive behaviours, but also instills in children positive attributes that build a healthy self-concept.



CLASSROOM / HOME ACTIVITIES

Before reading the book:

What do you think this book is about? (a dog, farm animals, superpowers)

What do you think superpowers are? (flying, invisibility, strength, etc)

Discussion Points

After reading the story, ask a few of these open questions to help the child make connections between themes in the story and their own life.

- What kind of feelings did you have reading this book? Happy, sad?
- What words (adjectives) would you use to describe Biggles? (brave, happy, nice, helper)
- Why do you think Biggles felt good at the end of the story?
- What sort of superpowers do you have?
- What do you love doing? What else are you good at?
- What sort of strengths, or superpowers/ special qualities do you see in your family members?
- Biggles was very kind to his friends. How do you feel when you are kind to your friends?
- Sometimes we have different superpowers on different days, and sometimes we get new ones over time. What superpower would you love to have?

This discussion influences an attitude that everybody has their own strengths and abilities, and when we have the opportunity to use them, we feel good. The story may be used to identify the particular character strengths that Biggles demonstrates, such as kindness, bravery, and social intelligence. You can also use the book to introduce a strengths language into the home/classroom.

Follow up action

Try a Strengths Spotting activity. First, build a language. Introduce the child/ren to 24 VIA character strengths. You can alter the names of some of the strengths to make them more age-appropriate if you feel it's beneficial. Then ask them to think of a friend/family member and match a strength to them. Ask the child what that person does that demonstrates that strength. Ask the child/ren what strengths/superpowers they think they have. Let them be creative with that – it doesn't have to map perfectly to the VIA strengths. Then add your observations of their character-based strengths.

WORKSHEET: Match the Character Strengths

See if you can connect the character words to their description!

Creative

You look for the good in things, and feel happy with what you have

Honest

You are not afraid to speak up, face your fear, or do what is right

Grateful

You keep trying, even when it gets hard

Funny

You love to laugh and bring smiles to other people

Gritty

You love to do nice things for others and show them you care

Kind

You love to explore and discover new things

Brave

You use your imagination to make stories, characters and artwork

Curious

You tell the truth and you are not afraid to be yourself

Note: some of the character strengths listed have been modified from the VIA Survey names to make them easier to understand for children under 8. 'Gritty' has been used as a substitute for perseverance, and funny has been used instead of 'humour'.

WORKSHEET: Fix the sentence

See if you can fix the sentences. Write them out so they make sense.

The runs. Dog

Handwriting practice lines for the first sentence, consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.



The dog sit. can

Handwriting practice lines for the second sentence, consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.



A cat is the tree. in

Handwriting practice lines for the third sentence, consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.



sad. The dog is

Handwriting practice lines for the fourth sentence, consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.



The dog at the cat. barks

Handwriting practice lines for the fifth sentence, consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.



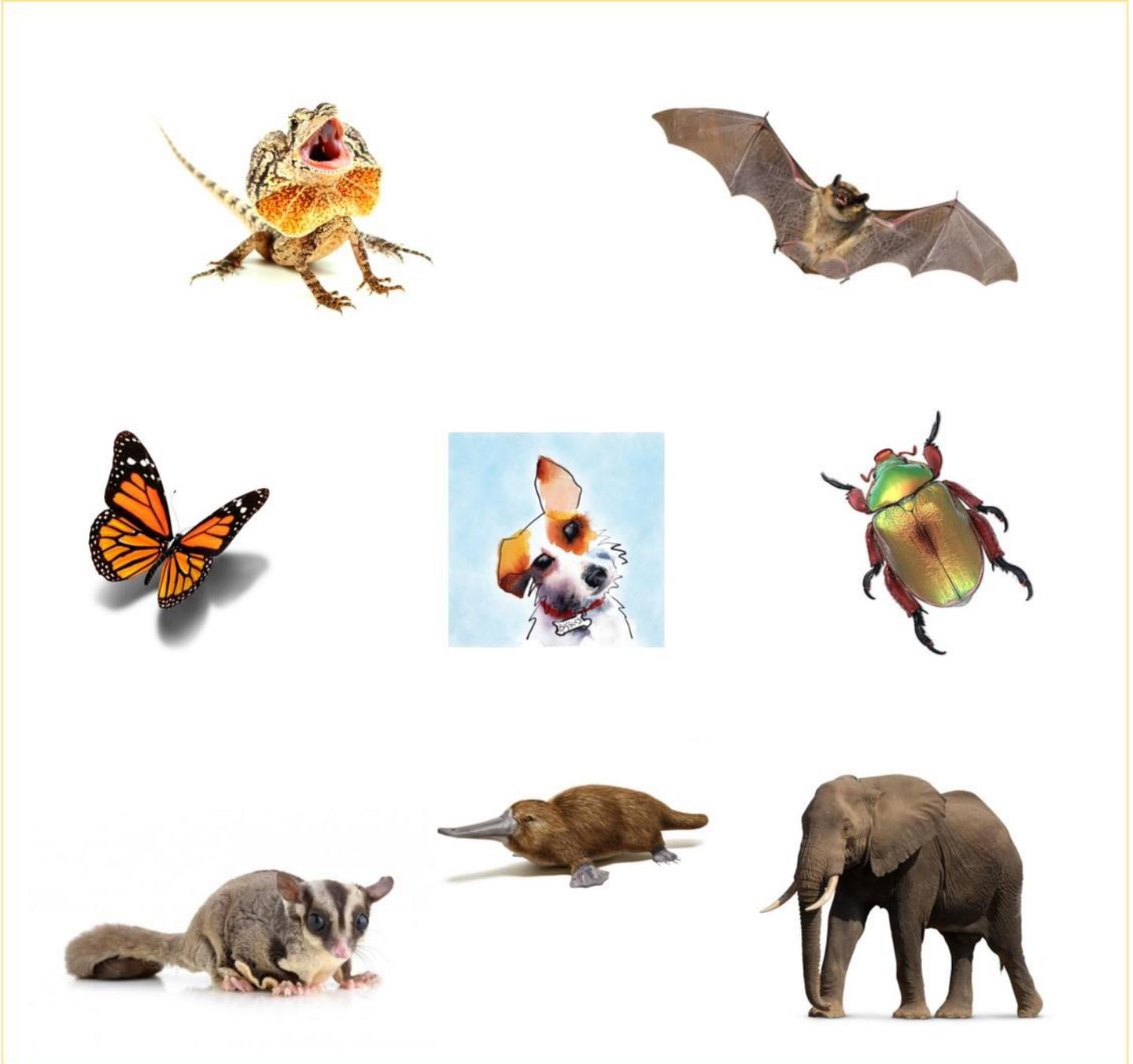
sheep eats grass. The

Handwriting practice lines for the sixth sentence, consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.



WORKSHEET: What's my superpower?

Each of these animals has something special about them. You might even say they have a 'superpower'. See if you can identify the special feature of each animal.



To purchase a copy of book 1: Biggles Goes to Work, or book 2: Biggles Finds His Superpowers, go to: www.bigglesbooks.org, search for the Biggles Books Facebook page, or call Vanessa on 0433 411 939.

Stay tuned for book 3 to be released in late 2019: The Little Dog That Could.

