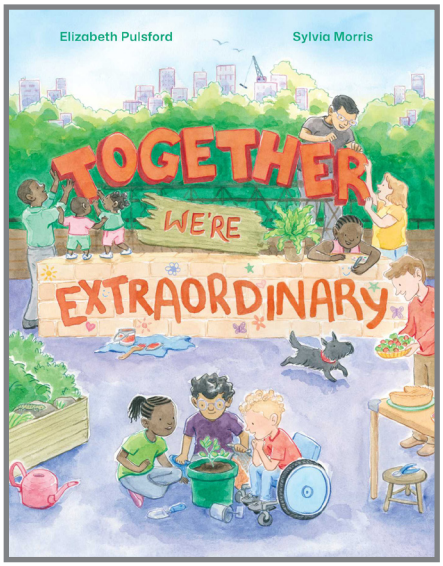
Together, We're Extraordinary



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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary

SYNOPSIS

What can we achieve when we work together? Grow a forest? Build a city? Search for life on Mars? Here is a powerful celebration of community and the magic we make when we stand side by side.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Pulsford is a picture book author and a mid-thirty-something year old cliché. She loves her small daughters, hot yoga, good coffee, overnight hiking, story-spinning, and nachos (not always in that order). Elizabeth's stories combine giggles with grit, inviting kids to imagine boldly, laugh loudly and dream up kinder worlds. Elizabeth is also a high school Literature and English teacher from the Sunshine Coast, where she spends her days dodging flying glue sticks and correcting students' pronunciation of the word 'hyperbole'. She is the author of several picture books including *But Why?, Boots, Dresses are for Messes* and *Daycare for Daddies*, with several new releases on the way.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Sylvia Morris is a children's illustrator from Adelaide, on Kaurna Country. She was shortlisted for the CBCA New Illustrator Award for her debut book *The Best Hiding Place* (written by Jane Godwin), and her most recent book *The Great Shark Egg Case Hunt* (written by Kasey Whitelaw) received a CBCA Notable Award. She loves illustration because it's a bit like doing a puzzle in the shape of a story.

THEMES

- Community and connection
- Belonging
- Individual and collective strengths
- Teamwork
- Kindness and helping others
- Making a difference
- Environmental responsibility
- Hope and possibility

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Look closely at the cover. What are the characters doing? Why might the illustrator show groups of people on the cover of a book called *Together, We're Extraordinary*?
- What does the word 'extraordinary' mean? What extraordinary things do you think the characters might achieve together?
- Read the title aloud. Who might "we" include? How is "we" different from "I" or "you"?
- Think of something you can do independently. Now think of something that is easier, safer or more enjoyable with other people.
- How might one person's actions become part of something much bigger? Share an example or prediction.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

- Who does the book begin by speaking to?
- What are some things the children can do on their own?
- Why do some tasks take more than one person?
- What happens when one star is joined by many stars? What happens when one voice becomes a crowd?
- How are people compared with stars, sparks and bees? What do these comparisons help us understand?
- Which examples show people caring for the environment? Which show people building, creating or exploring?
- What does the phrase "the good we do is magnified" mean?
- Why does the book remind us that it is fine to be on our own as well as celebrating togetherness?
- How do the final pages connect with the beginning of the book?

LITERACY

Rhyme and rhythm

- The rhyming couplets give the book energy and make its ideas memorable when read aloud.
- Listen for rhyming pairs such as soul/whole, one/done and stronger/longer. What other pairs can you find?
- Clap or tap the beat as the book is read. Where does the rhythm make particular words feel important?
- Create a new rhyming couplet about something a group can achieve together.

CONTRAST AND STRUCTURE

- The text moves between what one person can do and what becomes possible when many people act together.
- Make two lists: Things I can do on my own and Things we can do together. Where might some activities belong in both lists?
- Find words that signal contrast or connection, including but, and, although and where. How do they link the book's ideas?
- Trace how the book expands from one person to families, communities and people working together across the world, and even into space. Why might the author have chosen this order?

VISUAL LITERACY

Sylvia Morris's illustrations extend the text by showing many different ways people can contribute, cooperate and belong.

- Choose one spread and list everything the pictures tell us that the words do not.
- Notice how the number of people changes across the book. How does this help communicate the movement from one person to a community?
- Look at the characters' faces, gestures and positions. How do the illustrations show cooperation and shared purpose?

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Independence and interdependence

- *Together, We're Extraordinary* celebrates personal capability while showing that accepting help and working with others are also important strengths.
- What are you proud to be able to do independently?
- When might asking for help be a strong or responsible choice?
- How does it feel when someone includes you in a group or works beside you?
- What strengths can different people bring to a team? Consider ideas, practical skills, encouragement, listening and kindness.

Small actions, big change

- The book shows how one voice, spark or choice can grow when others join in.
- Can one small action make a difference? Find evidence in the book to support your answer.
- Why is it helpful for a group to share a common aim?
- Choose something your class would like to improve. What small action could each person take?
- How can a group make sure that every person's ideas and contributions are valued?

Final reflections

- Which achievement in the book would you most like to help make possible? Why?
- What can a group achieve that one person might not be able to achieve alone?
- Which page best expresses the message of the book for you?
- After reading, what do you think makes a community extraordinary?
- Complete the sentence: Together, our class can…

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Our extraordinary class

- Create a class mural beginning with one person and growing to include every member of the group. Each student adds a self-portrait and one strength, skill or quality they contribute. Join the portraits together beneath the words: "Together, we're extraordinary."

One choice, multiplied

- Choose one helpful action, such as picking up litter, saving water, welcoming someone or sharing books. Illustrate what happens when one person acts, then when five, twenty or one hundred people make the same choice. Add captions to show how the impact grows.

Teamwork tower

- In small groups, use recycled materials, blocks or paper to build the tallest stable tower you can. Give each person a role, then reflect: What helped the team succeed? How did you solve disagreements or problems? What could you improve next time?

A new extraordinary spread

- Write and illustrate an additional spread for the book. Choose something people can achieve together, create a rhyming couplet and design an illustration showing many different contributions working towards the same goal.

Community action map

- Draw a map of the school or local community. Mark places where people already work together, then add one new idea for making the community kinder, cleaner, safer or more welcoming. Share the maps and choose one realistic class action to try.

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