

# Joey and Riley

Mandy Foot

**TEACHERS RESOURCES**

# JOEY AND RILEY

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED

BY MANDY FOOT

TEACHERS RESOURCES BY LEONIE JORDAN

## Level

Stage 1 (Kindergarten to Year 2)

## Subject Areas

- English
- Visual Arts
- Humanities & Social Sciences
- Information & Communication Technology (ICT)

## Themes

- Animal-human relationships
- Farm life
- Drought
- Change
- Moving house
- Separation
- Grief and loss
- Hope
- Reunion



## About the Book

*Joey and Riley* is a beautifully illustrated picture book which provides rich opportunity for classroom reading and discussion. Set in rural Australia, the book explores the bond between a young farm boy, Joey, and his beloved border collie, Riley. When Joey and his mother are forced to move into town, Joey is separated from Riley, who is a working dog and needs to remain on the farm. As Joey struggles to adapt to his new life, Joey's Pop writes him regular letters about Riley and his activities. One night, however, there is a terrible storm during which Riley disappears.

Believing that Riley is dead, Joey's mother attempts to console him, telling him that Riley will live on in his heart. However, her words do little to allay Joey's anxiety over the whereabouts of his friend. Luckily, the story ends positively, with Joey and Riley joyfully reunited when the weary dog heroically makes his way to town, surprising Joey outside his house.

In addition to being a moving tale of hope and friendship, *Joey and Riley* can be used to discuss a range of issues related to animal-human relationships including pets, working animals and animal farming. The book allows students to learn about life on an Australian farm from a child's perspective, inviting them to compare and contrast Joey's experiences with their own. Importantly, it also offers valuable opportunities to explore themes of loss and grief within an ultimately reassuring context, as while the idea of death is present in the book, it is mitigated by the happy ending of the story.

Mandy Foot's soft, gentle illustrations play a pivotal role in the text, deftly extending the world of the narrative and creating an atmosphere of warmth and nostalgia, which reinforces the central themes and relationships. *Joey and Riley* would therefore be suitable for a study of visual literacy techniques.

## About the Author

Mandy Foot is a self-proclaimed animal nut and horse lover who works in a studio in the Adelaide Hills. Mandy's picture books for Lothian include the very popular Captain Kangaroo series and the bestsellers *The Wheels on the Bus* and *Old Macdonald had a Farm*.

For more titles and other fun downloads visit [www.mandyfoot.com.au](http://www.mandyfoot.com.au) or follow her on twitter or facebook:

[twitter.com/mandy\\_foot](https://twitter.com/mandy_foot)

[facebook.com/mandyfootillustration](https://facebook.com/mandyfootillustration)



# Learning Activities & Discussion Questions

## Before Reading

- Identify the following features of the book with the class: title, author, publisher, blurb, endpapers or inside cover, title page, text and illustrations.
- Ask students to make predictions about the book based on the cover. For example, what do they think will happen in the story? Will the story be happy, sad, scary, funny or something else? Where might the story be set? Who might be the intended audience for the book? Do they think they will enjoy the book? After reading the story, you may like to revisit these predictions and see which were correct.

## While Reading

### Guided Discussion Questions

Read the book through once without interruption so that students are able to enjoy the story. Then, reread the book as a class, using the following questions to deepen understanding and engagement.

- *'Riley was Joey's shadow and Joey's was Riley's.'*  
The book begins *'Riley was Joey's shadow and Joey's was Riley's.'* What does the author mean by this?
- *'On Wednesday they hurried the woolly mammoths along the raceway for Pop to count.'*  
Why is Joey's go-kart described as a rocket ship (on the previous page) while the sheep are described as woolly mammoths? Consider how these descriptions help us see the story from Joey's point of view.
- *'But on Friday, everything changed.'*  
Why isn't Riley able to come with Joey to the town?  
Why do you think Joey and his mother move into town?
- *'The breakfast plates looked bigger in town.'*  
Why might the breakfast plates appear larger to Joey? (Hint: Look at the amount of food on them, compared to on the earlier pages. Why might this be different?)
- *'Dear Joey, the rains have come.'*  
Why do you think Pop's letters to Joey are so short?
- *'The nights felt a little colder without Riley by his side.'*  
Compare Joey's bedroom in town and on the farm. What similarities and differences do you notice between them? Why do you think Riley is sleeping on Joey's bed?
- *'Until one day...'*  
What clues are there in the picture that something is wrong?
- *'That night, the clouds were a blanket to the sky...'*  
How does the illustration on this page help show Joey's feelings?

- *Page without text*

Why do you think the author has chosen not to use any words on this page? Do you think having no words makes the picture more powerful?

- *'The walk to school was long the next morning and even longer on the way home.'*

How do the illustrations help us understand Joey's feelings? (Hint: Look at the amount of empty space around Joey, the size the artist has drawn him and his body language.)

Joey's shadow is particularly noticeable against the empty background. Why has the artist focused attention on this?

Do you think Joey believes Riley is dead? Why or why not?

- *'Joey heard a familiar sound.'*

Look at the distance between Joey and Riley. Why do you think they have been drawn so far apart?

What other things suggest how difficult Riley's journey has been? Think about the language used to describe Riley. Look also at how he is positioned right at the edge of the page on a steep diagonal line.

- *'Joey stood. He ran.'*

Why does the author use short sentences at this moment? Why do you think the printed story ends here?

- *Endpapers & inside cover*

Examine the two sets of endpapers. What differences do you notice? Why do you think Mandy Foot has designed them this way? Think particularly about why they're different colours. Do they give any extra information about how Joey's life has changed at the end of the book?

Do you think Joey comes to enjoy life in the town?

## After Reading

### General Discussion Questions

- Discuss pets as a class. Who in the class has a pet? What things do you need to do to look after your pet? What would your ideal pet be? In what ways is Riley different to a normal pet?
- Riley is a working dog, looking after sheep on the farm. As a class, brainstorm some other jobs that dogs do in our society. For instance, guide dogs, police dogs, search and rescue dogs, guard dogs and service dogs. Can you think of any other animals that have jobs?
- In what ways was Joey's life on the farm different to your life? What are some things you would enjoy about living on a farm like Joey's? What might you find challenging?
- Joey uses his imagination to entertain himself, playing in his 'rocket ship' and pretending that the sheep are woolly mammoths. Can you think of occasions when you've used your imagination to entertain yourself? Talk to a parent or older member of the community about what they did when they were young. Share these stories as a class.

- Like Joey, many students in rural Australia are educated at home, taught by a parent or doing their lessons over the internet or radio. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of this? Would you prefer this or going to school?
- Joey's life changes dramatically when he moves to the town. Has anyone in the class moved house? What was it like for them? Have students experienced any other changes in their life that they've found challenging? Were there any things that helped them to adjust?
- Pop and Joey write letters to each other after Joey leaves the farm. Why do you think they communicate in this way? Is it different to how you communicate with people you live apart from? What might be some of the advantages and disadvantages of letter writing? Discuss other ways people have communicated throughout history.
- How does Joey's mother attempt to console him believing that Riley had died in the storm? What are some things you could say or do to try to comfort a person who has lost someone they care about?
- Discuss the concept of heroism. Would you describe Riley as a hero? Why or why not?

## Learning Activities

Note: all activities involving ICT skills are indicated in brackets (*ICT*).

### English

- As a class, create a list of adjectives to describe the story.
- Locate examples of similes and metaphors in the book and discuss their effectiveness as a class. For instance, 'Joey raced home, fast as the wind' is a simile used to convey Joey's eagerness for news about Riley. The metaphor 'the clouds were a blanket to the sky' both visually emphasises the darkness of the sky and creates a comforting feeling which contrasts ironically with Joey's anxiety as he lies awake in bed worrying about Riley.
- Onomatopoeia is used in the text, with the phrase 'Awoo woo' used to recreate the sound of Riley's excited barking. Have students think of other sounds that Joey might hear in the story and come up with onomatopoeic phrases to describe them.
- Discuss how the letters between Pop and Joey help readers understand the story. Challenge students to write a story told entirely in letters.
- Demonstrate how to set out a letter and address an envelope, then have students write a letter to a friend or relative. Alternatively, find a class in another part of Australia to participate in a pen-pal program.
- Have students look for other books on the theme of human–animal relationships or another theme explored in the book.
- There are many real-life accounts of animals reuniting with their humans despite incredible odds or displaying heroism in other ways. Have students research animal heroism on the internet and present their favourite story to the class (*ICT*).

- Mandy Foot begins her story with a typical week in Joey's life. Ask students to imagine that an author was using a similar structure to write a story about them. Brainstorm a list of activities they might do on each day of the week. Have students think of something that might happen to disrupt their normal life, in the same way that moving away from the farm disrupted Joey's life. Write a story that uses this event as the starting point.
- Ask students to speculate about what happened to Riley from the time he disappeared in the storm to the time he turned up at Joey's house, then write this section of the story from Riley's point of view. They may like to also illustrate their stories in a similar style to Mandy Foot.

## Visual Arts

- As a class, brainstorm a list of adjectives to describe the illustrations.
- Analyse selected illustrations as a class, discussing such things as medium/materials, colour and shading, composition, line, framing, body language and facial expression. Some questions could include: What do you think the artist has used to create the illustrations? What are the main colours and how would you describe them? Why do you think the artist chose these colours? How do the letters and photographs in the illustrations help bring you deeper into the story?
- Challenge students to tell a story entirely in photos.
- Create a 'Wall of Fame' of amazing animals, with students painting or drawing portraits of an animal hero they have researched. (ICT)
- Have students make origami Riley bookmarks. (See worksheet.)
- Have students create a 'border collie-age', a collage of a border collie made from black and white newspaper! (See worksheet.)

## Humanities and Social Sciences

Watch the following video on ABC Education about living on a sheep farm:  
<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/2530670/visit-a-sheep-farm> (ICT)

Joey's family's farm is affected by drought. Have students work in pairs to research this topic then create posters informing people how to help during times of drought. (ICT)

- Organise an excursion to a farm or arrange for a farmer to visit the school to do a talk.

Many children who live in remote parts of Australia attend 'School of the Air'. View the ABC Behind the News segment at: <http://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/school-of-the-air/10531692> ) Have students create an advertisement aimed at farmers in the outback promoting 'School of the Air' (ICT).

Watch the ABC Behind the News segment about training a sheepdog: <http://www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/sheepdog-school/10522816> (Note: you may like to draw attention to the Indian Runner ducks pictured in the book, which are commonly used to train sheepdogs. There are some good videos of this available online.) Direct students to research this topic further then create a pamphlet explaining how to select and train a sheep dog. (ICT)

# Research Resources

The following websites may be suitable for students to use in their research. Students are also encouraged to use resources from their school and local libraries. ABC Education

<http://education.abc.net.au/home#!/home>

- Animal Planet – Pets  
<http://www.animalplanet.com/pets/>
- Britannica for Kids  
<https://kids.britannica.com/kids>
- DK Findout!  
<https://www.dkfindout.com/us/>
- National Geographic for Kids  
<https://www.natgeokids.com/au/>

## Mandy Foot on Writing Joey and Riley

First and foremost, I wrote the story to highlight the relationship/bond between the dog and the little boy, and show how dogs are very much part of the family. Working dogs are very loyal and border collies in particular tend to attach themselves to one person.

The story, although a work of fiction, was inspired by some real-life events. We lost our own 12-year-old border collie, Cody, when my son Joshy was three. To help him understand this, I told him that Cody's body had gone back to the earth because it was worn out and that his spirit had gone to heaven. I told him that Cody would be the brightest star in the sky that night, and of course, there were no stars. Joshy insisted on getting in the car to drive down the paddock and find Cody because he wasn't up in heaven like I told him. Joshy grieved terribly and even six months later would suddenly burst into tears declaring how much he missed him. This is how much dogs mean to a family, and even more so to the kids who have grown up with them.

I guess writing this story was like therapy for me as I wanted to bring Cody home, so that's exactly what I did. Having said that, I still wanted to really pull on the heartstrings, once, twice, so those similar emotions could be felt by the reader, and explore just how special the relationship between a boy and his dog can be. (Yes, there were many tears shed during the writing process.) It also opens the door for discussion about losing a pet and that grieving process, but we get to have our happy ending here.

We now have Arty as part of our family, a red and white border collie. He goes to school with Joshy and I most days and follows me absolutely everywhere. (He sleeps by my computer desk or drawing table while I work.) I've used four different dogs over the course of three years as reference to create my drawings for this book. Arty now fills the very large space in our hearts which the passing of Cody left.



## About the Author of these Notes

These resources were created by Leonie Jordan. Leonie Jordan is a former Secondary School English Teacher and Children's & Youth Librarian who has presented at the State Library of NSW on numerous occasions. She has worked for a number of publishing companies including Walker Books Australia and Allen & Unwin, and regularly reviews and creates test material for Educational Assessment Australia, writers of the NAPLAN, ICAS and GAT assessments.



# Worksheet 1

## Make your own Riley bookmark!

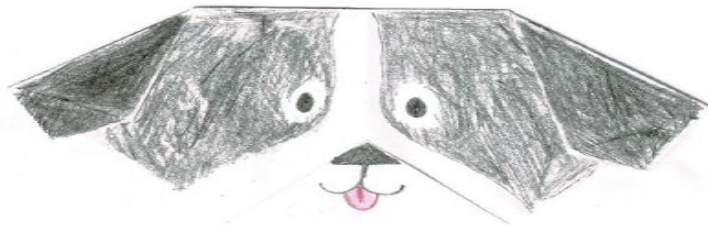
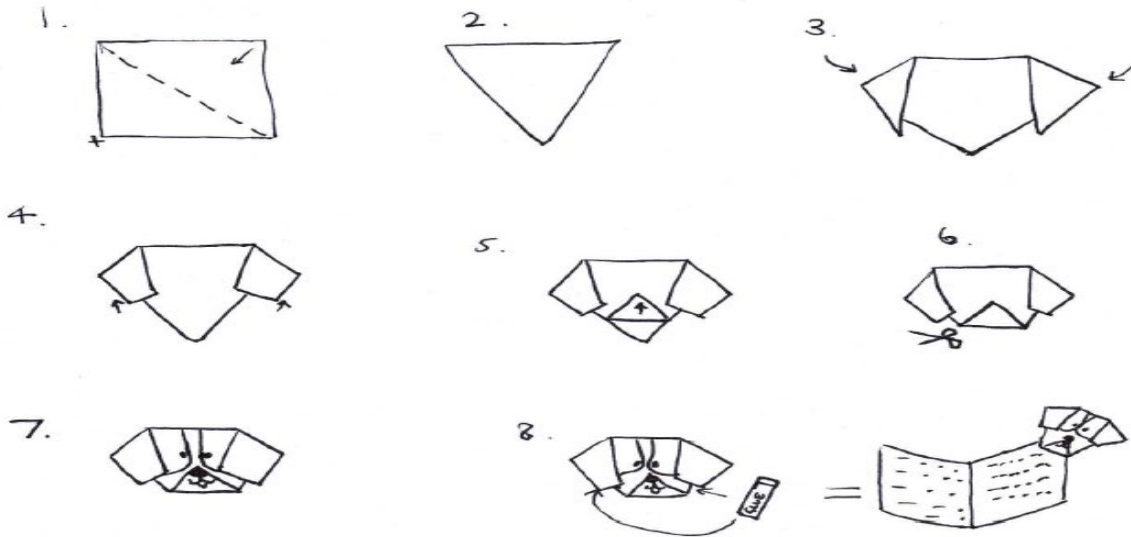
### You will need:

- A square of white paper about 10cm x 10cm
- Glue
- Scissors
- Coloured pencils, textas or crayons

### What to do:

1. Fold the paper in half diagonally to create a triangle.
2. Turn the triangle so that the base is on the top and the tip points down.
3. Fold down the top corners of the triangle to create ears.
4. Fold under the bottom points of the ears so that they look like a border collie's.
5. Fold up the top layer of the tip of the triangle to create a snout.
6. Cut off the bottom layer of the tip of the triangle.
7. Draw on the eyes, nose and mouth then colour in your bookmark.
8. Glue together the side edges of the bookmark only – don't glue the bottom! You may want to stop about 3/4 of the way down so that you have a bigger opening.

Slide your bookmark onto the top-right corner of your page to mark your place!



## Worksheet 2

### Border collie collage

Stick scraps of newspaper on the stencil below to make your own Riley 'Border collie-age'!

