

Blimmin' Koro!

Kātahi rā, e *Koro* e!

Jill Bevan-Brown
Illustrated by Trish Bowles



Published by Oratia Books
ISBN: 978-0-947506-87-2

Teacher Resource

Koro stopped talking and I was really sad.
My nana said, 'Never mind, he still loves listening to everyone.'
I said, '*Blimmin' Koro!*' and we all smiled.

Blimmin' Koro is the true story of Koro's progressive dementia journey. It was written by his wife, Nana, for their grandchildren, to help them understand, accept and adjust to the effects of dementia on their grandfather. Nana decided to publish the story so that other children may learn about dementia and not be fearful or dismissive of people with this condition.



Discussion

This is a true story. Koro is lucky because he has 12 grandchildren who love and include him. However, some old people are not so lucky. Their family may live far away or be too busy to visit. The older person may feel forgotten and lonely. Do you know any old people who may be in this situation? Talk about ways they can be cheered up. Is there anything you can do to help?

Discussion continued

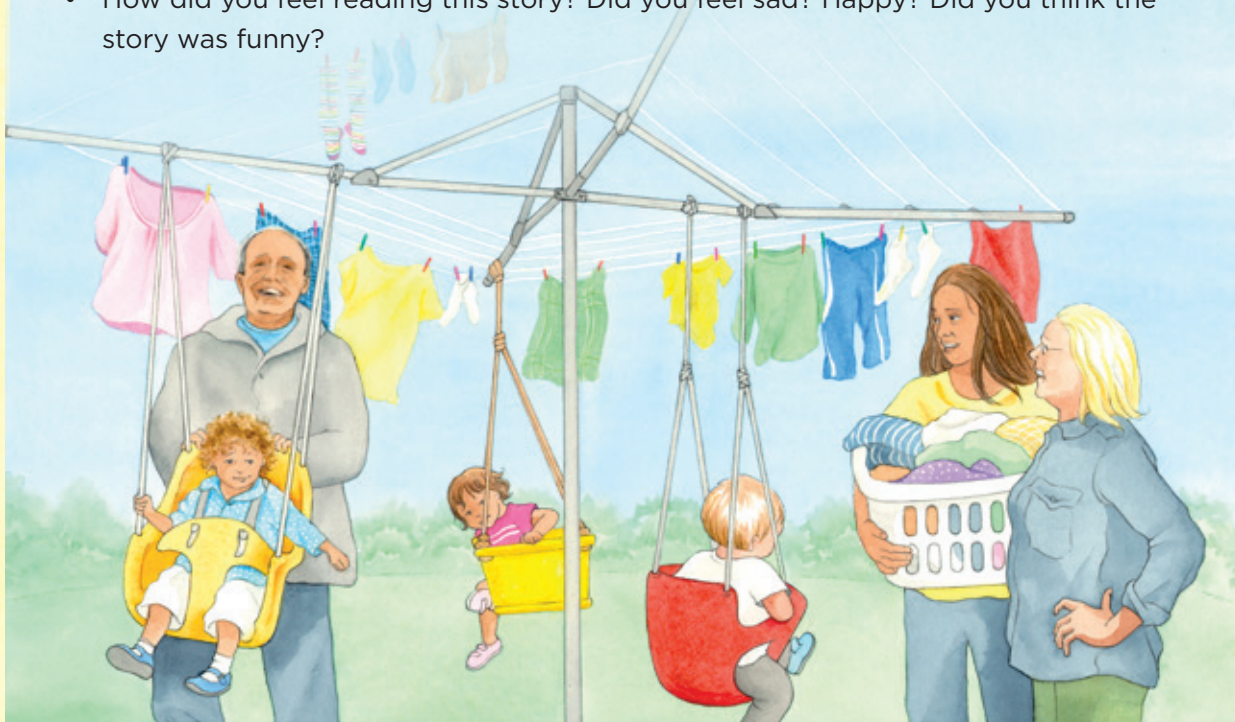
At Aunty Maraea's tangi Koro's wheelchair could not be pushed up the steps into the whareniui. Luckily there were some strong people available who could lift Koro and his heavy wheelchair into the meeting house. Can you think of other occasions and places where people in wheelchairs cannot be included because they do not have access? Is this fair? What can be done about it?

What are some other ways people with disabilities get left out? In your school are there any students who are excluded in some way? Perhaps they are never chosen for teams or asked to join in playground games. How do you think they feel? How would you feel if this was you? What can you do about it?



Questions

- Why do you think the washing-line swing broke?
- Why wouldn't Nana let Kotuku help Koro with his test at the doctors?
- What would you have said to the friend who was scared of Koro and his broom?
- What is a tangi? Have you ever been to one?
- Why did Koro stop walking and talking?
- If you had a magic lamp, what would you wish for when you rubbed it?
- What did Kotuku mean when she said, 'Blimmin' Nana' at the end of the story?
- How did you feel reading this story? Did you feel sad? Happy? Did you think the story was funny?



Activities

- 1 From the suggestions that arose in the discussions above, choose one that you can do by yourself, with a partner or group or maybe even as a class project. After doing your chosen activity share what happened. Was it successful? Why or why not? How did it make you and others feel?
- 2 'Koro' is the Māori word for grandfather. What do you call your grandfather? Why is this name used? Do a class survey to see how many different words are used for 'grandfather'.
- 3 Using a cardboard box, string, staples or any other material, make an 'unbreakable' washing-line swing for a toy such as a doll or a teddy. If possible test it out on a washing line.

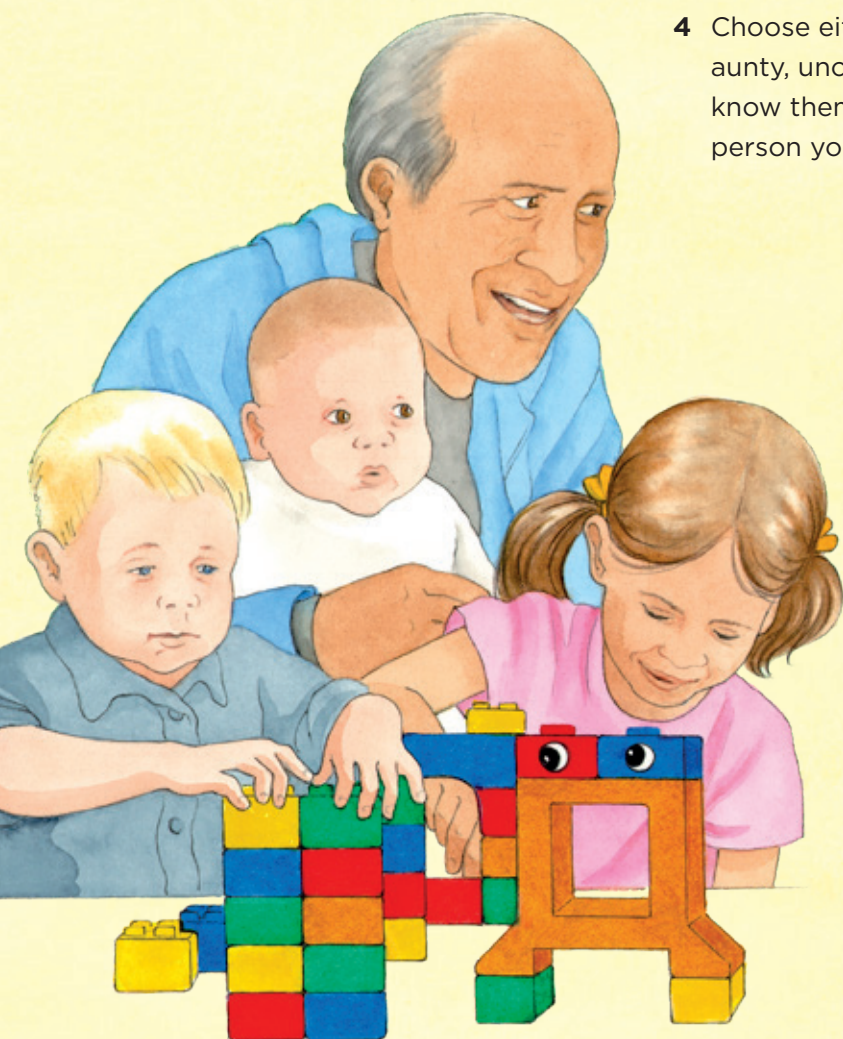


- 4 Choose either your grandfather, grandmother, elderly aunty, uncle, family member or friend. How well do you know them? Can you answer these questions about the person you chose:

- a How old is the person you chose?
- b Where were they born?
- c What is their favourite food?
- d What colour eyes do they have?
- e What is their favourite song?
- f What makes them happy, and what makes them sad?

If you don't know the answers to any of these questions your homework is to find out.

- 5 With other students in your class make some friendly cards for people in a local resthome and/or make a large, colourful class poster to hang on the resthome's noticeboard.



Activities for older students

- Koro has dementia. This is when damaged brain cells cause people to become forgetful, muddled, act in unusual ways and struggle to do things they once found easy. Do a research project on dementia. Some questions you may like to investigate are:
 - what causes brain cell damage?
 - what are common symptoms of dementia?
 - what are some different types of dementia?
 - how is dementia diagnosed and treated?
 - is it curable?
 - what can be done to lessen a person's chances of getting dementia?
- Write a 'This is Your Life' book about an elderly family member. You should interview them to gather the information needed. If they have a photo album one approach is to look through it with them asking about the stories behind the photos. If they don't have an album there may be photos on the wall or valued possessions on display that will be good memory joggers for the person being interviewed. Find out what their life was like when they were young.
 - did they enjoy school?
 - where did they work?
 - did they have any ambitions or adventures?
 - what were happy and sad occasions for them?
- Create a Kahoot quiz (<https://kahoot.com>) using information gathered in the previous activity. Perhaps you could conduct your quiz and present the 'This is Your Life' book to the person it is about at a family get-together.



Background information about dementia

Dementia is not a single disease. Rather it is a general term for brain cell damage that causes changes in many areas including memory, thinking, behaviour, movement, balance, language, judgement, problem solving, emotions and personality. The dementia symptoms a person experiences depends on the area of their brain that is damaged.

Alzheimer's disease is the leading cause of dementia, followed by Vascular, Lewy Body and Frontotemporal dementias. The cause of brain cell damage varies. For example, in Alzheimer's disease damage is the result of an abnormal build-up of amyloid and tau proteins, while in Vascular dementia damage is caused by microscopic bleeding and blood vessel blockage in the brain. There is no single test to determine dementia. Doctors make a diagnosis based on medical history, physical examination, memory questions and tasks, laboratory tests and the presence of characteristic changes associated with particular dementia conditions.

Dementia is not hereditary nor is it curable except in rare disorders. However, there are drugs that can temporarily reduce symptoms. Research has also identified lifestyle factors that can lessen a person's chances of getting dementia. These include being physically and mentally active, eating healthily, refraining from smoking and limiting alcohol intake.

While dementia can affect anyone, the chances of developing it increase with age. In general, dementia progresses slowly, although this varies according to its cause. The average life expectancy for Alzheimer's, for instance, is ten years after diagnosis. However, it must be emphasised that individuals are unique in how they experience dementia and in the rate it progresses.

Another important message is that while dementia gradually decreases a person's physical, cognitive, social and emotional capacity, it does not diminish their value as human beings and their right to be loved and included.

More information on dementia can be found at:

<https://www.alzheimers.org.nz/information-and-support/information/what-is-dementia>



Using this book in the New Zealand classroom

Blimmin' Koro supports Te Aho Matua o Ngā Kura Kaupapa principles inherent in Te Ira Tangata, Ngā Iwi, Āhuatango Ako and Ngā Tino Uaratanga as well as the New Zealand Curriculum principle of Inclusion, values of Diversity and Equity and the key competency of Relating to Others. The book content, discussion topics and activities are relevant to the Health, PE and Social Sciences Learning Areas. In particular they can help students

to: develop understandings, sensitivity and aroha to enhance their interactions and relationships with elderly people and those with disabilities; value diversity; critically consider social issues and; contribute to greater inclusion within the community.

Additionally, it is hoped that the bilingual nature of this book may foster an interest in te reo Māori among children unfamiliar with this language.