

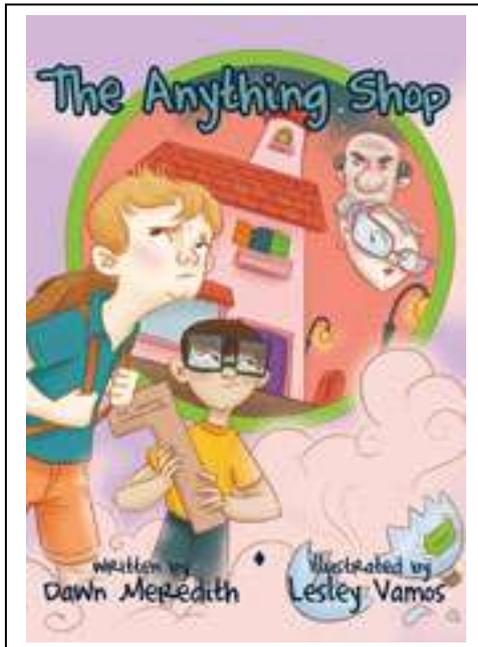


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Teacher's Notes and Ideas

Prepared by Wombat Books



## The Anything Shop

By Dawn Meredith

Illustrated by Lesley Vamos

ISBN: 978-1-921633-51-5

Recommended Retail \$14.95

Recommended Age: Between 8 and 10 years old

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## **Introduction**

Charlie has no money, but at The Anything Shop it doesn't matter. He can swap things he doesn't want. Charlie swaps two years of embarrassing hugs for a cricket bat that hits six runs every time.

But things go wrong at school and Charlie soon misses all the hugs from his family. Can he swap them back? And what's really going on at that weird looking shop?

## **Story Summary**

*The Anything Shop* explores themes of family, friendship, consumerism, delayed gratification and goal setting, ageing, listening to instinct, persistence, affection and belonging.

## **Key Learning Areas**

English

Social

## **Values addressed/Themes**

Children's natural desire for toys, books and gadgets is usually tempered by parental control, but in this story that control is handed over to the children, whose eager desires lead them to relinquish intangible elements given to them for free by their families in order to acquire special toys they've dreamed of.

The new shop in town, Dream Toys, convinces parents to shower their children with toys in order to show their love. Another theme is in the area of inter-personal skills – gut instinct. Charlie is first warned when meeting Alfred, who already knows his name and 'we know what children like'. In situations of perceived threat, the body sends messages to the conscious mind through feelings, such as the tingling sensation Charlie feels. Other hints include Alfred's glistening teeth, Meryl's sparkling eyes 'like black diamonds', her impatient foot tapping and the instant contract. All are signs Charlie misses.

Another theme is friendship, which can spring from situations in life where we find ourselves in need of a friend. Children have great capacity for compassion and empathy, especially if they are encouraged to think of others' feelings as much as their own. The theme of persistence is important. When things don't go exactly as we want, we must have the courage to explore other possibilities and, perhaps on some occasions, accept there are things which are not within our control. Delayed gratification adds value to what we desire and teaches us self-control and goal setting, both valuable assets to our lives.

## About the Author



Dawn Meredith loves writing stories for children. It's a good excuse to have fun adventures with some of her favourite things, like robots and medieval castles, cartoons and cats. Dawn writes fiction and non-fiction. Her fifth book, *The Anything Shop*, was released in October 2011. Dawn was awarded a May Gibbs fellowship in 2011 and 2012. She enjoys conducting writing workshops for kids in schools and libraries. Dawn was once a high school Art and English teacher, but now works in special education and counselling. She loves to draw, write, read, play the piano, go for bushwalks with her family, dogs and horse, work in her garden and travel overseas.

## About the Illustrator



Lesley studied at the College of Fine Arts, receiving a distinction and animation honour in their Bachelor of Digital media degree.

She spent the next year in Los Angeles gaining experience and is now working as a freelance illustrator and graphic designer, spending time both in Australia and abroad to help inspire her creativity.

### Questions to explore

1. What is consumerism? How does advertising affect the choices we make?
2. Instinct - How do you know when something isn't quite right and could be dangerous or harmful?
3. Belonging – what makes you feel part of the family and loved? What 'intangibles' do we sometimes take for granted?
4. What special things can only a family give you? What is affection? Why are intangibles such as hugs important?
5. What is body language? What signs does the body give you that tell you something isn't quite right?
6. Why is fear a normal reaction, designed to protect us?
7. Friendship – how do you know a person is your friend? What do they do or say?
8. Why is saving up for something, not just being given it when we want, important? What

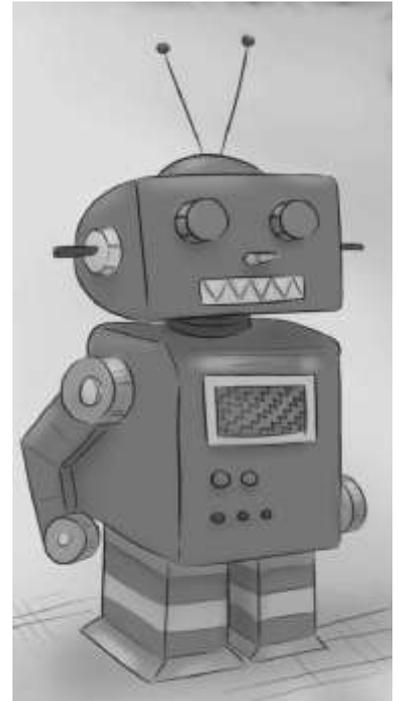
## Activity Sheets

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### PUZZLE:

Find the hidden words in this puzzle

P O H S G N I H T Y N A  
C M I N I Z O O L R I G  
H U G S O U I A Z I G D  
A P M P U L C G O D L E  
R I U E Y F K D A D A B  
L N M R B O L J M A S B  
I K E F A G E O A E S I  
E M A L T I S X Z R E E  
I N T A N G I B L E S A  
S M E L L O M E T R E U



Intangibles  
Meryl  
hugs

jars  
Alfred  
girl

tickles  
fog  
bat

Mum  
Anything Shop  
mini-zoo

Dad  
dog  
glasses

Debbie  
smell-o-metre

Sam  
pink

## Grammar and Punctuation

### Nouns and Pronouns

Nouns are 'naming words'. We use them to name objects ie: desk, pencil, sugar and people, ie: Sam, Charlie, Mum, Debbie. We also use them to name places, ie: Sydney, England, Africa, The Harbour Bridge. Other nouns include 'abstract nouns' ie: happiness, cruelty, fun. These are 'things' you know exist but you can't necessarily touch or see.

Pronouns are words we use in place of the nouns, when we don't want to repeat the name over and over ie: she, he, her, they, it him.

Underline the twenty nouns and six pronouns in this passage. Correct the five capital letters:

'As he lay in bed, cuddling his pillow, charlie wondered; what did meryl and Alfred want with a boy's Hugs anyway? His mind flew back to the day he had visted the shop. It had seemed so wonderful. He remembered the kangaroo and her joey, the friendly Saint bernard and the boxes of things every child dearly wanted. What did grown-ups want with a child's "Personal" things, like hugs? It was time to find out.'

*(The Anything Shop page 43)*

\* Did you find the spelling mistake?

### Comprehension

There are several important skills in comprehension – a) remembering facts, b) understanding the main idea, c) understanding what is hinted at, but not said directly, d) understanding themes and ideas explored in the text, e) forming an opinion based on what you've read.

1. What is the name of Charlie's sister?
2. Where does Charlie meet his new friend, Sam?
3. How are the intangibles stored?
4. Why do Meryl and Alfred need the children's intangibles?
5. Who normally gives Charlie affection?
6. Explain why Charlie wanted the cricket bat so badly.
7. Why do you think Charlie's family kept buying him toys?
8. At what point do you think Charlie decided he needed his hugs back?
9. How do you think Charlie felt when he realised he would have to wait two years for a hug?
10. How did Dream Toys make so much money?

## Text Types – Persuasive text



### Suggestion A

Imagine you are Charlie's friend. Charlie is about to sign the contract. What will you say to convince him it's a bad idea? Include the facts you know at that point in the story, the hints you have picked up about Meryl and Alfred, what your 'gut instinct' tells you and why a magic cricket bat might not be a fair swap for two years of hugs. What seems wrong about the situation that would bother you?

### Suggestion B

Imagine you are Charlie's friend. Charlie is about to sign the contract and you think it's a great idea! What will you say to convince him? Think about all the advantages of having a cricket bat that hits six runs every time. How will it make Charlie's life better?

### Cloze Activity

Fill in the missing words by using the book or thinking what word might best fit.

"There he is!" hissed Charlie, as Alfred's thin, long \_\_\_\_\_ strode into view, his fat \_\_\_\_\_ sticking out. He was \_\_\_\_\_ cheerily. "Sh! \_\_\_\_\_. He's talking to her." Sam held a \_\_\_\_\_ to his lips. Alfred was chatting to the little \_\_\_\_\_ like they were old friends."

(*The Anything Shop* page 54)

## Text Types – Short Story

A short story is different to a book in many ways. Its features include:

- Begins right in the middle of the action
- No back story is provided, the reader must guess by what the characters say and do. The reader must be 'in' the story straight away.
- Builds a vivid picture in the reader's mind without having to explain things.
- Short length
- Has a climax and sometimes a coda or reflection at the end.
- Doesn't waste words on describing things too much, but instead uses strong verbs, such as 'tackled' instead of 'went to grab'.

- Avoids using too many adverbs, ie: 'lightly', 'hesitatingly' as these slow down the action.
- Avoids using well-worn and meaningless words or phrases such as 'got', 'get', 'go', 'nice', 'stuff' ie: 'she got into her nice car, put her stuff inside and drove away'. Better – 'She wrenched open the car door, threw in her backpack on the back seat and zoomed off, smoke billowing from the exhaust pipe'.
- Uses emotive words, ie: 'wrenched' (she was angry), 'threw' (she didn't just place it inside) 'zoomed' (sped off) 'billowing' (tells us the car was old or damaged), which help the reader understand the situation and how the characters are feeling.

### **Short Story Topics**

1. You've traded something important at the Anything Shop and now you want it back, but the shop has moved. Oh no!
2. You're stuck in the Anything Shop, in the dark, with Sam. You can hear Meryl and Alfred coming. What happens?
3. Dream Toys has built a second shop in your neighbourhood. Meryl and Alfred are out the front trying to convince you to come inside. What will you do? What happens?

### **Text Types – Story Board**

Depict your favourite scenes from the story in a cartoon or story board in the space below.

