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***Kick with My Left Foot* by Paul Seden, illustrated by Karen Briggs**

This picture book is positively endearing! It deserves a hug and a congratulatory slap on the back. A boy learns by trial and error how to be a winner at footy, accompanied as he is by his delightfully expressive team-mate dog. The simply told story effortlessly conveys the emotional ups and downs of learning and sport in general, sport in general, and together: learning to play a sport. Add in the concepts of winning, losing and what it means to have a pet dog. Add in the privacy of practice, and the public nature of a game. Add in the concept of try, try, try again, but then you might need to go “left field” for an answer. This book is emblematic of life in general!

Cleverly written in first person, with some pages of stand-alone illustrations to do the story-telling, this book for 0 to 5-year-olds is a winner. Whether the pages that are without words are enjoyed alone by pre-schoolers and their imaginations, or as part of the collaborative process with a carer or teacher, they are well done. The absence of illustrating other members of the team, (apart from the dog), was an interesting “nod” to the egocentric nature of this period of childhood development. The fullness of meaning of the onomatopoeic word “kick” which is used as a verb in the story, but can also be used as a noun, is a wonderful introduction to naming and action for this age group, and the embryonic grammatical work that is done in Prep and Year 1. There is great in-context learning for the child to distinguish left from right.

The illustrations, whilst suggestive of indigenous communities, are simple enough to relate well to all communities of children and their carers. The brush strokes feel as happily energetic as the story itself. Many children will learn to love reading thanks to this book.

This book is a great result of the Emerging Indigenous Picture Book Mentoring Project. As per the Allen and Unwin website, *this project is a joint initiative between The Little Big Book Club and Allen & Unwin, assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.*

“Goal!”

Andrea Deborde, Brisbane QLD 4001

Kick with my Left Foot is a beautifully crafted story which centres on our Australian national sporting code – Aussie Rules football.

Two features jumped out when reading this colourful picture story book. Not only do we have a very simple introduction for Early Years readers to our indigenous heritage, but our little hero is a “leftie”. He is different, he is left-footed. And yet, we ultimately see him triumph with a goal kicked off his left boot.

The illustrations are also uniquely Australian ‘outback’ and provide wonderful insight into the colours and landscape of this area for all Australian city dwellers. Art teachers will be inspired by the mere simplicity of the sketches.

This very touching story will be a priceless resource in a classroom setting, particularly when incorporating indigenous literacy. It will also serve as a tool for discussing resilience, perseverance and the message of never giving up.

Karyn Verity, Library Technician, Wheelers Hill Primary School VIC 3150

Goal!

Young readers (0-5 years) will enjoy this energetic telling of how a young boy and his dog get ready to participate in a game of football.

With minimal text, the illustrations show all the movement of the game that takes place in a local Indigenous community. The language features and illustrations will assist the reader with the differentiation between left and right; bounce, catch and kick and the conclusion shows the origin of the book title.

The endpapers, featuring a line sketch of the community features like streets, homes, the footy field and 'outback' animals, could be used in the classroom to identify features of the community and for orientation activities. For example, the footy field is _ _ _ _ (south) of the church. And counting activities: for example, how many camels can you see?

I also really loved the close-up illustrations of the young boy and his dog and the emotions that are portrayed through the illustrations.

Kick with my Left Foot is a fun picture book for home, libraries and early childcare centres.

Colleen Collins, St Clare's Catholic Primary School, Narellan Vale NSW 2571