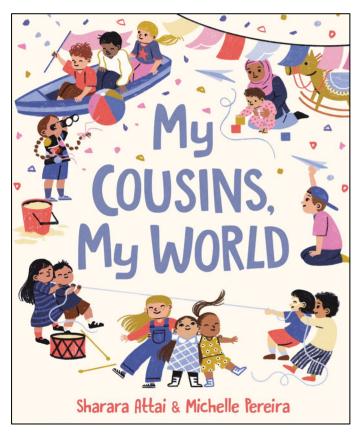


My Cousins, My World by Sharara Attai and Michelle Pereira



A lyrical, vibrant picture book celebrating the rich and unbreakable bonds we share with our cousins.

RECOMMENDED FOR

4-8 (Preschool-Year 3)

THEMES

Family, cousins, siblings, cultural diversity

ISBN (AUS)

9781761180972



SYNOPSIS

This story is a vibrant celebration of the love and unbreakable bond that many kids have with their cousins. From wild campouts to boisterous family gatherings, the adventures and experiences that bind cousins together are rich and lifelong. In particular, *My Cousins*, *My World* highlights the experiences, joys and feelings of children of colour – many of whom have a large number of cousins, and for whom cousins are often almost like siblings.

A WORD FROM SHARARA ATTAI



The bond that cousins share is often lifelong and deep, and this book aims to capture some of the beauty of that bond. The book is also intended to bring up fond memories for parents who read the story to their children, perhaps surfacing some nostalgia about their own childhoods and encouraging them to share stories and anecdotes about their own cousins or upbringing with their children.

'My own cousins have been an absolutely integral and enriching part of my childhood and the same is true of my children and their cousins. Many children, particularly a lot of kids who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, are extremely close with their cousins and spend a lot of time together from an early age. I reflected on the fact that for many of us, our cousins feel almost as close as our siblings – and yet I had never seen a picture book about cousins. I did some research and found that some picture books about cousins did exist, but they were few and far between, and I didn't come across any in the Australian context. This drove me to write this book.

'My children are mixed-race (half Afghan and half Caucasian), and all of their (many) cousins are also mixed-race. I believe that the racial and cultural diversity within my own children



and their cousins is a good reflection of modern-day Australia whereby mixed-race marriages are widespread, and I wanted this diversity to be portrayed within the book. My kids' experiences as well as my own experiences growing up with my (literally) dozens of cousins, provided the inspiration for many of the specific scenes in this book.'

Sharara Attai worked as a human rights lawyer for refugees for ten years and is now director of the Islamophobia Register Australia, a diversity and inclusion not-for-profit organisation.

In May 2023, she was a finalist for the UNHCR Les Murray Award for Refugee Recognition.

A WORD FROM MICHELLE PEREIRA

'I also have a multi-racial family (and a lot of cousins) that spans across geographical borders, which was a major source of inspiration for this book. The majority of my extended family live in different countries and there was always a lot of excitement whenever I got to visit them. I remember having lots of adventures with my cousins, from running around my grandmother's mango farm in the Philippines to building makeshift cubby houses out of banana leaves in India. In the illustrations of My Cousins, My World I tried to capture that same essence of childhood fun.'



Michelle Pereira is a freelance illustrator and artist. Colourful palettes, graphic shapes and cheery characters are features of her work, and she illustrates them all from her home studio in Melbourne. Her picture books include Stay for Dinner, Ammi's Sari and The Boy Who Tried to Shrink His Name, all written by Sandhya Parappukkaran.



IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Before Reading

Before opening *My Cousins, My World,* look at the title and cover design. Ask the following questions to encourage students to think about the concept of a 'cousin'.

- 1. What is a cousin? (Can you explain in your own words?)
- 2. How are cousins different from brothers and sisters?
- 3. Do the cousins on the cover look the same?
- 4. What fun things are the cousins on the book's cover doing?
- 5. Can cousins be best friends? Why or why not?

After Reading Discussion

Read the story through once. Put the book down and ask students if they liked it. Ask them to pick out specific parts of the story they liked. Ask the following questions to explore the story in depth.

- 6. What fun things do you like to do with your cousins or family?
- 7. In the story, the cousins play poya-kon on the beach. What games do you play with your cousins?
- 8. The cousins in the book go on adventures. Where would you like to go on an adventure with your family?
- 9. The cousins in the story eat different kinds of food together. What special foods does your family enjoy together?
- 10. Some cousins in the book live far away but the little girl can talk to them on a computer and they sometimes visit her. How do you stay in touch with cousins who live far away?



- 11. The cousins in the story speak different languages. Do you know any words in another language?
- 12. Aunty Mina likes to squeeze cheeks! Does anyone in your family do something funny like that?
- 13. Bibi Jan tells stories about when she was young. Who in your family tells you fun stories?
- 14. The book says cousins are 'our first friends, best friends, and forever friends'. What do you think that means?
- 15. Look at the image of the girl and her cousins on the final page. What words do you think she would use to describe how her cousins make her feel?

Language

Turn to the page where the little girl is sleeping in her bed and point out that she says, '...memories of them surround me, wrapping me up like a warm blanket.' Explain that the author is using an important device here called a <u>simile</u> and that <u>similes</u> are a way to compare two things to help us understand them better. To aid their comprehension ask students to come up with words that describe how they feel when they are wrapped in a warm blanket on a cold night. Answers will vary but may include words such as: safe, comfortable, happy, content. Now explain that the <u>simile</u> the girl used tells us those words describe how she feels about her cousins when she thinks about them.



Activity: Make a Family Tree

Depending on the age of the student you may need to ask them to complete this activity at home and with the assistance of a family member.

What you'll need: pencils and a big piece of paper.

- Start with You!
 Draw yourself in the middle of the paper. Write your name under your picture.
- 3. Add Aunts and Uncles!

 Next to your parents, draw their brothers and sisters (your aunts and uncles). Write their names.
- 4. Add Your Cousins! †† †† ††
 Under your aunts and uncles, draw pictures of your cousins. These are their children!
 Write their names.
- Decorate Your Tree!
 Draw branches, leaves, and anything fun to make it colourful!