

# I Remember

## Discussion Notes and Activities for Schools

### Introduction

*I Remember* is a heart-warming story about a little boy, George, spending time with his grandma, Kathleen, who is forgetful. It is aimed at helping young children understand dementia and focuses on the positive experiences George has with his grandma and their loving relationship.

Stories can help start conversations with children about similar experiences in their own lives. These resources are designed for adults who would like to explore the subject matter of the book with their child(ren). Just like the book, the discussions and activities suggested here are mainly related to helping children focus on happy experiences and memories, whilst also acknowledging the other emotions which may be relevant for families.

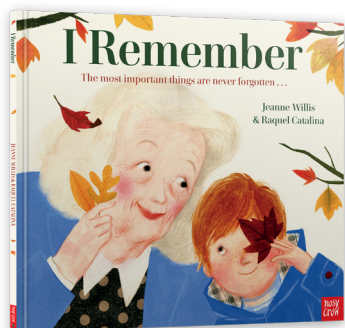
These notes have used the term 'relative' to refer to the older person who has dementia, although of course many important relationships may be outside of a child's immediate family.

### General tips for talking to children about *I Remember*

- Setting the right context for talking about the book:
  - A calmer moment when there aren't lots of other distractions is likely to work best.
  - It might help to remind children of the class rules and expectations for behaviour such as listening, raising their hand, one person talking at a time, being kind to others etc.
  - You could also remind pupils that they could talk to you or a family member if they feel worried or unhappy.
- It will be important to hold in mind the different family situations and experiences of the children in the class, which may well include: family separation, adverse experiences, being fostered or adopted and/or bereavement.
- Aim to focus on George, his grandmother and family relationships in general, rather than discussing individual children's experiences.
- You can help by keeping the conversation casual and being curious about what your pupils have to say.
- Listen out for your pupils' emotions and try to notice and help them to label these; they might be feeling sad or worried. Validating a child's feelings by recognising and acknowledging them helps them to learn about the emotions they are experiencing and how to manage them.
- Bear in mind that young children will find some of the concepts like time, ageing and memory difficult to understand; it might be helpful to focus on the concrete examples in the book and more practical things like what activities they enjoy with their relatives.
- It is likely to be helpful to conclude the lesson on a positive note discussing an aspect of the story which is safe and happy.

### A note on safety

If any child mentions information which concerns you, it is vital to follow your school's safeguarding policy and discuss with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.



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written by Jeanne Willis

illustrated by Raquel Catalina

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### Before Reading the Book

You could introduce the book as being about families, and one particular kind of family relationship.

Questions:

- How do you think these two people might know each other?
- How might they be related?
- What season do you think it might be?

You could explain that lots of people might need help in the life. Sometimes older people need help with things, or might get confused or forgetful.

### After Reading the Book

Comprehension discussion:

- Who does George go to visit?
- What things does George do with his grandma?
- Sometimes George's grandma forgets things or needs some help; what did you notice?
- How did George help his grandma when she forgot things or got worried?



George and his grandma enjoy a number of different moments together throughout the book.

- What did George enjoy doing with his grandma?
- How did we know they were happy?
- What do you like doing with your relatives?



George and his grandma connect through sensory experiences like enjoying a biscuit, singing and dancing.

- What are our five senses?
- What senses did we see George and his grandma using and enjoying? (refer to page [6, 14, 17] for taste, sound, touch)

Food and music are important in lots of families and different families will have different favourites and different traditions.

- What food do you usually have at your relative's house?
- What songs do they sing? What music do they listen to?



Sometimes older people need a bit of help with things.

- How did George help his grandma?
- Why is it important to help people?
- What things do you need help with? Who helps you?
- What kind things could we do to help other people in our family?
- What could we do if we saw that an older person needed help?



In the book, it appears that George goes to visit his grandma alone, although from an adult perspective it is likely that there was someone else around when he visited. You may want to ask your pupils where the other adults might have been. This could help to reassure them that George was not on his own and as a reminder that for young children, someone will be there to help them when they need it.



George's grandma got a bit worried when they were playing outside.

- Why do you think Grandma got worried?
- How did George help her feel better?
- Who helps when you feel worried?
- How do you think George and Grandma felt in the end?



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### Activity ideas

These activities are focussed on supporting exploration of family relationships, just like George and his grandma in the book. They are aimed at the whole class, and may require some sensitivity to ensure that all children can access them in a positive way, and might need to be adapted for your pupils' particular circumstances.

#### Draw a family 'photo' book:

Provide children with a template of a blank photo album or photo-frames for them to fill in with drawing of the key people in their family as if they were photographs. They could label the people's names and their relationship to each person.

#### Make a family tree:

Drawing a family tree is a great way to learn about family relationships.

- Children could complete a family with support from their family as a homework task.
- Children could make up a family tree of people, animals or other characters.
- You could look at a family tree together and discuss the different relationships; this could be one that is made up, or a family tree of familiar cartoon characters, for example.
- More information is available here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zc9s6g8/articles/znnj96f>



#### Draw a happy memories:

Pupils could draw a picture of a time that they have enjoyed visiting a relative or friend. They include some writing about what they remember and what they enjoyed.

Pupils could decorate a cardboard frame for their picture.

This could be an opportunity to record the memory in different formats, such as a news article, or making the picture into a 'memory postcard' with a message on the back.

#### Enjoying sensory experiences:

Pupils could draw their favourite things from the five senses: what they most like to taste, touch, see, hear and smell.

Pupils could draw their favourite food to eat at home or with relatives. They could write about where the food is from, who cooks it, who they eat it with.



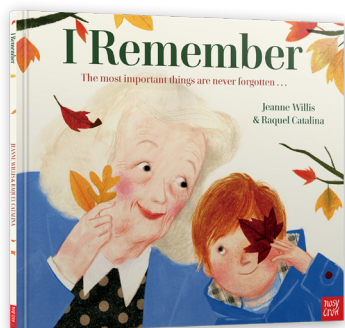
#### Helping people:

Pupils could write or draw about one kind thing they are going to do to help someone at home or in their family.

Pupils could role play and act out short scenarios together about helpful things that they could do at home.

You could discuss and draw/write about all the different people who help in communities (e.g. doctors, nurses, police, delivery drivers etc).

You could find out about local charitable organisations and ask someone to visit and share the things they do to help older people.



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### Links to supporting resources:

Explaining dementia to children and young people:

<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/daily-living/explain-dementia-children-young-people#content-start>

Frequently asked questions:

<https://www.dementiauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Questions-that-children-often-ask-about-dementia.pdf>

Dementia explained for children of different ages:

<https://www.alzheimersresearchuk.org/kids/dementia-explained/>

<https://dementiainmyfamily.org.au/>

For older children:

<https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms/media/4629/booklet-about-dementia-for-cyps.pdf>

Talking to children about emotions:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/talking-to-your-child-about-emotions>

Bereavement Support:

For children and young people: [Child Bereavement UK](#)

For adults and children: Home - [Cruse Bereavement Support](#)

Information for adults who are supporting  
or caring for someone with dementia:

[https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/information-guides/ageukig13\\_advice\\_for\\_carers\\_inf.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/information-guides/ageukig13_advice_for_carers_inf.pdf)

[https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/information-guides/ageukig47\\_caring\\_for\\_someone\\_with\\_dementia\\_inf.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/information-guides/ageukig47_caring_for_someone_with_dementia_inf.pdf)

<https://www.carersuk.org/>

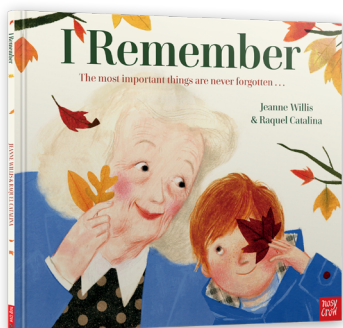
Mental health support for adults:

[Home - Mind](#)

<https://www.samaritans.org/>

### Notes written by Dr Sarah Carman

DR SARAH CARMAN is a Clinical Psychologist specialising in child and adolescent emotional wellbeing, development and behaviour. Dr Carman works clinically in a national and specialist service for children and young people at the Michael Rutter Centre, part of South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. She has worked throughout her career in specialist services for children and young people, in community teams in south and west London and in a specialist service at the Evelina London Children's Hospital. Dr Carman also teaches on postgraduate and professional development trainings in child and adolescent wellbeing across London and the South of England and supported the development of the Nosy Crow book *Coronavirus and Covid: A book for children about the pandemic*.



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