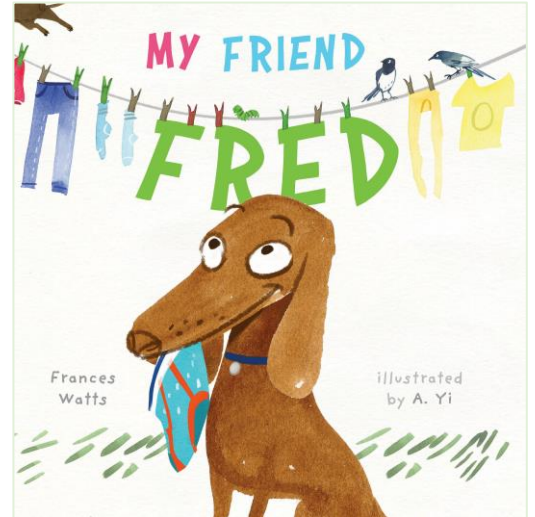


My Friend Fred

By Frances Watts
Illustrated by A. Yi



May 2019 ISBN 9781760290948
Hardback picture book
Recommended for 3-5-year-olds

Summary

A delightful picture book about a friendship between an exuberant but loveable dachshund and his more retiring, tidy housemate.



Repetition of the words, 'My friend Fred...' helps pre-schoolers anticipate what will come next in the story, and it provides a rhythm that is useful to early reader word recognition. Best of all, repetition builds a sense of expectation that, in this story, is delightfully upended both in text and visuals on the book's last double-page-spread.

A Yi's illustrations are motion-filled and guaranteed to bring smiles to the faces of dog-lovers and non-dog-lovers alike. The story's delightful denouement—that the narrator is in fact a cat who has been discretely shown in earlier spreads—encourages young children to return to the book to find if they have missed other details.

Use in the curriculum

In early childhood, *My Friend Fred* is a great read-aloud book. It could be learned and read as a 'call and response' between carer/teacher and children, who respond to each 'My friend Fred...' statement with the 'I...' or 'He...' response on the opposite page, using appropriate tone of voice and body language.

After the first reading, children should visually 'read' the book over again and discover the hidden friend of Fred illustrated on most pages. This can prompt a discussion of what else is shown in the pictures but only hinted at in the words. [*Fred can be messy. He gets into trouble. Fred and 'I' live with a family that includes children...*]

Further discussion can be about: What makes a good friend? Is it boring if you and your friend always do and think the same thing? What is 'personality' or 'character'? What's good about there being differences between us?

Themes

- friendship
- tolerance
- animals
- pets
- family
- humour
- different personalities

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Discussion questions

- Before opening *My Friend Fred*, look at the title and cover design. Discuss what students think the story might be about and the clues in the picture that make them think that. Ask questions such as:
 - Do you think this is going to be a funny or sad story?
 - What sort of a dog do you think Fred is?
 - Do you think he might be a bit naughty and silly sometimes? What in his picture makes you think that?
 - What other animals can you see on the cover? [*Hint: look very closely.*]
- Read the story out loud once without showing the pictures and ask students if they think the story is funny. Now read it out loud with the pictures and after finishing ask them if it is funnier the second time. Talk about why the images make the story funnier. Ask students to nominate their favourite images of Fred in the story. Turn to the page where the narrator is revealed and ask them to explain why it is funny that the story was told by a cat.
- Repeat the story, turning the pages slowly, to allow enough time for students to find the narrator on most pages. [*Hint: sometimes they will need to look very closely.*]
- The book's endpapers show Fred and his friend doing all the things they like best. We know that Fred loves to be active but, based on the back-endpaper images, what sort of things do students think the cat likes to do?
- Ask students to come up with a name for the narrator and create a new story about the cat entitled, *My Friend ...*, told from Fred's point-of-view.
- Discussion: ask students how it might be if their best friend ate exactly the same food, did exactly the same things and thought exactly the same thoughts as them. Ask them if they think this might be exciting or a bit boring after a while. Encourage them to explore why they feel this way and end the discussion with a talk about things they like about their friends that are different to themselves.

From the author and illustrator

'Although *My Friend Fred* is about a very dashing dachshund, I am in fact a cat person! But I make an exception for dachshunds. (Although I've had cats since the age of nine, my first companion was a dachshund who very graciously shared his bone and his chew toys.) While most dogs are eager to please, dachshunds have strong wills and minds of their own. But they are so personable, how can one resist them? Even the aloof cat narrator of *My Friend Fred* can't resist Fred's charm.'

— Frances Watts

'This is a preschool story, so I had to have this in mind when illustrating. The story is sweet and gentle. Most of the colours are pastel toned to reflect this, with the exception of Fred and the cat; Fred is light brown and the cat is brown black. This is so that those two characters stand out in the pages. This is a story about those two and I wanted to remind the readers of that visually. You will also see that there are children's toys lying around the house, reminding the reader that there is a child somewhere too.'

— A. Yi

The author

Frances Watts is an award-winning author of more than 25 books for children. Her first picture book, *Kisses for Daddy*, illustrated by David Legge, was a Children's Book Council of Australia Honour Book and has been published in 20 languages. Her next book with David Legge, *Parsley Rabbit's Book about Books*, was a CBCA Book of the Year and *Goodnight, Mice!*, illustrated by Judy Watson, won the Prime Minister's Literary Award. Frances lives in Sydney, Australia.

The illustrator

A. Yi is an illustrator and animation artist based in Sydney. She has illustrated various children's books including the best-selling Alice Miranda series. She likes doodling and wishes all books were illustrated.

