



**Type of Text**  
Picture book

**Key Curriculum Areas**  
English  
Health  
Visual Art

**Themes**  
Family & Relationships  
Resilience  
Emotions  
History



## Grandma Forgets

**Author:** Paul Russell  
**Illustrator:** Nicky Johnston  
**Publisher:** EK Books  
**Price:** \$24.99  
**ISBN:** 9781925335477  
**Publication Date:** August 2017  
**Audience:** Children aged 3–8

**Teacher Notes prepared by**  
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## SYNOPSIS

*Grandma Forgets celebrates the wonderful relationship between a grandmother and her granddaughter. A granddaughter who is determined to make new memories for them to share as her grandmother begins to suffer from dementia. Warm and hopeful, this story shows that while Grandma may not remember names now, she will always know how much she is loved.*



## **AUTHOR BACKGROUND**

Paul Russell has always been passionate about stories, even before he could read. Determine never to grow up and lose his imagination he is a teacher, playwright, father, artist and author but maybe not always in that order. He is passionate about children's literacy and in building an appetite within children for the written word.

## **ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND**

Nicky Johnston is a primary teacher, an art teacher and children's book author/illustrator. Her love of visual storytelling has seen her dream to be children's book author and illustrator come true. Her style is often referred to as whimsical, emotive, simple yet deep. She loves visiting schools and passing on her innate passion for creative writing and illustrating.

## **ILLUSTRATION STYLE**

Nicky has used both water colour and pencils to create the illustrations for Grandma Forgets. There is subtle softness to her colour palate that certainly conveys the fun and warmth from past memories and the new memories being made for Grandma.

## **SELLING POINTS**

- A lovely story for 4-8, observing generational relationships
- Relating to children, parents and grandparents embracing change
- Family traditions and customs creating caring communities
- A discussion starter for families dealing with Dementia and Alzheimer's
- Can be linked to the curriculum Health, Visual art, English
- Classroom use:

Health—resilience, coping with change, emotions

Family – relationships

Visual art—use of colour, emotive expressions

English—vocabulary, reading



## **AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR INTERVIEW**

### **1. What was the inspiration for the story?**

**Paul:** My own grandmother passed away several years ago after fighting a long battle with dementia and Alzheimer's. After having my own children, I felt a deep regret they would never know my grandmother and as I shared memories of her with them I realised that although her memories had all faded my memories of her never would. This book, another means of remembering her, has also been dedicated to my Grandmother. It didn't occur to me until after I had finished writing this story that it may not just be a story unique to me.

### **2. What was the most rewarding part of this project?**

**Paul:** Nicky (illustrator) bringing my story to life. Sure, she turned me into a girl but seeing it illustrated gave it life and made it so much bigger than I ever thought it could be.

**Nicky:** Being able to visually create all emotions intended by Paul (author) and exceeding all expectations!

### **3. What was the most challenging part of this project?**

**Paul:** Waiting. There is such a long time between finishing the text and seeing a finished book. I've never been good at waiting.

**Nicky:** Deciding on two sets of clothes for the entire family (past and present clothes) and keeping them all within the same colour palette.

### **4. What media did you use to create your illustrations? Can you briefly describe your process?**

**Nicky:** The entire book is hand painted in watercolour and outlined in pencil. After completing the final rough sketches, I painted each character profile for both sets of clothes (and listed the names of all the colours used) for references to make sure their outfits were consistent throughout the book. I loved creating a cheeky Grandma who collected tea/coffee cups and making daisy chains.

## TEACHING NOTES

### Classroom Ideas:

Activity sheets can be used for small group activities or whole class activities. Suggested activities can also be adapted to suit all year levels.

### ENGLISH

- Looking at the cover what do you think the story is about?
- After reading the blurb predict what the story might be about.
- After reading the story why do you think the author may have written this story?
- What were some of Grandma's old memories?
- What are some of Grandma's new memories?
- Discuss the different settings for Grandma, particularly her new home - **Activity Sheet 1**.
- Write a book review for Grandma Forgets – **Activity Sheet 2**
- Bring in a photo or picture from magazine of a Grandma/Grandpa and write their own story including family characters, settings and fond memories.

### HEALTH

- Discuss families, different combinations, Grandparents and their different names and nationalities eg: Grandma, Granny, Nanna, Nonna etc...
- Who are the characters in the book, how do you think they are related? Discuss what a family tree is. Design your own family tree – **Activity Sheet 3**.
- Write or draw a Grandma or Grandpa that you know or have met. What are their features, do they have short/long hair, do they wear glasses, hearing aids, have walking stick or frame? Discuss why some people particularly older people need these as they get older?
- Discuss your favourite memories about an older relative, aunt, uncle, grandma or grandpa. What traditions does your family have?
- Discuss how we use our memory for names, people, our past etc... Using **Activity Sheet 4** (Print 2 copies for a set of pairs), cut out the pictures to play a variety of memory games, such as Go Fish, Memory Pairs, and Guess What's Missing. (Lay out a few pictures for student to see, then remove one or two and they have to guess what is missing.)

## VISUAL ARTS

- Discuss the use of colours in the book. The change of outfits of the characters, why do they have different clothes on some pages? How did the illustrator make Grandma look younger or older on these pages?
- Look at the details in the illustrations, what are some other parts of the story you can see that is not mentioned in the words?
- What can you 'read' from the pictures in **Activity Sheet 1**. Answer the observation questions.
- Make paper daisy chains.
- Discuss and draw a favourite memory of something about an older relative.

**Activity Sheet 1 – Grandma's New Home Quiz**

**Activity Sheet 2 – Book Review**

**Activity Sheet 3 – My Family Tree**

**Activity Sheet 4 – Memory Games**

