

JAKE'S BALLOON BLAST

KEN SPILLMAN AND CHRIS NIXON

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Jake has always wanted to fly; it's just a matter of how. Together with his best friend Jonah, he comes up with a fantastic plan to get himself off the ground – with very surprising results!

Jake's Balloon Blast is a story about a boy with dreams who sets out to make them come true. For this to happen, Jake needs to make a plan and work towards achieving them. If one plan fails to achieve your dream, find another. You may not always be successful, but you may have a 'blast' of an adventure in the process. The book shows how friends and family can help each other achieve their dreams, and enjoy a good laugh on the way.

Jake's story is told in the third person. The narrative voice stays close to the child's point of view. The narration gives insight into Jake's thoughts and plans. Dialogue between the main characters is interspersed throughout the story.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ken Spillman became interested in writing stories in Year 4, when a teacher named Sister Carmel gave his class interesting topics like 'The Autobiography of a Horse'. During the summer holidays at the end of that year, Ken wrote a story about a kitten that was born to a stray cat under his house, and which later won the title of 'Most Beautiful Cat' at the Collie Show. In Year 10, another teacher gave Ken permission to skip English classes and write whatever stories he wanted! He is now the author of around two dozen books. For more information about the author, visit www.kenspillman.com.

Chris Nixon is a freelance illustrator and adventure tour guide. He grew up in the foothills of Perth, spending all his spare time outside, and feels passionate about getting kids to experience the natural world. He graduated from Curtin University with a Bachelor of Design, majoring in Illustration.

STUDY NOTES

Pre-reading

- Look at the cover of *Jake's Balloon Blast*. What does the illustration tell you? How would you describe Jake's expression?
- What does the title tell you about the story? BEFORE reading the blurb, write your own short story titled '[Your name]'s Balloon Blast'.
- Look at the book's dedication. What does it mean 'to get dreams off the ground'? What kind of dreams do you have?

During reading

CHAPTER 1

- Jake 'really, *really* wanted to fly.' Is there anything you really, really want to do?
- Jake described the plane as 'a big, comfy bus in the air.' If you have been on a plane trip, is that really what a plane feels like? What places have you flown to?
- What is it like riding in a car, a bus, on a bike or on your scooter or skateboard? Use interesting words like Jake to describe the experience.



- What types of air transport are mentioned in this chapter? Can you think of any others? Which ones have you been in, or would like to go in?

- Jake asked his dad to help him get a real rocket, plane or helicopter. Dad said, 'Sure! And what would you like me to do for my next trick?' What does Dad mean when he says this? What comment like this have you heard an adult say when they are joking or being sarcastic?

Cross Curricular Activities

- Art – The second illustration shows a page divided into three with each section showing a different aspect of Jake flying in a small plane. Create your own drawing to show three different aspects of Jake flying in a rocket or a helicopter. Then make a similar drawing of yourself doing something you dream of doing.

- Drama – Pretend you are flying in a small plane. Move your head so that your hair thrashes about and your lips and cheeks go wobbly.

CHAPTER 2

- Was Jake's plan to fly using wings a good one or not? Why?

- Jake uses the words 'No problem-o!' Do you or a member of your family have some words you use often, like that? What are they and what do they mean? (Give some examples (e.g. 'Cool!', 'Sure thing!', 'No worries!', 'Sweet!' etc.).

Cross Curricular Activities

- English – Read the legend of Daedalus and Icarus to the children. Discuss the events and what might have happened if Icarus had listened to his father. A version of the story may be found at <http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/greeks/religion/myths/daedalus.htm>.

- History – Look at different pictures of early flying machines including some artificial wings; discuss them.

- Design and technology – Make up a design for a pair of flying wings. Collect the materials and make a small model.

CHAPTER 3

- Talk about climbing high obstacles. What is the highest thing you have climbed?

- Jake fell from the wall and hurt himself. When has this happened to you? What happened? Who helped you? Did you need a bandaid or a bandage? Did you need to go to hospital?

- Jake's heart thumped. His arm pumped. And he jumped. What are some other verbs that rhyme? (e.g. walk/talk, fly/cry). Compile a list as a class on a large sheet of cardboard and display for use during writing of stories and poetry.

Cross Curricular Activities

- Mathematics – Weigh craft feathers and thin cardboard strips and compare the results.

- Art – Draw the view of a place (e.g. the school playground) as you imagine it would look from a high place, like a low-flying aeroplane.

- Drama – Make facial expressions that show fear when falling from a height and pain after hitting the ground.

CHAPTER 4

- Dad tells Jake about people jumping or riding off bridges flapping wings in competitions. It was funny to watch. What is something funny you have seen people doing? What kinds of competitions have you entered? Did you enjoy entering the competition? Why or why not?

- What is helium? What is special about helium-filled balloons?

- What do the words 'lift-off' mean?

Cross Curricular Activities

- Art – Draw a picture of a 'birdman'. Use a lead pencil and put in lots of details and shading like the illustrations in the book.

- Science – Compare the time taken for a helium-filled balloon and a normal balloon blown up to deflate. Why does this happen? Which balloons are the best to have?

CHAPTER 5

- What is eBay? Does someone in your family use eBay? What do they use it for? Are you allowed to use eBay? Why or why not?

- Dad volunteered for the balloon stall at the fair. What is a volunteer? Is it good to be a volunteer? Why or why not? Does anyone you know volunteer at school or in the community?

- Jake called the day he would fly B-day. B for big; B for balloon; B for blast. What else could B-day stand for?

CHAPTER 6

- Jake had chores to do. What were they? Do you have chores to do at home? What are they? Is it a good idea to have chores to do? Why or why not?
- What is badminton? How is it played? What other games like badminton need a net?
- Did Jonah think Jake's idea was a good one? Why or why not? How do you know?

Cross Curricular Activities

- Physical development and health – Take turns hitting objects with a badminton racquet. Learn how to play the game.
- English – Rewrite Jake's list using commas to separate the items.

CHAPTER 7

- Jake lied to his dad about what he was going to do. Why?
- What games do you play at the park?
- Was it hard work inflating all of the balloons? How do you know? What happens when you get blisters? What do you do?

Cross Curricular Activities

- Physical development and health – Is it ever good to lie to someone? Why? When might it be okay to lie to someone?

CHAPTER 8

- What do the phrases 'pulled to its full length' and 'test the drag' mean? What do these have to do with being able to fly?
- The wind was blowing Jake like 'a hyper wheelbarrow in a world championship wheelbarrow race'. What does this mean? What are some other ways to describe how fast Jake was moving?
- Why did Jake call out to Jonah to get the stick?

Cross Curricular Activities

- Physical development and health – Hold wheelbarrow races in the playground on a grassy area in pairs with one child holding up the legs of another child who uses their hands to 'run'.
- Drama – Role-play the steps taken to make the balloons lift Jake off the ground. Make sure they are in the correct order.

CHAPTER 9

- Why was Nana driving past the park? How did she know it was Jake being carried away by balloons?
- Did Nana think trying to fly using balloons was safe?
- What is a contraption? Give examples.
- What happened after Nana untangled Jake and was carrying the balloons back home? Did she think it was dangerous then?

Cross Curricular Activities

- Physical development and health – Look at a range of physical activities and compare unsafe ways of performing them with the safe way of performing them. Explain the risks that make the unsafe ways dangerous.

CHAPTER 10

- Was Dad happy about what Jake had done? Why or why not?
- Why did Nan think 'grounded' was a funny word to use? What does 'being grounded' mean? Have you ever been grounded? Why?
- What are 'treats'? What things are 'treats' at your house?
- Why did Dad feel that 'safety comes first'? What was Jake's safety plan? Was it a good one? Why or why not?
- Do you think it would be a good idea if next time Jake tells his plan to Dad first? Why or why not?
- Jake 'had a blast' trying to fly. What other phrases could be used to mean this?
- Has Jake given up his dream of flying? How do you know?

Cross Curricular Activities

- Science – Carry out some simple experiments using balloons to move objects.

AFTER READING

- Write another adventure about Jake. Staple ten sheets of A4 paper together to make the front and back covers and eight chapter pages of a book. Plan your own story on scrap paper, then write one piece of text on each page. Draw a black and white illustration to accompany each text. If preferred, use a word-processing application and clipart to publish your chapter book on computer.
- Read other titles about Jake. With a partner or in a small group, discuss the similarities and differences between the stories.
- Write a simple review about *Jake's Balloon Blast*. Mention the characters, events or interesting words. Present the review as an oral presentation.
- Draw your own image of Jake, in your own style of art, using different media such as colored chalks or charcoal.
- Write about or draw your favourite character or event in the book, explaining why it is your favourite.
- Discuss, and decide who would enjoy this book best – boys, girls or both; adults, teenagers or young children. Then decide what is the book's purpose – to entertain, to inform or to persuade people to do something. It may be a mixture of some or all of these.

