

ANNIE AND MAEVE ARE DEFINITELY NOT FRIENDS

OLIVIA MUSCAT

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YEAR LEVEL: Y4-6

ABOUT THE BOOK

The first day of term has got off to a bad start for Maeve. Late to school, stuck sitting next to the most annoying boy in her class, and now she's been forced to buddy up with the new girl!

Annie and Maeve have almost nothing in common, and they definitely do not want to be friends. But from braving the high swing at camp to battling it out in the talent contest, maybe, just maybe, this fiasco could grow into friendship.

From the joys of friendship to navigating the world while living with a disability, Olivia Muscat's own-voice debut novel for young readers pokes fun at society's assumptions, and celebrates the unexpected happiness of finding somebody who really gets who you are.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olivia Muscat is a totally blind writer, actor, performer and disability activist. She lives in Naarm/Melbourne (Wurundjeri Country), Australia with her guide dog, Jemima, and uses her love for colour, joy and music to tell stories that make people want to examine their attitudes towards disabled people and difference in general. When she's not writing, Olivia teaches children and occasionally performs on stage. She is the author of *My Name Is Jemima: a tale of a guide dog superstar*, and premiered her autobiographical play *Is Anyone Even Watching?* in 2025.

THEMES

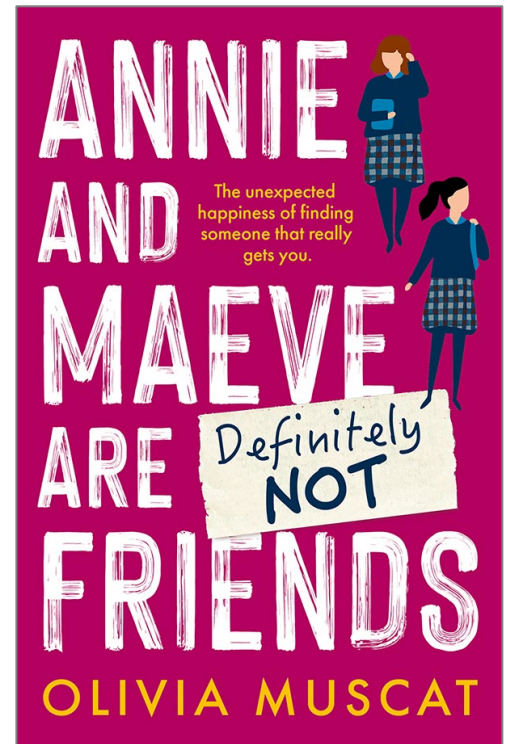
- Friendship
- Change
- Disability
- Growing up
- Family
- Resilience

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

- Y4–6 English
- Y4–6 The Arts
- Y4–6 Health and Physical Education
- Y4–6 Humanities and Social Sciences

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Vision Australia: visionaustralia.org



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Maeve's first diary entry shares her anticipation about the first day of a new school term. Describe how you usually feel at the end of the school holidays.
2. How does Annie feel on her first day at the new school? What clues tell you this?
3. Create a list of ways you could help a new classmate feel welcome at your school.
4. Both Maeve and Annie live with disability.
 - a. How does the author help readers understand some of the daily experiences of blind characters?
 - b. Why are Annie and Maeve upset when everyone assumes they'll be friends because they share the same disability?
 - c. What does Maeve mean when she says, **'This girl is blind and she's clearly not very good at it'** (p. 27). Do you think this is a fair assessment of Annie?
 - d. Do you think it's important for disabled characters to be written by writers with lived experience of the disability?
 - e. Did this book change how you think about blindness? What did you learn or notice that you didn't know before?
5. Consider this quote: **'Annie felt light, like she could take on almost anything'** (p. 160).
 - a. What has made Annie feel this way?
 - b. Can you find examples throughout the story where Annie's friends support her?
 - c. How is it different to how her friends from St Lucy's made her feel?
6. What do Annie and Maeve learn about themselves by the end of the story?
7. On page 161, Maeve writes, **'Wet-day timetables are the best'**. What happens at your school on rainy days? Do you enjoy the change to the routine like Maeve does?
8. Why is Maeve so upset when her Aunty Em goes on a date? (p. 169)
9. One theme explored in this book is resilience.
 - a. Which characters demonstrate resilience in the text?
 - b. How does the author show their growth or determination?
 - c. Identify a moment in the story where a character could have given up but didn't. What helped them keep going?
 - d. How does one character's resilience influence or inspire the people around them?
10. Although Annie appreciates the support of her parents, teachers and classmates, she also wants to be more independent. She says, **'I hate people making assumptions about who I am or what I can do, or what I might like to do or be interested in. It's all that has seemed to happen to me this past year'** (p. 184).
 - a. Identify moments in the story where Annie actively tries to be independent. What does she do to take control of her own choices or actions?
 - b. Are there times when well-intentioned people try to help Annie but end up limiting her independence? Describe what happens and how this might make her feel.
 - c. Why is it important to ask disabled people what support they want or need, instead of assuming what would be helpful?
11. Describe a moment in the story where a character shows kindness. What makes it meaningful?
12. How do Annie and Maeve shift their language depending on their audience: private (journal), social (friends) or public (speech/performance)?

Creative Writing

1. Re-read chapter one and take note of how Maeve introduces herself. Introduce yourself in the same style.
2. Half of the story is told through Maeve's point of view via her journal entries. Retell a key point from the story, such as the first day of term, the sleepover or a day at camp as a journal entry from Annie's point of view.
3. Close your eyes and describe your location without sight, using sensory details such as sound, touch or smell.
4. Maeve prepared a speech for her school captain nomination. Create your own nomination speech that outlines your time at your school, demonstrates your leadership strengths and explains how you would represent your school community if chosen.
5. Write a poem about friendship using literary devices such as metaphor, simile, alliteration or personification.

6. Write a persuasive letter to the owners of the paintball centre, outlining the importance of accessibility and recommending changes to make the venue more inclusive.
7. Maeve includes definitions of interesting or new words in her journal. Write 10 original sentences using your choice of defined words from the story.
8. On page 221, Maeve lists some of the things she has learned in Grade 5. Make your own list of things you've learned so far this year. Like Maeve, you could include school learning, as well as things you've discovered about friendships, family, emotions and yourself.

The Arts

1. Choose a significant moment from the story to adapt into a short dramatic performance. Consider how voice, gesture, space and simple production elements (such as costume or props) can communicate meaning. Prepare and present your scene to your classmates.
2. Annie feels nervous before performing. What techniques or strategies do you use to calm your nerves before a performance?
3. Create a character portrait for one of the main characters, using colours, textures and symbols to show personality traits.
4. Design a poster that represents the ideas of belonging and inclusion. Use images, colours, symbols and words to show what it means for everyone to feel welcome and valued.
5. Annie learns that audio-captioned TV can make media more accessible (p. 121). Try watching one of your favourite shows with audio captions enabled. How does it affect the way you experienced the episode?

Health and Physical Education

1. Access the Vision Australia website to research some technologies and support services available for people with low vision. Summarise what you discover.
2. Choose a character and list three things they value. How do you know?
3. What strategies does Annie use to cope with change? Which ones are most effective?
4. What makes a friendship healthy? List examples from the story.
5. Identify a moment where someone shows empathy in the story. How does it help?
6. Aunty Em suggests that journaling will help Maeve with negative feelings (p. 174). Have you ever tried journaling? Did you feel like it helped you process events and emotions?
7. How does the story show characters feeling included or left out?
 - a. Describe a moment when a character feels left out. What caused it?
 - b. How was the situation resolved?
 - c. How do the characters show empathy when someone is struggling to fit in?
8. How do characters manage jealousy and changing friendships?
 - a. How does jealousy show up between characters? What triggers it?
 - b. Why might someone feel jealous when their friend becomes close to someone new?
 - c. What could the jealous character have done differently to express their feelings in a healthier way?
 - d. How does Maeve balance old friendships with new ones?
9. Annie sees a psychologist called Rainah.
 - a. What does a psychologist do?
 - b. Why do you think Annie sees a psychologist?
 - c. How does Annie's psychologist support her and her family? Can you remember any of her advice from the story?

Humanities and Social Sciences

1. How does the school community at North Avenue Primary support new students?
2. Create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Annie's two schools, St Lucy's and North Avenue Primary. Which school would you rather attend?
3. Maeve says, '**Everyone needs a friend like Persie who will always stand up for them and defend them when other people are being ableist or some other -ist**' (p. 187).
 - a. What does the term ableist mean?
 - b. Can you think of a real-life situation where you have seen someone treated in an ableist way, or where a person's abilities were unfairly judged or dismissed?
 - c. What do you think Maeve means by '**some other -ist**'?
4. What is accessibility?

- a. Can you find an example of a situation or location in the story that was accessible, and a situation that wasn't?
 - b. Why is accessibility important in public spaces like schools and camps?
 - c. Is accessibility only about making physical spaces easier to use (such as adding braille signage), or does it also include people's attitudes, assumptions and expectations? Explain your thinking.
5. After being excluded from the paintball activity, Maeve writes, **'Why should we have to get used to being left out of stuff when other people don't have to get used to finding ways to include us in stuff?'** (p. 66)
 - a. Why were Annie and Maeve not allowed to join the paintball activity?
 - b. Do you think the decision was fair?
 - c. How do you think Annie and Maeve felt when they were told they couldn't participate?
 - d. Can a rule be well-intentioned but still unfair?
 - e. How could the activity have been made safer or more accessible?
 - f. Is there a difference between keeping someone safe and excluding them?
6. During the leadership interviews, Mrs Vitale asks the question, **'You have a disability, Maeve. Why do you think you should be allowed to be school captain over someone who can see?'** (p. 175) Do you think this question was fair? Do you think a teacher who knows Maeve better, like Mrs Cheung, would have asked this question?
7. In her leadership speech, Maeve talks about the qualities she believes will make her a strong leader. What qualities do you think are important in a good leader? Which of these qualities do you feel you possess?



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