

IF I COULD EAT THE STARS

REBECCA M. NEWMAN & SALLY MURPHY
WITH BRIONY STEWART
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YEAR LEVEL: Y4–7

ABOUT THE BOOK

Defend a Goal with Sally Murphy, rocket through space with Amber Moffat or get radioactive with Cristy Burne. Walk the dog with Deb Fitzpatrick and play with your food with James Foley. Then ... Barlay! (Watch out!) with Cheryl Kickett-Tucker.

With stellar illustrations by Briony Stewart and featuring shape poems, haiku, cinquain and free verse ... these are poems to tickle your funny bone, make your belly rumble and keep you up at night.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rebecca M. Newman is an award-winning children's poet and a short story writer for grown-ups. Her poetry has been published in Australia and internationally in magazines and anthologies and even set to music as a choral work. Rebecca is an editor and the publisher at Alphabet Soup Books and when she's not writing, she runs a website showcasing book reviews written by children.

Sally Murphy is an award-winning author and poet with over 50 books to her name, and poems in numerous anthologies, journals and more. Her love of poetry started with her mother reading and sharing poetry with her, and grew and grew until Sally decided she loved poetry so much she chose it as a topic for her doctoral studies many years later. As well as writing and reading, Sally shares her love of words with as many readers and audiences as she can – including as a speaker, educator and academic at Curtin University.

Briony Stewart is an award-winning author and illustrator of over 25 books for children, including the Kumiko and the Dragon series and the CBCA award-winning picture book *Gymnastica Fantastica*. In 2022 she won a Prime Minister's Literary Award for her illustrations in Sherryl Clark's verse novel *Mina and the Whole Wide World*. Briony lives in Fremantle with her biologist husband, two children and her many unfinished craft projects.

THEMES

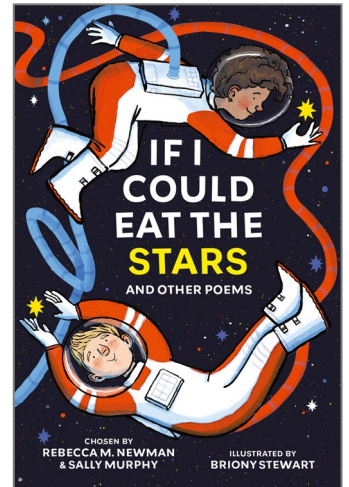
- Nature
- Animals
- Identity/Self
- Curiosity
- Humour

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

- Y4–7 English

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Authors' websites: sallymurphy.com.au and rebeccanewman.net.au
- For student research into Marie Curie: kids.kiddle.co/Marie_Curie



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Middle/Upper Primary

1. Read 'Caution: Poem Ahead' (p. 12). Create a class table that lists and defines each poetic device explicitly mentioned within the poem and highlight examples (e.g. simile: **'will surround you like sharks'**).
2. Elicit prior knowledge on Marie Curie and assign groups to do further research before reading 'Radioactivity: The True Story of Marie Curie' (p. 24). Discuss the rhyme scheme (coupled rhyme) and how the strict rhyme structure reflects order and precision to match the scientific context of the poem. How is irony used at the end?
3. Read 'Terse Verse: Food Edition' (p. 26). Ask students in pairs to devise a joke for their own comical rhyming phrase about a food item, imitating the examples in the poem (**'faster pasta', 'fart tart'**), and put them together as a whole class poem.
4. Read aloud 'Socks!' (p. 29) to demonstrate the playful rhythm of the poem, then designate each stanza to a small group to practise reading aloud in unison before performing as a class. What is the mood here? How does the rhythm create enjoyment of the poem?
5. Read 'Knees!' (p. 36). Challenge students to write another poem in the same rhyme scheme focusing on a different body part. Students could draw the body part out of a hat at random to make it more engaging.
6. Read 'Stingers' (p. 45). Identify one example each of alliteration (**'stingers swim in summer shallows'**), onomatopoeia (**'ouch!'**), simile (**'trailing tentacles like string'**), and metaphor (**'tiny pirates of the bay'**).
7. Research each of the French patisserie items mentioned in 'I Can't Say No' (p. 47). Ask students to write their own poem about what they cannot say no to, following a similar model:
 - a. I can't _____
 - b. I can't _____
 - c. I want _____

Early Secondary

1. Read 'Colour Senses: Red' (p. 55). Students could use this poem as inspiration to devise their own poem featuring a different colour that is explored through the senses.
2. Identify the rhyme scheme (simple four-line rhyme) in 'Kitty's Symphony No. 9' (p. 58). What is the effect of capitalising the last word in each stanza?
3. Read 'Barnstorming' (p. 62). Identify examples of personification (**'the sky bursts open in watery rage'**) and metaphor (**'faraway thunder is a big brass drum'**). Discuss the effect of the shortening countdown in each stanza on the tone of the poem.
4. Read 'Wish' (p. 79). What is the tone of the poem? What information do students think may have been shared with the author in the opening line **'When mum told me'**? Discuss the example of simile and impact of the no-rhyme scheme in the poem.
5. Examine 'The Song of the Dugong' (p. 84). Discuss the sad tone of the poem and the environmental theme it alludes to. What is the message of the dugongs' **'warning song'**? Identify the use of consonance with the repeated 's' sounds to create depth and texture in the poem.
6. Read 'blind cat' (p. 90). How does the layout of the poem add to its meaning and convey the feeling of blindness?
7. 'Who is Watching?' (p. 92) poses a question on the perspective of the poem. Whose perspective do the students think the poem is written from? How is humour used in the poem?
8. Read 'Shoo (F)lies!' (p. 98). What is the double meaning of the poem? Identify the image created by the layout of the poem (a fly). Examine how truth and lies are reflected in experiences of nature – why did the author choose to represent these concepts this way?
9. Which senses are activated in 'If I Could Eat the Stars' (p. 104)? Identify a simile that links to each of the five senses (e.g. touch: **'feel as smooth and cool as river mud'**). What imagery is created throughout?
10. Read 'Morning Snorkel' (p. 136). Highlight the use of personification and metaphor. Discuss the message of the poem on the relationship between humans and their natural environment (**'their place, not mine'**). How does the layout of the poem create feeling and meaning?

Additional activities

1. Research one of the poets featured in the text (list provided on pages 139 to 146). Give a three-minute presentation on what you learned about their life and works.
2. Compare poems written from the perspective of animals (e.g. 'The (not-feeling-so-great) White Shark' (p. 20), 'Kitty's Symphony No. 9' (p. 58), 'Slug Song' (p. 69), 'Fed' (p. 88), 'Who is Watching' (p. 92)). Students could devise a poem written from the perspective of their own chosen animal.



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