

Olivia Muscat: Annie and Maeve Are Definitely Not Friends

FRIENDSHIPS THAT DON'T RUN SMOOTHLY

As the title suggests, Annie and Maeve do not start out as friends. In fact, they're convinced they never will be. Why do some friendships begin badly? What misunderstandings make things worse? How do the girls learn more about each other as the story goes on? Is it possible to be very different and still be friends?

Students should form a circle while the teacher reads short "friendship scenarios" (i.e. being left out, group work clash). Students step into the circle if they've ever felt that way too, then step out and share one way the situation could be handled kindly.

DISABILITY, DIFFERENCE AND FAIRNESS

Annie navigated the world as a blind child, and Maeve must rethink assumptions. What assumptions do other characters make about Annie? What's the difference between helping and listening? How can accessibility make spaces fair for everyone? Why is it important to see disabled characters in books who have full, interesting lives?

Think-pair-share: "How can schools become more accessible or inclusive?" Ideas can be written on sticky notes and added to a class poster titled, "A School Where Everyone Belongs".

FINDING YOUR VOICE AS A WRITER

Olivia Muscat has written the book she would have loved to read as a child. Why might someone feel they "don't see themselves" in books? How does it feel when you do recognise yourself in a story or character?

Students write a paragraph starting: *A character I wish existed is someone who...* They may like to draw the character as well.

STORIES CHANGE HOW WE SEE THE WORLD

Annie and Maeve Are Definitely Not Friends invites readers to think differently about friendship, disability, and bias. How can a book change the way we think? Which scene in the story made you see something differently?

Teachers should write three headings:

- I used to think...
- Then I read...
- Now I think...

Students can contribute anonymous sentence strips to each heading.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olivia Muscat has spoken about not wanting disabled characters whose only purpose is to be "inspirational". Instead, she wants characters who are funny, messy, complicated and real.

Provide students with the following quote: "Being different can be hard, but it can also be awesome fun. Every human is different. That's what makes us human." (from [Olivia Muscat on writing, disability and diversity in the classroom](#))

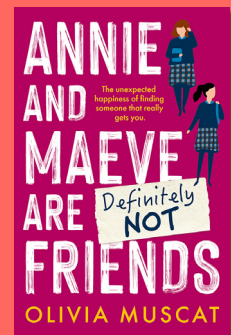
Discuss:

- What do you think Olivia means by this?
- How does this idea change how we read disability in stories?

Students should write a sentence beginning, "A story is more interesting when characters are..." and finish with their own idea.



Olivia Muscat



Annie and Maeve Are Definitely Not Friends is available at Readings.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS (YEAR 3-6)

Learning areas: English, Health and Physical Education, Humanities/ Civics and Citizenship

Capabilities: Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Capability

Foundational Skills: Literacy