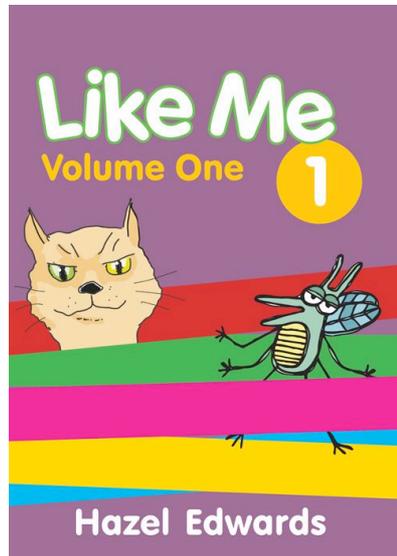


Writing 'Like Me'.

by Hazel Edwards

<https://hazeledwards.com/like-me.html>



Titles are always a challenge. Ambiguous ones are even more so.

'Like me...' could mean imitating, just enjoying the company of that mind or being similar. Co-incidentally, 'Like me' is one of the curriculum themes for this age group. Luckily, it links these diverse stories.

'Like Me' are easy to read 'shorts' for beginning readers of about my 8 year old grandson's ability. Fact and fiction.

School, home, family and where you fit concern eight to ten year olds. Wanting to be like everybody else is common, but we are all different. So a sense of humour helps.

So do diverse viewpoints, even a cat, insect or a Reading Dog. Being someone else for the length of the story, makes the reader more tolerant, later.

Issues of handling differences, bravery, names and imaginative problem solving, using fun, are story material. Family issues such as fostering and visit day and where you fit in a changing family or school are included.

With a collection written by the same author, it's vital the stories are sufficiently different. I've collected these across ten years and often in response to specific requests.

'Where did you get your ideas from?' is a common question for authors.

One is ghost-written by a Reading Dog (based on the real Lachlan) because I met these highly trained dogs during a literacy program in libraries. Lachlan puts his snout in the book for the treat, he doesn't really read the print but the child has an attentive listener for reading.

It's hard to write in an accessible way about serious issues like asylum seekers.

But by making the characters insects and changing the period and settings, the story is universal. Kids can talk about how they might feel in that situation because it is one step removed from sensationalized news headlines.

'Garden of Guesses' is my favourite. *Listening to the car radio, I heard about this special vegetable garden made from recycled junk as sculpture. Visitors had to guess or read the labels on the vegetables. Fabulous problem-solving.*

'Betwixt': *After our novel '2m; the boy within' came out, I was asked for a diverse gender story for children who were much younger, about how they coped at school. Issues like lining up. Toilets. Pronouns.*

'Visit Day': *Foster carers requested a story that was realistic about parents who didn't turn up on Visit Day. But a story with some hope.*

A Couple of Clever Cats': *We had a real cat which we shared with neighbours and all of us fed it, thinking it was ours. It answered to different names in different places.*

'Popstar': *For the family of a late friend Graham Brown. His grandkids called him Popstar.*

'Ry the Wounded Warrior': *A real boy Ryan Donohue, who looked after the neighbour's big dog and whose face was badly bruised, but who was a hero.*

'I Danced With a Mosquito': *So many students play and practise this piece of music, that I was asked for an updated story to match.*

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'The Upside Down Insect with No Name Tag'. Asylum –seeker children in detention is a serious issue which concerns me, but sometimes a story can provide a different viewpoint and provoke change. The story must be more than political propaganda.

Extension activities are provided: Classes can design their own 'Garden of Guesses', either a real garden, model or draw with labels. Can have an 'Open Day' for parents & special friends.

Could any rules or language be adapted to make it easier for those who are diverse in some way? Invent a new pronoun? 'Betwixt' is a carefully chosen title for this story.

And ghost-writing from the dog's perspective has been a first for me.



Our mini-launch of 'Like Me' at Diamond Valley Library is on Weds July 11th at 11AM. The surprise launcher just might be a Reading Dog!

<https://www.fivesenseseducation.com.au/like-me-volume-1-9781760322397>

'Like me' Vol. 1 &2

<https://hazeledwards.com/like-me.html>