



Penny Draws a School Play

SARA SHEPARD

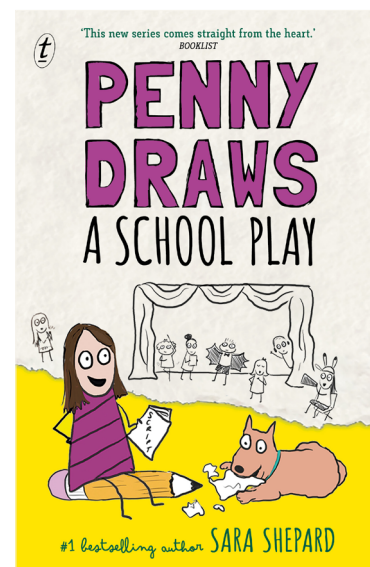
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Fiction

RECOMMENDED READING AGE: 8+

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CURRICULUM GUIDE

The following teaching guide has been designed to embrace shared curriculum values. Students are encouraged to communicate their understanding of a text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.

The learning activities aim to encourage students to think critically, creatively and independently, to reflect on their learning, and connect it to audience, purpose and context. They aim to encompass a range of forms and include a focus on language, literature and literacy. Where appropriate, they include the integration of ICT and life skills.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Credit: Danielle Shields

Sara Shepard is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Pretty Little Liars* series, the *Lying Game* series, the *Perfectionists* series, *The Heiresses*, *The Elizas*, and *Reputation*.

SYNOPSIS

It's a new school term and Penny Lowry has undergone some pretty big changes! She's made it through the beginning of a school year without her best friend, Violet, and has actually made several new friends, including Maria, Kristian and Rocco (and, of course, she still has Cosmo, her beloved dog). Maria's even getting pretty close to becoming Penny's best friend, but Penny is still feeling too hurt by what happened with Violet to commit to that just yet. Still, things are going pretty well, and even though Penny still worries about things, she's managing to not let her worries overwhelm her.

Then Penny discovers that she's got a new homeroom teacher, Miss Kettle, who's going to be in charge of the school play. And Miss Kettle wants everyone to perform... even Penny. Worse, Petra, the playwright, decides that Penny's currently non-speaking role should narrate the whole play, meaning that Penny is now going to have a lot of lines. To make matters worse, everything is changing at home, too. Penny's mum is expecting twins, and so Penny arrives home one night to discover that they're moving to a new house, and she's only got a week to prepare.

Suddenly Penny has gone from being in control of her worries to having them threatening to control her. What if she forgets all her lines? What if the moving van loses all of her stuff forever? What if something embarrassing happens and everyone laughs? Penny tries to imagine all these changes as a big adventure, but it's starting to feel as if she's diving off the high board into a pit of dragons and snakes.

But Penny is stronger than she gives herself credit for, and braver too. She tells herself that she can act in the school play, and even opens herself up to a new friendship with Chloe, her new next-door neighbour. Maybe, things are actually going to be okay?

Penny Draws a School Play is the sequel to *Penny Draws a Best Friend* and is a funny, playful story about the challenges of navigating big changes as a chronic worrier.



BEFORE READING

1. Have you read *Penny Draws a Best Friend*? If so, come up with a quick recap in groups about what happened in the last book that might help you understand this book better.
2. Why do you think the series is called *Penny Draws*? Why is drawing a useful way to tell a story or express yourself?
3. Penny is the kind of character who worries—a LOT. In groups, share some of the things you worry about. Are there any similarities? What kinds of things do you worry about that Penny might also worry about in the book? How do you make yourself feel better?
4. Read the blurb. What does it tell you about the book? What questions do you have?

WHILE READING

1. Why doesn't Penny feel the need to write in her journal? What are some of the reasons she writes? Why else might you keep a journal?
2. What is the first thing that Miss Kettle does that makes Penny worried?
3. Why do so many kids want to play the vampire in the school play? What does Rocco do that earns him the part?
4. Make a list of some of the changes happening in Penny's life. How does she feel about them?
5. Who does Penny want to call when she's feeling upset in her new house? Why doesn't she make the call?
6. Who is Chloe, and what does she do to help Penny feel more at home in her new house?
7. What does Penny think will happen if Maria and Chloe meet? What actually happens?
8. What tips does Luke give Penny to help her manage her anxiety?
9. Penny keeps discovering Juice Box in strange places—the cot, the high chair—what do you think he's doing?
10. What kinds of things does Penny think you should put in a hospital bag? Would you add anything to her list?
11. Why does Riley come to Penny for help?
12. How does working on the play together change the dynamic of Penny's class? Do you think this change will last?
13. What do you think is in the box that Penny and her friends find in the attic?

AFTER READING

CHARACTER

1. What are some of the things that people say about Mr Morton? Which of these things (if any) turn out to be true?
2. What do Grandma Anne and Grandpa Bob do that Penny finds 'exhausting'? How are they different from Grandma Mimi?
3. Why doesn't Penny believe that Maria and Chloe can be sworn enemies? How does Penny describe Maria? How does Chloe describe Maria? Can they both be right?

STYLE & STRUCTURE

Inciting incident

Something has to happen in a story for the reader to be interested, and the thing that happens is called the *inciting incident*. This is the moment in the story when the every day life of the protagonist (the main character) is interrupted by something unusual.

In Penny's case, this is the reason she needs to start writing to Cosmo again.

An inciting incident can usually be found if we try to describe the story as follows:

Every day [NORMAL LIFE], but one day [INCITING INCIDENT].

Use this template to describe what happens in *Penny Draws a School Play*. Now use the same template to come up with as many story starters as you can.

THEMES

Worrying

1. What are some of the things Penny worries will happen if she is forced to go on stage? Do any of these things turn out to be true? Should she have to perform if she doesn't want to?
2. When Penny thinks about having to stand up and audition for the play she feels 'jittery'. (p. 37) What are some of the other words she uses to describe her worries? How do you feel when you're worried about something?
3. Penny uses different imagery to describe and understand her worries. At one point she compares herself to the bat she's playing in the school play. What similarities does she discover? How does this help her to feel more confident about her role in the play?

Moving house



1. Penny knows that something is up when Grandma Mimi shows up to go on a drive with them. Where do they go? What change does Penny's mum spring on Penny when they arrive? Discuss other ways that Penny's mum could have introduced this change to Penny, and how this might have made her feel differently.
2. What are some of the reasons Penny doesn't want to move. What are some of the reasons that Juice Box does want to move? Who should get to decide?
3. What does Rocco say that he misses about his old house?
4. Have you ever moved house? What advice would you give to someone going through the same thing.
5. Discuss the picture that Penny draws to show how she feels about moving. What do you think it means?

done instead, and then write a new version of the scene using one of them as inspiration

Friendship

1. How does Penny describe her friendship with her old best friend, Violet Vance?
2. Why is Penny worried about calling someone new her best friend? What does she think might happen?
3. Penny really wants Maria and Chloe to get along, so much that she draws several plans to make them like each other. Which plan does she pick and why? Can you come up with an alternative plan that she could try? Is it even possible to make two people like each other?

RESPONDING

1. Luke always has 'some kind of business going'. What are some of the businesses Luke operates? Come up with your own business idea, and draw a logo for it. How much would you sell your services for?
2. Choose one of your story starters from your every day/one day exercise and use it to start writing your own Penny story. (Or you can choose to start a story about an entirely new character if you like!)
3. What are some of the tools Penny's dad uses to build the treehouse? What else might he need? Design the perfect treehouse for Penny and Juice Box.
4. Penny is surprised that Rocco thinks she's not going to bomb onstage. 'It was weird how you couldn't tell what was going on in someone's head... And maybe how you couldn't see yourself the way other people saw you.' (p. 138) Choose a scene from the book and rewrite it from the perspective of a different character. How does this change your understanding of what happens?
5. When Penny feels overwhelmed at her party, what does she do? Make a list of things she could have