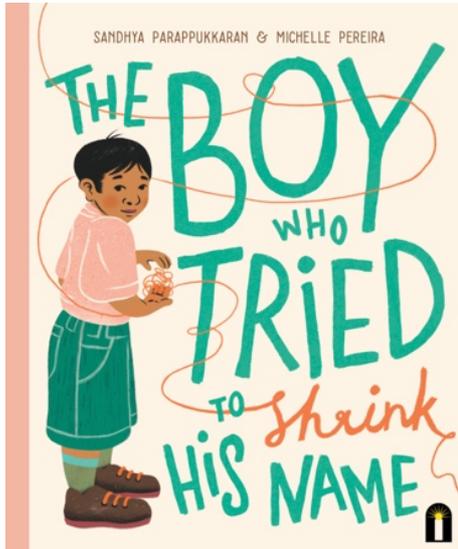


## Teacher's Notes



### *The Boy Who Tried to Shrink His Name*

Written by Sandhya Parappukkaran

Illustrated by Michelle Pereira

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### RECOMMENDED FOR

Years 1-2

#### KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
  - Understand the use of vocabulary in everyday contexts (ACELA1454)

- Connect characters and events in literary texts to students' own experiences (ACELT1582)
- Listen for specific purposes and information (ACELY1666)

### THEMES

- Identity
- Fitting in
- Learning new things
- Friendship
- Acceptance
- Diversity and inclusion

### SYNOPSIS

Zimdalamashkermishkada worries about his long name. It trips him up every morning, so it will almost definitely trip up everyone at his new school. So he tries to shrink it down, crumple it up and fold it tight, but no matter what he does, Zimdalamashkermishkada's full name keeps exploding out. After a whole day of feeling uncomfortable, when a new friend invites him to the park, saying '*Come to the park if you like to skate ... it's Zim, right?*', Zim is relieved to have a new friend ... and a new name.

But when Zim gets home, his mum explains where his name is from, and all the meaning it carries. She tells him to give people a chance to get it right.

*The Boy Who Tried to Shrink His Name* is a powerful story about holding onto who you are, learning new things, and giving people a chance to know the real you.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sandhya Parappukkaran left her job as a Food Technologist so she could put her feet up and read. Then she rediscovered her passion for children's books. Her stories are inspired by her multicultural experience and include scrumptious food from her Kerala Indian heritage. Sandhya resides in Brisbane with her family.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

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Michelle Pereira is an illustrator who spent her childhood in Nairobi, Kenya, and now lives in Melbourne, Australia. She graduated from Monash University with a Bachelor of Communication Design and became a professional illustrator after a somewhat extended, but enjoyable, stint of bar work. She has worked with a range of clients such as Penguin UK, Netflix, the New York Times and Marie Claire. She uses bright colours and textural elements to create playful illustrations.

## THEMES

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*The Boy Who Tried To Shrink His Name* is deceptively complex – a simple story that contains significant themes for discussion. As Zimdalamashkermishkada navigates his first day at school and makes a new friend, he learns that he doesn't have to fit in to belong, and that sometimes giving people the chance to learn something new works out better for everyone. Readers might discuss themes such as:

- Bravery
- Identity and belonging
- Diversity and inclusion
- Friendship
- Learning and curiosity

## WRITING STYLE

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The author, Sandhya Parappukkaran, uses simple language to tell the story. This language is accessible for young readers, and also serves as a reminder that all words can be easy if we take the time to learn them. Readers struggling with any words will be able to relate to Elly, as she uses the technique of breaking up Zimdalamashkermishkada's name into smaller parts so that she can learn it.

Parappukkaran also points to the significance of names – where they come from and what they mean – when Zimdalamashkermishkada asks his mum if he can change his name. In response, she tells him that he was named after 'the coconut trees that stretch high and hold up the sky while sheltering all underneath.'

On the page, the words and illustrations work together, with sounds like 'VOOSH' and 'POOF', exploding out of Zimdalamashkermishkada along with his name.



## COMPREHENSION

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- Why do you think Zimdalamashkermishkada wants to change his name? Have you ever wanted to change something about yourself to fit in?
- Elly isn't the only one to learn something new in the story. What new things does Zimdalamashkermishkada learn?
- Why does Zimdalamashkermishkada's mum tell him to give Elly a chance to get his name right? Should people just give up if they don't get things right the first time? Why/why not?
- How are the lives of the characters in the book similar or different to your own?
- What do you think the colour orange represents in the book? (Look at where it's used.)
- What do Elly and Zimdalamashkermishkada have in common? How important is it to have things in common with our friends?
- How do you think Zimdalamashkermishkada's mum feels when he asks her if he can change his name? Write what she is thinking in this moment.
- Do you think Zimdalamashkermishkada is the only one feeling nervous on his first day? What might some of the other kids be worried about?

## WRITING EXERCISE

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- Zimdalamashkermishkada comes up with a lot of interesting ways to try to make his name fit. Why do you think none of them work? Come up with other ways of making something small, and a list of sound words to use as it explodes back out to its original size.
- Write about something that you're good at because of practise. What is it? How did you get better at it? Did you ever feel like giving up? What made you keep going?

## ILLUSTRATION STYLE

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The illustrations are visually striking, particularly since they are primarily green and orange. Discuss in class what the effect of this is on the pictures, and the other types of contrast Pereira uses in the images to make them interesting.

Readers might spot the way that Pereira uses the outline of a bird unfurling to show Zimdalamashkermishkada's growing confidence in his name, particularly on the last page when Elly shouts his name out to everyone else, and the enormous orange bird unfolds in the image above them.

Readers might also like to consider the way the images show the diversity of the characters, and blend together things that aren't real with things that are to support both the physical and emotional landscapes of the story.

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

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- What's in a name? When Zimdalamashkermishkada finds out what his name means, he decides not to change it after all. Ask your parent or guardian where your name comes from. Does it have a special meaning, or remind them of something? Where were they when they chose your name? Write the story of your name to share with the class.



- Food is often used in stories to celebrate differences. What kind of food do you cook at home? Where do you eat it? What's your favourite meal? Write down a recipe for your favourite meal, and draw a picture to go with it. Write a short introduction about yourself and why this particular food makes you happy. Put everyone's recipes together into a classroom recipe book.
- If your name was an animal and/or a colour, what would it be? Draw a picture of something that represents you and your name.
- The author uses **similes** to describe the way that Zimdalamashkermishkada's name behaves (e.g., 'My name springs back to life like a scared pufferfish at sea.'). A simile is when we say something is **like** something else to make our description stronger. What other similes can you find in the book? Come up with your own similes for the following:
  - Her hair is as light as ...
  - The day was cold like ...
  - He shouted so loud it sounded like ...
  - I ran as fast as ...

