



Penelope Perfect: Project Best Friend

Written by Chrissie Perry

Illustrated by Jon Davis

Published February 2015 by Hardie Grant Egmont

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Draw their own star sign symbol
- Write a list of similarities and differences with a friend and share results with the class
- Explore ways of coping with anger and frustration
- Investigate the way illustrations and punctuation can be used to develop characters and stories
- Have a class discussion on the positives and negatives of being a perfectionist

About the story

Penelope Kingston is fairly happy at Chelsea Primary, but there's one big thing missing in her life; she doesn't have a best friend. She does love Ms Pike, but she knows that being paired with the teacher for activities and excursions makes her the odd one out.

Luckily that is just about to change. Ms Pike has told the class that there's a new girl starting at Chelsea Primary. As soon as Penelope hears her (elegant) name, Brittany O'Brien, she just knows that Brittany will make a perfect best friend. In fact, since she has spent so much time imagining what her new best friend will be like, she feels as though she already knows her!

But Penelope Kingston didn't get to be excellent at most things by leaving anything to chance. She is Very Determined that Brittany O'Brien won't get sidetracked by any other kids in her class.

When Brittany O'Brien does show up to Chelsea Primary, she is not at all what Penelope expected. Even so, Penelope puts a great deal of effort into making sure they will become friends. Unfortunately, Penelope's plans go awry. She has to deal with other students rudely interrupting the school tour and generally getting in the way of Penelope's new friendship.

Which is why she has an outburst. In front of everyone.

Penelope is terribly worried that she's ruined her chance of getting her very own friend. When she shares this fear with her beloved Grandpa George, he suggests she should try to 'go with the flow'.

Penelope tries Very Hard to follow her Grandpa's advice, but it's no good. The new girl seems to be bonding with everybody but her!

But a chance encounter changes everything. It's when Penelope isn't trying at all that things work out perfectly!



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Themes

- Family and step families
- Friendship
- Anxiety
- Handling difficult emotions
- Perfectionism
- Tolerance and understanding of difference

Reading Questions

Chapter One

Who does Penelope live with?

What other family members does she have?

What is her star sign? Why is this important?

Why does Penelope want a new friend?

Chapter Two

Is Penelope's personality similar to her mum and brother's?

Does Penelope like her name to be shortened?

Is Oscar good at basketball?

Who is the naughtiest girl in the class?

Is the new girl what Penelope expected? What name does she go by? Can you figure out why?

Chapter Three

How does Penelope feel when Ms Pike asks her to show Bob around at recess?

What things would Penelope like to show her?

During the tour, why does Penelope feel her emotions boiling inside her?

Chapter Four

What is Penelope's favourite book?

Does Penelope enjoy Dodgeball?

Why does Oscar seem disappointed?

How does Penelope feel after her outburst?



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Chapter Five

What does Joanna do when she sees Penelope in the classroom after her outburst?

Why does Penelope's heart 'swell' when she sees Oscar get a goal in basketball?

How does this help her decide to keep trying to make friends with Bob?

Chapter Six

What does Grandpa George's group discuss ?

What are some of Penelope's favourite calming activities?

Does Penelope like the same TV shows as Harry and their mum?

Predict whether Penelope will be good at going with the flow?

Chapter Seven

Where is Penelope while the other girls talk about her outburst?

Who says that Penelope is 'the queen of cracking it'?

Who sticks up for Penelope?

What has Joanna brought along to muck up with at lunchtime?

Who is the teacher on yard duty?

Chapter Eight

What does Penelope's mum do on Tuesday nights?

What unexpected gift does her mum leave under the shopping for Penelope?

What song is the class practicing to sing at the aged care centre?

Who sticks her head out of the bay window of Penelope's favorite neighbourhood house?

Chapter Nine

What does Penelope do to help Bob settle in?

What are the 'knick knacks' that Penelope arranges on the shelf of the bay window?

Why does Bob reserve a space on the wall?

Chapter Ten

Why is Penelope surprised when Bob's dad kisses his daughter on the top of her head?

What drink does Bob's dad make the girls?



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Who is Lincoln? Why does Bob think he's a 'rat'?

What story does Penelope share with Bob about her (half) sister, Sienna?

Chapter Eleven

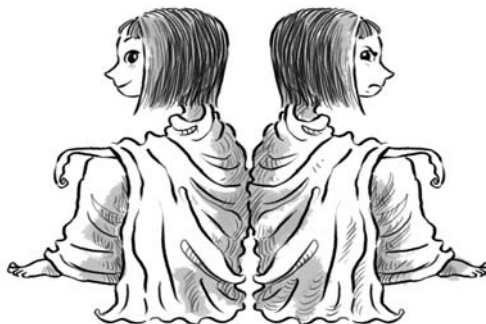
How does Penelope feel after telling Bob the story about Sienna?

What are two of the things Penelope and Bob have in common?

What is Oscar's favourite book?

Activities

- Write a letter to Penelope giving her advice on how to make friends with Bob.
- Make your own list of things Penelope and Bob have in common and in what ways they are different. Then pick a friend to work with and make a list of things you have in common and what ways you are different. After you've made your list, explain to the class how the differences and similarities affect the friendship.



- Penelope's star sign is Gemini (the twins) and she often feels like there are two Penelope's living inside her. Research your star sign and design a symbol for it.
- Look at the use of capital letters and brackets in Project Best Friend. Why do you think they're used? Write an argument between two characters using regular punctuation, but also capital letters and brackets.
- Have a class discussion about perfectionism. In what ways can this trait be positive? In what ways can it be negative?
- Penelope uses several calming techniques to soothe her when she's upset, like drawing, reading and jewellery making. What activities do you find soothing? Make a poster advertising them.