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Tiger, Don't Worry! by Daishu Ma



Learning Resource Guide for Teachers and Libraries Suitable for ages 5+

In this heartwarming tale of friendship and courage, Mei and her exuberant best friend Tiger eagerly try to help make tea, but their efforts lead to broken tools and panic! Fearing being scolded, they run away, but Mei soon realises the importance of returning home and facing their mistake. They return home with trepidation and are relieved to be met with an important lesson in empathy, forgiveness and patience.

Steeped in kindness, this reassuring story is perfect for children navigating how to say sorry, concluding in Tiger and Mei finding the courage to admit to their mistakes and learning that honesty helps to bring the whole family together.

These notes provide you with guidance and ideas for supporting children's enjoyment and engagement with the text and their reading and writing inspired by the story. The activities could be run over a period of 1-2 weeks, with the story being slowly revealed to the children over this time. The creative ideas can be incorporated at the end of the notes which offer guidance for what to do after reading to further support children's literacy development.

Find your way with
**Tiger
and
Mei**



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Tiger, Don't Worry!
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Sharing the front cover:

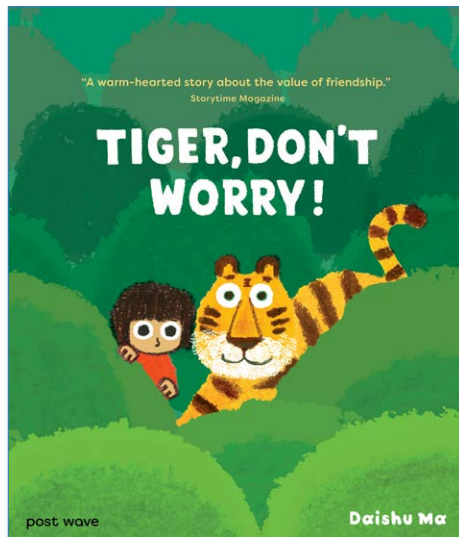
Share the front cover of the book with the children and invite their responses to what they see. You could prompt them with key questions such as:

What do you see on the cover?

What do you know or think you know about the characters?

What do you think they might be looking at?

Where do you think they might be?



What do you think they might be thinking or feeling?

What do you think might happen in this story?

Does it remind you of anything else you have read or seen?

Talking about the title:

Read the title of the book to the children and discuss this together. Who do you think might be saying 'Tiger, don't worry'? Why might they be saying this? What do you think Tiger might be worried about? Do you think Tiger looks worried?

Look together at how the title is written. How do you think it should be read aloud? Look at the comma after 'Tiger' and the exclamation mark at the end. Talk about what these punctuation marks represent and mean when we see them on the page, and what we might do with our voices when we see these on the page and read the title aloud. Practise reading the title in different ways using the punctuation to guide you. Talk about which ways are most effective and why this is.



Entering the world of the story:

Open the book and spend time looking at the illustration on the endpapers. Invite the children to talk about and respond to what they see. You could prompt them with key questions such as:

What do you see here? What catches your attention first?

Where do you think this is? What gives you this idea?



What time of day do you think it is? How do you know?

How do you think this place connects to the characters and the title?

Encourage the children to write one thing they see, think or have a question about when they look at this scene on a sticky note. Stick these around a copy of the endpapers and take time to discuss the children's observations and questions, linking these to things that can be seen in the illustration. Depending on the age and stage of the children's development you could also scribe the children's ideas for them.

I can see a house right on top of a huge hill.
I wonder who lives there?

Alternatively, you could give small groups of children a copy of the illustration and allow them time to annotate this with their observations, thoughts and questions, before coming back together to discuss.

Now, turn to the front title page of the book and look at the illustration of the characters. Discuss with the children what they think is happening here. Does it give you any more information about the characters and their relationship, the time of day or what might happen in the story? Encourage the children to look carefully at the characters facial expressions, body positions and the props that have been placed in the scene. All of these give us additional information.



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Reading and responding to the book:

Pages 1-2:

Read aloud the first two pages of the book, discussing what you have heard. What more do we know about the characters and the building that we saw in the scene in the endpapers? Encourage the children to discuss and explore potential ideas of what Tiger and Mei might do for fun. Discuss some of these together so that the children can hear a range of different ideas.

Look together at the illustrations you've seen so far, from the front cover to this first spread. How do you think these illustrations were made? What materials do you think Daishu Ma – the author and illustrator of the book – used?

Provide the children with some drawing pencils, crayons or oil pastels and a sheet of A4 paper. Invite them to visualise what Tiger and Mei might do for fun based on the ideas they discussed. Where will they be? What will they be doing? How will they be feeling? How will they show this using their faces and bodies? Take one of the ideas as an example and model how to share this idea in an illustration, copying the style of the characters and setting from the book.

Pages 3-14:

Re-read pages 1-2 and on to pages 3-4. How does what Tiger and Mei do compare to the ideas that you had? Do you think that picking the tea leaves looks like it would be fun? Why or why not? What do you think these pages tell us about Mei's family and where the story might be set? Do you know where tea is grown?



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Note for teachers:

In Britain, we have been drinking tea for over 350 years, but tea has been around for hundreds of years before this. The oldest discovered tea is from the Han Dynasty in China, dating 206BC to 220AD. It is thought that the popularity of tea drinking rose during the Tang Dynasty in the 8th Century, when it became China's national drink.



You may wish to share with the children that Daishu Ma, the author and illustrator of the book, grew up in China before moving to London to study, and the book was first published in China before being translated into English. You can see her talking about her life and work as an author and illustrator in this video, produced by children's literacy charity the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) here.

Re-read the final lines from this spread: 'It's harder than it looks . . . especially with big paws! "Be careful, Tiger!" I say.' Why do you think Mei is telling Tiger to be careful? What might happen next? Collect the children's predictions before turning the page and reading on. Here, it is Tiger who says: "Don't Worry, Mei" – why might Mei be worried? What do you think they will do next?

Read on to pages 14-15, where Tiger says: "I know what we should do." What has happened in this part of the story? What more do we know about Mei's family? Encourage the children to summarise the events and draw together ideas about the characters.

Explore how things get worse and worse with each event. What consequences might their actions have on the rest of the family?

Revisit Tiger's line: "I know what we should do." What do you think they should do now? Invite the children to share their ideas, first by talking about and sharing these together, then by writing them down, for example on a sticky note.

I think that Mei and Tiger should just tell Dad what happened and explain that these things were accidents. They could help to clear up the tea leaves and fix the churning machine.



Look at the ideas suggested and then discuss: We think these are the things Tiger and Mei **should** do, but what do you think they **will** do? Discuss whether these ideas match with their initial thoughts about what Tiger and Mei should do.

Pages 15-20:

Re-read the story so far, then turn to the next spread, where Tiger declares "Let's run away!" and Mei jumps on to his back. What do the children think about this decision? Do they think this is what they should have done? Why or why not?

Explore with the children the idea of making mistakes and having accidents. These are natural, as no one person is perfect. The important thing is that we learn from our mistakes and take responsibility for our actions when we need to. Explore what this means by sharing an example from your own life of a time when you have made a mistake or had an accident and how you learned from this or took responsibility for it in a way that the children can connect with and understand.



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Think about what has happened in the story so far and what we know about Mei's family. What impact might Tiger and Mei's actions have on the rest of the family and their work? How do you think Tiger and Mei could take responsibility for this?

Now read on to page 20, where Mei tells Tiger: "It will be alright. You'll see!". How was Tiger travelling when they ran away? Why do you think he goes so far and so fast?

Take time to look back at final two illustrations in this section of the book, where Mei says to Tiger: "Let's go home!" and where she reassures him that: "It will be alright. You'll see!". What can you tell about the relationship between Tiger and Mei? How do you think Tiger is feeling now? What makes you think this?

Look at what Mei does here in this illustration too. How do you think she feels about Tiger? What shows you this? How do you think she knows "It will be alright"? and what do you think she plans to do now?

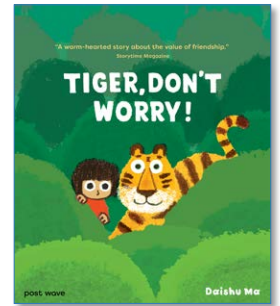
Encourage the children to work together in pairs to engage in some improvised role play. One child should take on the character of Mei and the other should take on the character of Tiger. Allow them to act out these last two scenes together, with Mei first suggesting, "Let's go home!" and Tiger giving a response to this and then Mei suggesting, "It will be alright", and sharing her idea for what she thinks they should do next.

After they have had some time to rehearse their scenes, allow those that wish the time to perform their ideas to the rest of the class.

Then, give each child a copy of the illustration of Mei face to face with Tiger as she says: "It will be alright. You'll see!". Invite the children to write their ideas of what Mei and Tiger might be thinking or saying to each other at this point of the story.

Encourage the children to write first and then decide whether this would be something the character would say aloud to the other character, or something they would keep inside and think to themselves. This will help them decide whether their writing should be encapsulated in a speech or thought bubble.

Use this as a vehicle to discuss how sometimes, when we are worried, we don't always say out loud how we feel, or we express ourselves differently when we share them aloud with someone else because we are feeling embarrassed, ashamed or anxious.



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I'm really scared that I'll get into trouble and Dad will be cross because I ruined the tea.



If we say sorry to Dad and Granny and help to clear up, they will understand and won't be cross with us.



Pages 21-26:

Re-read the story so far and on to page 26, where Mei asks “Could Tiger come too?” to the children. How does the journey back compare to the journey when they ran away? Turn back to compare the two journeys and discuss who is leading and who is following on each stage of the journey? How does Tiger feel at each stage of the journey and how do we know this?

Now reflect on Mei’s actions. What was Mei’s plan? Do you think this was the right decision to make? What do you think her family are thinking and feeling now?

Re-read and consider Mei’s final question: “Could Tiger come too?”. What do you think the family will say in response to this? Give the children a copy of the illustration where the family are embracing each other and invite them to think as Dad, Mum and/or Granny to decide what each character might say in response to Mei’s question.

Rather than just saying “Yes” or “No”, encourage them to expand and explain their thinking using extended sentences. They may use a conjunction like ‘but’, ‘if’, or ‘so’, or they may use words like ‘only’ or ‘except’ to extend thoughts and ideas. Model this with your own ideas for the children first, demonstrating how to think of an idea, how to translate this into speech ready for writing and then how to transcribe this onto the page. Encourage them to include speech marks and speech tags to demarcate each character’s speech, looking back at how Daishu Ma does this with speech in the book.

Dad says:

Yes, of course, but you should turn the handle more gently this time while we churn the leaves.



Granny says:

Yes, he can. This time I’ll show him how to walk carefully around the plants when he picks the leaves.

Page 27 to the end of the book:

Read the rest of the book aloud to the children. How did the family react? How did this compare with what you predicted? What do you think Tiger and Mei might have learned from their experience? What do you think they might help with tomorrow? What do you think they might do differently from today?



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Now, read the blurb at the back of the book. Do you think that Tiger and Mei were honest, responsible and brave? Where did you see this in the story? How did they own their actions and make things right again? Can you think of a time when something like this has happened to you? Did you have the courage and bravery to be honest, own your actions and make things right? How did you do this? Or, if you got scared and ran away like Tiger, what could you do differently if you found yourself in the same situation again?

Look back through the story as a whole to see if the children can recount and explain the process of making tea as the family did in the book. It would be helpful to explore the final step of the process by getting some tea leaves, inviting the children to touch and smell these so they can see what they are like in real life, and brewing some in a teapot with boiling water and pouring out cups with a strainer. The children could be invited to smell or even try the tea if you have agreements to do this, have considered any allergies, taken appropriate safety measures and allow the tea to cool first.

Invite the children to summarise the process in words and pictures. Model this yourself for the children first, demonstrating how to identify each step in the process from looking back at the book, how to summarise each step by talking this through first, how to translate this into speech ready for writing and then how to transcribe this onto the page, including using:

- Sequencing words to order events like: 'first', 'next', 'then', 'after that', 'finally'.
- Verbs to explain the actions needed like: 'pick', 'gather', 'collect', 'lift', 'dry', 'put', 'turn', 'empty', 'roast', 'roll', 'boil', 'brew'.
- Adverbs to explain how things should be done (which may have helped Tiger on his first go!) like: 'gently', 'carefully', 'slowly', 'safely'.



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After reading:

Here are a range of ideas that could lead on from reading the book to engage children further in talk, reading and writing inspired by the story.

Booktalk:

Open up evaluative conversations about the book to gain an insight into children's engagement with the story, as well as their tastes and preferences. This can be done through simple and open questions such as:

- What did you like about the book?
- Was there anything you disliked? Why was this?
- What questions were you left with after reading the book?
- Did it remind you of anything that's happened to you or that you've seen in real life?
- Did it remind you of any other books you've read or any films or TV shows you've seen?
- What would you tell someone else about the book if they hadn't read it? And what might you leave out so you don't give too much of the story away?
- Do you know anyone else who would like this book? Who is it and why do you think they would like it?
- If you were going to give this book a rating out of 5 stars, what rating would you give it and why?



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Summarising the story:

Support the children to identify and summarise the key events in the story. This could be presented using words and pictures in a story map or on a storyboard. Try to really focus on the key events, without going into every small step or great detail, e.g.:

- Tiger and Mei wake up one morning and want to have fun together.
- They want to help pick tea leaves, but Tiger makes a mess.
- They want to dry the tea leaves, but Tiger tips the basket over and breaks the handle off the drying machine.
- Tiger and Mei run away.
- Mei decides they should go back home and be honest about what happened.
- The family forgive them, and they make tea together.



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Children might want to draw the characters from the story using Daishu Ma's original illustrations as references. They may want to draw favourite scenes from the story, make a new story scene for Tiger and Mei, or draw themselves and their favourite animals in Daishu Ma's style.



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Retelling the story:

Encourage the children to retell and replay the story in different ways. This might include:

- Making masks for the characters and role playing the story.
- Creating a small world scene of the setting in a tuff tray and obtaining or creating models of the characters to replay the story through small world play.
- Making lolly stick puppets of the characters to act out the story in a cardboard box theatre, creating scenery for the different parts of the story.

Performance reading:

You could also give the children a section of the text in groups of three to performance read together. Each child could take on the role of Mei, Tiger or the narrator. The narrator would read all the text that is not contained in speech marks, and the other two children read the speech of their character.

Give the children time and space to read and re-read the section, practise how they are going to say the lines to bring out the feelings and emotions of the characters and perform this to the class.

You could record their performances so that the children can reflect on and evaluate these, considering what they did well and what they might do differently if they were to do it again.



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Creative writing:

The children might also be inspired to write their own stories after reading. They could either:

- Write a new adventure for Tiger and Mei.
- Write their own story featuring themselves and a favourite animal character set where they live.
- Write their own story about two friends doing something together.

Knowledge and understanding of the world:

The book offers a window to learn more about both China and the process of growing and making tea. You could:

- Find out more about China, locating it on a map and its location in the world in relation to the UK and other countries.
- Explore China's landscapes, wildlife, climate, leisure, pastimes, food, history, art and cultural traditions.
- Explore why Tigers are important in Chinese culture, what they represent, including in the Chinese zodiac, and where and why they appear in prominent Chinese art, literature and as motifs.
- Investigate what other food is grown in China and why the climate is suitable for tea and these other foods.
- Look at the history of tea and investigate the *Camellia sinensis* – the plant that tea comes from. They can draw and describe it, and find out how tea travelled from China and other countries to the UK and other parts of the world.
- Find out about other prominent children's authors and illustrators with Chinese heritage such as Yijing Li, Maisie Chan, X Fang, Eva Wong Nava, Xin Li, Kevin Tsang, Polly Ho-Yen, and Maple Lam.



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