

ME AND MISTER P

WRITTEN BY
MARIA FARRER

ILLUSTRATED BY
DANIEL RIELEY

Oxford
Children's
Books

READING NOTES, DISCUSSION IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES FOR EXPLORING *ME AND MISTER P: JOE'S NEW WORLD* BY MARIA FARRER AND DANIEL RIELEY

There are times when only a **polar bear** will do . . .

So Mum and Dad have decided we're moving house, but not just down the road, not even in the same town . . . not even in the same COUNTRY! Not only that, but now they expect me to try and fit in and make new friends. Don't they understand that I just want my old friends who love and accept me the way I am—bad jokes and all.

It would seem that the only friend I CAN make is this enormous POLAR BEAR who has come to stay. I didn't ask for him, but I ended up with him at the airport instead of my missing suitcase . . .

Meet Joe, who is trying to adapt to his new life. And meet Mister P, the world's most helpful(ish) polar bear!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maria Farrer lives in a small village in the Yorkshire Dales with her husband and her very spoilt dog. She used to live on a small farm in New Zealand with a flock of sheep, a herd of cows, two badly behaved pigs, and a budgie that sat on her head while she wrote. She trained as a speech therapist and teacher, and later she completed an MA in Writing for Young People.

She loves language and enjoys reading and writing books for children of all ages. She likes to ride her bike to the top of steep hills so she can hurtle back down again as fast as possible. She also loves mountains, snow, and adventure, and one day she dreams of going to the Arctic to see polar bears in the wild.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Daniel Rieley is a British freelance illustrator based in Lisbon. After studying at The Arts Institute, Bournemouth, undertaking an epic backpacking adventure in Australia, and working for three years in London, he decided to take off to sunny Portugal. For the past few years, Daniel has been working on several illustration projects, from advertising, print, and card design to children's books.

When Daniel is not drawing, you can probably find him trying to catch waves, taking photos with old cameras, or playing his newly discovered sport, Padel.



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Here are three more stories about Mister P that we think you'll love . . .

ME AND MISTER P

All I want is a normal family but no, I've ended up with the brother from Weirddsville. Liam is so embarrassing, but Mum and Dad can't see that and give him all the attention. Leaving me with zero! Zilch! A big fat NOTHING!

And I'm not really sure how an enormous, funny, clumsy polar bear is going to help with all this, but he was standing on the doorstep, so I had to invite him to stay, didn't I? Well, what would you have done?



ME AND MISTER P: RUBY'S STAR

Our flat isn't big, but at least it's high up. I can stand on the balcony and look up at the stars. I reckon Dad's out there somewhere looking up too. And I bet he's thinking about me. I do love Mum and Leo but it's hard work looking after both of them and sometimes I wish things were a bit easier.

What's NOT easy is a ridiculous, annoying, in-your-face, POLAR BEAR moving in! I mean, what use is HE going to be? I've tried to get rid of him, but he seems very determined to stay . . .



ME AND MISTER P: MAYA'S STORM

Gran and me. The beach and the sea. This is my home now—with my new family at Lighthouse Cottages. It wasn't easy at first but Gran helped to make everything OK. She's getting a bit forgetful these days and everyone looks worried. I know better though and I think she's fine . . .

But now an enormous polar bear has washed up on our beach and decided to make himself at home. How on earth am I supposed to keep him and Gran out of trouble?



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For teachers and reading groups

Here are some ideas for children's discussions and activities, including research, creative writing, art, and further reading.

BOOKTALKING

INTRODUCING EACH BOOK

Talk about the cover and the blurb, say **'here's a taste of what's to come'**, and read the first pages aloud to introduce the story and the main characters.














Then read the book all the way through—it's a great story for reading aloud and sharing together. Stop every so often to talk about what's happening.

BOOK-TALK QUESTIONS

Share what you think about the book.

If you're in a group or class, use lots of open questions to get people talking about their feelings and responses to the story, the characters, and the writing.

Here are some questions you might use:

-  How did you feel when reading this book? And how did you feel when you'd finished it?
-  Which parts of the story do you remember most?
-  Did you skip any parts? Which parts?
-  Was there anything that took you by surprise?
-  Were there any parts that didn't make sense to you?
-  Did any parts make you laugh or cry? Which parts?
-  What was the thing you most liked finding out from the book?
-  What kind of book did you think it was going to be?
-  Did you feel swept up by this story, all the time wanting to know what happened next?
-  Did you want to stop and start, or did you want to read it all through in one go?
-  Are there parts you want to read over again?
-  If you gave up on this book, can you say why?
-  Has reading the book got you thinking about things, or wanting to find out more about things?

More things to talk about that link directly to the story:

A new world

'Hello new world, here I am,' he shouted. (p28)

Joe's family are moving to America for his Dad's new job.

Have you moved to a new house, a new town, or a new school? Or maybe to a new country—or all of these things?

How did you feel at first? How about after a few weeks?

What kind of things did you or other people do to help you feel good and to make the most of these changes in your life?

Feeling an outsider

He knew going to live in another country made you an outsider and starting at a new school made you an outsider. That made him a double outsider . . . treble if you counted the wheelchair. (p57)

How might you make someone feel welcome when they are new at your school? Are you, or do you know someone who is, a wheelchair user? What might make things difficult for a wheelchair user when they start at a new school, and what might be helpful? What helps Joe in this story?

Home—and belonging

. . . this wasn't his cosy, lived-here-forever-smelling room at home and nothing could change that. (p45)

What makes a place feel like home to you? Is it to do with the house itself, the things in it, or the people there? Is it also about feeling that you belong somewhere?

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'Five reasons why Mister P is THE best friend to have'

When you've read the book, have a look again at these five reasons—they are right at the beginning.

For each of these reasons, think of something that happens in the story that shows what a good friend Mister P is.

... it wasn't things that really mattered. It was people – friends. (p70)

What makes a good friend? Think of the friendships you have: what helps to make them work?

Mister P

'I think the time has come for Mister P to move on,' he said. 'I suppose we knew he wasn't going to stay for ever.' (p258)

This is what Joe's Dad says when a man comes to collect Mister P to take him to the port and on to another adventure.

Why do you think Mister P came to stay with Joe and his family? And why does Dad eventually think that it's time for him to move on?

Think of at least three times in the story when Mister P helps Joe or gets him to see things from a fresh point of view.

Do you know any other stories, or films, where someone arrives into a family, changes their lives for the better, and then moves on?

For Joe it's a bear, rather than a person, who comes to help—would you like Mister P to join your family and be your friend? What would you do together?

Can you think of more stories where a bear, or another animal, is someone's best friend?



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Paws for thought

When Joe finds it hard to deal with the changes in his life, he is able to get help from his Mum and Dad, his friends' emails, and, of course, from Mister P.

Here are some of the things they help him with. Have a look at where they fit into the story. What do you think about them? Are there times when you've had some of these feelings and thoughts?



Hiding from things

He understood what it was like to want to hide from things that frightened you. He also knew that hiding wasn't the answer. (p83)



Trying

If you don't try, you'll never know. (p105)



Life can be a juggling act

That was what life felt like sometimes, Joe decided. A juggling act. (p169)



Give time to get to know people

Don't judge people too quickly. (p101)



Changing

My mum says we can't always expect the world to change just to suit us, so sometimes we have to change to suit the world. (p171)



Go with the flow

*We can't control everything in life. (p225)
He'd go with the flow. (p250)*



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Me and Mister P: the chapter headings

Every chapter heading in this book is a pair of rhyming words.

What are the main things in each chapter that these headings refer to?

You could chat about this as you read the book, and jot down your thoughts in the boxes below.

1. SURVIVAL AND ARRIVAL	2. OUT AND ABOUT
3. HERE AND THERE	4. SHOPPING AND DROPPING
5. NEWS AND VIEWS	6. TIPS AND TRIPS
7. PLAYING AND PAYING	8. CROWDS AND CLOUDS
9. FEARS AND TEARS	10. UKES AND NUKES
11. LAKES AND FLAKES	12. LIFTS AND DRIFTS
13. DRILLS, THRILLS, & SPILLS	14. DRIFTS AND RIFTS
15. LIGHT AND FLIGHT	16. STARTING & DEPARTING
17. ENDS AND FRIENDS	

Artwork © Daniel Rieley

Me and Mister P: Activities

Arctic quiz

Have a look at a map of the world and see where the Arctic region is.

Then have a go at this quiz—it's about the Arctic and polar bears, and for your answer you need to choose **a, b, or c** in each question. N.B. One of these questions can have two answers.



Where is the Arctic?

- a. The South Pole
- b. The North Pole
- c. The Equator



What do you think the weather in the Arctic is like?

- a. Rainy
- b. Hot
- c. Cold



What kinds of animals live in the Arctic?

- a. Polar bears and snowshoe hares
- b. Crocodiles and alligators
- c. Penguins



How do you think the animals keep warm?

- a. They race around all the time
- b. They stay sheltered in their homes all the time
- c. Their bodies have a thick layer of fat and thick fur



What do polar bears eat?

- a. Ice cream
- b. Mostly seals, and sometimes bird's eggs
- c. Hot chocolate



What are some of the threats to the polar bear?

- a. Climate change and melting ice
- b. Tornadoes
- c. Being hunted

(The answers are at the end!)



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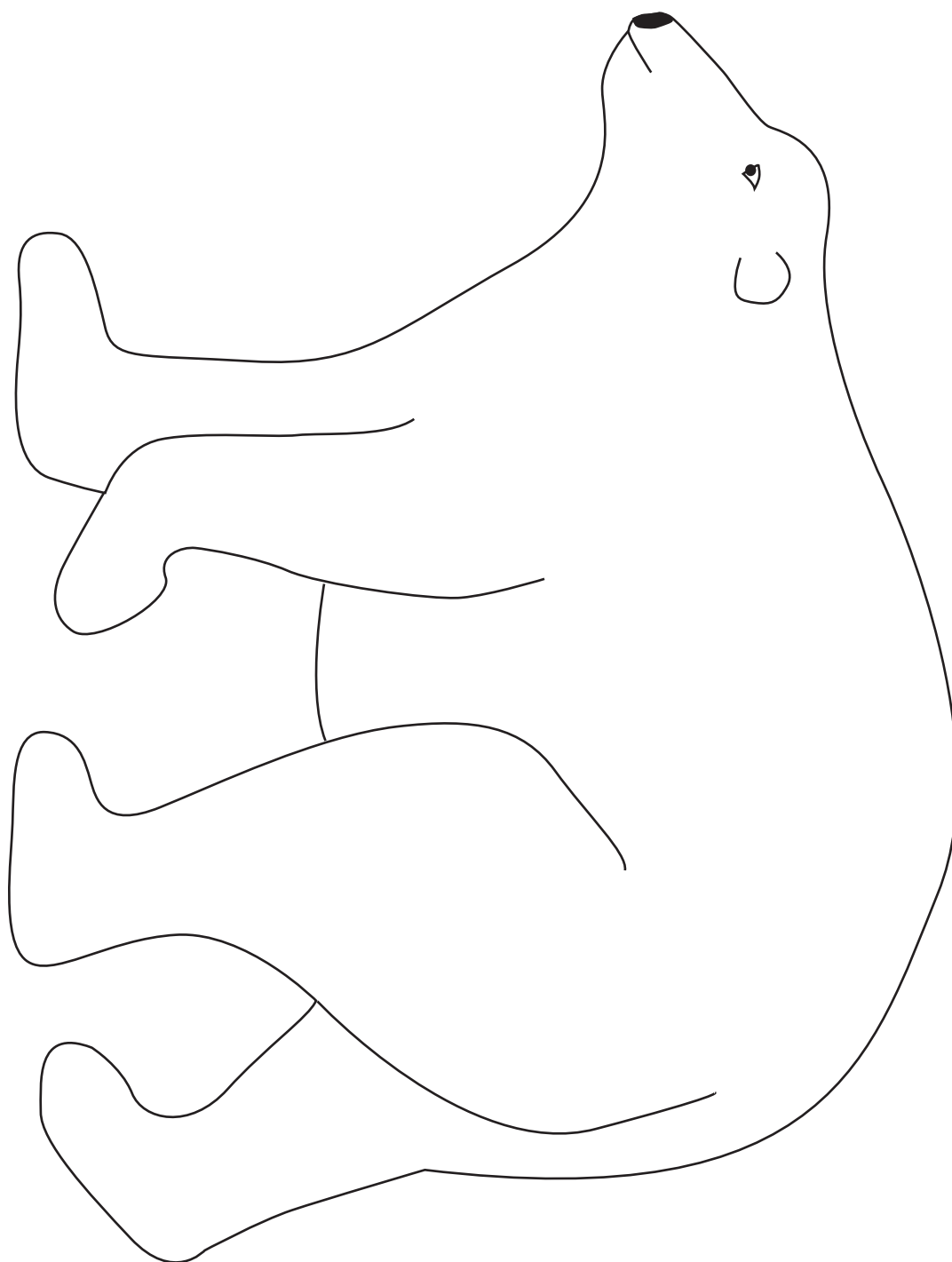
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A fact-filled polar bear!

Use this outline of a polar bear or draw your own.

Fill it with as many facts as you can find out about polar bears, including the ones you have learned from the **Polar bear quiz**.



Artwork © Daniel Rieley

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There's a bear in the house!

What would it be like to have a polar bear like Mister P living in your house?!

What would you give him to eat? What games would you play with him?

Would your house be warm enough? Or would it be too warm? Where would he sleep?

A new best friend!

What animal would you choose to be a best friend?

You could either fantasise and imagine something amazing like a polar bear or a tiger, or think about real life and an animal that could be a pet, such as a cat or a dog or a hamster.



MY ANIMAL BEST FRIEND

The animal I would choose as a best friend would be

Name of animal:

Brief description:

It would be great to have this animal as a best friend because:



Here's a picture of what my animal best friend looks like:

Artwork © Daniel Rieley

Make a foam finger!

A foam finger is a giant glove made of foam. Mister P and the supporters of the Belton Bears ice hockey players wear these to show their support for their team. (See p116)

You could use this template (you may need to enlarge it) to make your own foam finger. You could use fairly thin foam, making two identical pieces and gluing them together to make a glove.

Or you could make one from card and fix it to a stick, which you could then wave as you cheer on your team!



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Words and writing activities

Cut off by the snow!

Imagine that a snow storm has blocked all the roads to your house.

You have no electricity—and no polar bear to help you!

Once it's over and the electricity and internet are back, what would you say in an email to your friends, telling them all about it?

🐾 Who was in the house with you? Or were you alone?

🐾 For how long were you cut off?

🐾 What did it feel like?

🐾 What did you do?

🐾 What did you eat?

Get some ideas from **Mister P's Snow Storm Survival Guide** at the end of the book.

Your ten worst jokes ever!

Lame jokes were Joe's speciality. In times of crisis, everyone relied on him to come up with a terrible joke. (p9)



Find some of Joe's jokes in this story (e.g. p227), and try them out on your friends and family!

What are your ten worst jokes ever!

Collect together your favourite jokes: your own, plus jokes from your friends and ones that you like from joke books. (You can borrow these from the library.) Then **make your own joke book!**

Or get together and have a **joke-telling party**. Don't forget refreshments—maybe biscuits and hot chocolate?!

The street where you live

Dotted around were tall pine trees with silvery green needles and Joe supposed that's where the name 'Pinewood Avenue' came from. (p34)

What is your street called? See if you can find out how it got its name.

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Words and writing activities

Words, words, words!

Here are some words from *Me and Mister P* that may be new to you.

Find out their meaning, and then fit each of them into one of the sentences below.

The first sentence is done for you to show you how this works.

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| A. hypothermia | F. security |
| B. essentials | G. potential |
| C. silhouetted | H. transformed |
| D. adapting | I. assess |
| E. humongous | J. buffeting |

1. She had a **humongous** appetite and would eat everything on her plate.
2. He had only a thin jacket, and it was so cold he was afraid he would suffer from _____
3. She checked in with her friend to _____ whether he was fit to travel.
4. Being with her dad gave her a sense of _____, of feeling safe and protected.
5. Food and drink are two _____ for life.
6. The castle was _____ against the sky, its dark outline showing clearly on the horizon.
7. When he smiled the boy was _____ into a different person.
8. They wore thick fleeces to protect them from the _____ of the wind.
9. His playing showed great _____, and he was likely to be picked for the first team.
10. He was not good at _____ to things, and it took a while for him to get used to his new school.

(The answers are at the end!)

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More reading

MORE BOOKS ABOUT MISTER P BY MARIA FARRER & DANIEL RIELEY

	<i>Me and Mister P</i>	OUP	9780192744210
	<i>Me and Mister P: Ruby's Star</i>	OUP	9780192766519
	<i>Me and Mister P: Maya's Storm</i> (publ. Aug 2019)	OUP	9780192766557

BOOKS ABOUT BEARS

Michael Bond & Peggy Fortnum	<i>A Bear Called Paddington</i>	HarperCollins	9780007174164
Gill Lewis	<i>Moon Bear</i>	OUP	9780192793546
Bill Martin Jr & Eric Carle	<i>Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?</i> (board book)	Puffin	9780141383514
A. A. Milne & E. H. Shepard	<i>Winnie-the-Pooh</i>	Egmont	9781405280839
Philip Pullman	<i>Northern Lights</i> (Bear – Iorek Byrnison)	Scholastic	9781407130224
Nicola Davies & Gary Blythe	<i>Ice Bear</i>	Walker Books	9781406364644
Jackie Morris	<i>The Ice Bear</i>	Graffeg Limited	9781912050468

SNOW

Abi Elphinstone (ed.)	<i>Winter Magic</i> (short stories)	Simon & Schuster	9781471159824
Piers Torday	<i>There May Be a Castle</i>	Quercus	9781784292744
Jeanne Willis & Jarvis	<i>Poles Apart</i>	Nosy Crow	9780857634931

BRINGING HELP AND FRIENDSHIP

Christianna Brand & Edward Ardizzone	<i>The Collected Tales of Nurse Matilda</i>	Bloomsbury	9780747576792
Roald Dahl	<i>The BFG</i>	Puffin	9780141365428
Kate DiCamillo	<i>Because of Winn-Dixie</i>	Walker Books	9781406357622
Michael Morpurgo & Christian Birmingham	<i>The Butterfly Lion</i>	HarperCollins	9780006751038
P. L. Travers	<i>Mary Poppins</i>	HarperCollins	9780007286416
E. B. White	<i>Charlotte's Web</i>	Puffin	9780141354828

DIVERSITY

Ellen Oh (ed.)	<i>Flying Lessons & Other Stories</i>	Crown Books	9781101934593
Michael Foreman	<i>Seal Surfer</i>	Andersen	9781842705780
James Patterson & Chris Grabenstein	<i>I Funny: A Middle School Story</i> (wheelchair user and joker!)	Arrow	9781784750145

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Some web links about polar bears

World Wildlife Fund

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/polar-bear>

National Geographic

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/animals/general-animals/polar-bear-facts>

Dorling Kindersley

<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/animals-and-nature/bears/polar-bear>

Answers

Quiz

1b, 2c, 3a (penguins are found in the Antarctic), 4c, 5b, 6a & c

Words, words, words

1E, 2A, 3I, 4F, 5B, 6C, 7H, 8J, 9G, 10D