



Billie B. Brown: The Big Sister

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Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Write a short story.
- Explore ways of managing negative emotions.
- Design and label a toy.
- Rewrite a segment of the story from an alternative perspective.

About the Story:

Billie is excited about becoming a big sister and she's gathered some of her baby things to pass on to the new baby, including her favorite teddy, Mr. Fred. But when the time comes for the baby to arrive, Billie suddenly feels all jumbled up inside and not so sure that she is ready to part with Mr. Fred. One smile from her baby brother puts some of those jumbled feelings to rest, and Billie comes to the conclusion that being a big sister may well be fun after all. Billie also learns that being a big sister doesn't mean that she can't keep some of the baby things that give her the comfort she still needs.

Before You Read the Story:

Read the title of the book aloud. Survey students about their position in the family. Ask those who are big brothers or sisters how they felt when their sibling was born. Invite students to comment on the good and bad aspects of being a big brother or sister. Turn to the back cover and read the blurb aloud. Direct the question asked in the blurb to students – is it true that big brothers and sisters don't need teddies? Invite students to elaborate on their answer.

Questions and Activities:

Chapter One

- Billie is going to be a big sister. How does she feel about that?
- Why does Billie plan to give the baby her favorite teddy?
- What else does Billie have ready to pass on to the baby?

Activity: Return to page 3 and review some of the things that were kept from when Billie was a baby. Ask students whether they have any baby items in storage. Send a request home with students to find a baby photo and a keepsake and talk about it with their parents. At school, have students share their baby keepsakes, then have them use their baby photos as inspiration to write a short story in response to the sentence starter, "When I was a baby ..."

Chapter Two

- The baby is arriving but Billie has decided that she doesn't want a silly baby anymore. Explain why Billie feels this way.
- Who does Billie stay with while the baby is being born?
- Lying in Jack's dark bedroom, what does Billie suddenly want and why?



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Activity: Observe that Billie relies on Mr. Fred as a source of comfort. Ask students if they have a toy like Billie or something else that they like to go to when they need some comfort. Then list some negative emotions on the board including sad, scared, worried, hurt, angry, and ask students to comment on how they manage that feeling. Have the students create a book with the title, "When I am ...," about how they manage their feelings. Encourage answers such as, "When I am scared I hug someone I love;" "When I am angry I go for a long walk;" "When I am hurt I talk to a friend." Invite students to share and discuss their responses.

Chapter Three

- Billie's tummy feels a bit like a milkshake. What are some of the things Billie feels right now?
- Billie has misplaced Mr. Fred. Do you remember where he is?
- Billie tells her dad she wants to be a baby rather than a big girl. Why might Billie feel this way?

Activity: Note that at this stage of the story, Billie can't find Mr. Fred anywhere. Ask students if they can help Billie come up with an alternative present for her baby brother. Make a brief list of some ideal baby toys before assessing the qualities and features of these toys that make them ideal baby toys. With these qualities and features in mind, invite students to design a baby toy for Noah. Instruct students to label their design and provide a brief description on how it "works."

Chapter Four

- When Billie first arrives at the hospital, what is she most interested in doing?
- What is Billie's first impression of baby Noah?
- As Billie leaves the hospital, she whispers goodbye to Noah. What happens next that makes Billie feel so proud?

Activity: Ask students to consider the events in the story from Mr. Fred's perspective. Help students to identify the events that may have been relevant to Mr. Fred. Events might include: when Billie decided to give him to the baby; when Billie left him in the garden; when Jack found him; when he was reunited with Billie; when Billie decided to keep him for herself; when Billie gave him a well-deserved bath; or when Billie bought baby Noah a bear of his own. Choose one of these events and model how to rewrite that event from Mr. Fred's perspective.

Teacher Tips adapted from Hardie Grant Egmont.