

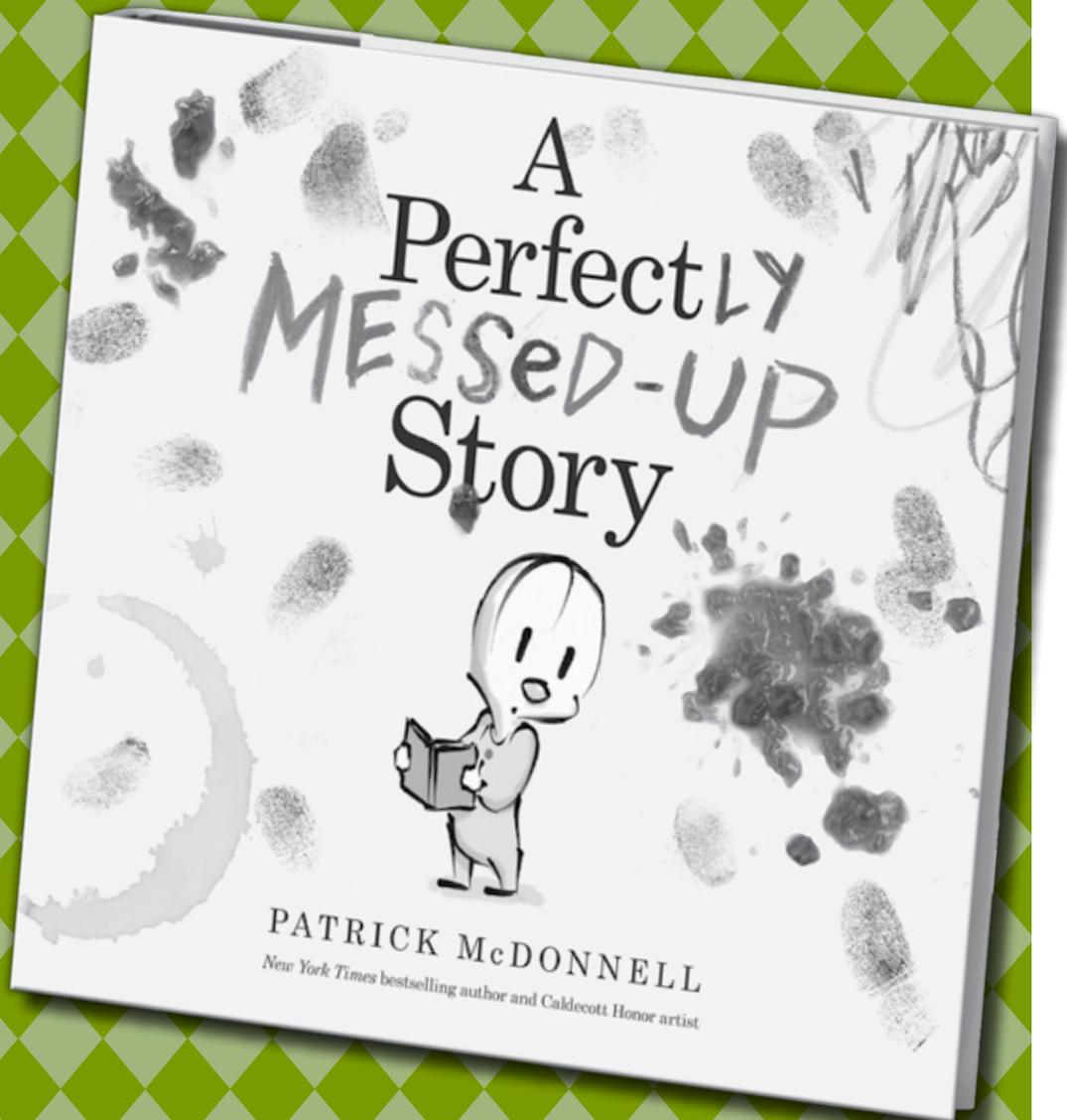
A PerfectLY MESSEd-UP Story



Curriculum connections

- ❖ Art
- ❖ Character Education
- ❖ Writing

Ages: 3 to 6



BY PATRICK McDONNELL

MUSIC

Guess My Song

As Louie skipped merrily along, he sang a song using only the words “Tra la la”. Can you sing a song without any real words? Ask students to think of their favorite song and practice singing it using only the words “Tra la la”. These songs can be simple songs that everyone knows or even pop songs that can be heard on the radio. Then ask students to sing their song in front of the class and see if their classmates can guess the name of the song. The first student to guess correctly can be next in turn to sing their song.



SCIENCE

Comparisons/Graphing

Louie is faced with a giant splatter of peanut butter, and it sure looks delicious. Review with the class the two types of peanut butter – chunky and smooth. Conduct an experiment that allows them to test the properties of each of these peanut butters. Divide the class into pairs and give them a sample of both chunky and smooth peanut butter. Ask them to examine the properties of each one – which one is more spreadable, which is thicker, how does it feel in their mouth, etc. Then set up a bar graph that will analyze which peanut butter students like best. Have each student draw an X in either the chunky or smooth column and discuss the results. For older students, you can spend time

comparing the nutrition labels and create a graph that analyzes the healthiness of each peanut butter. *Sun Butter can be used as a substitute

Fingerprints

Louie’s story was interrupted by a series of fingerprints. But what is a fingerprint? Review the basics of fingerprints including how they are made (natural oils on our skin are left behind when we touch things), focusing on the fact that each person has one that is unique. Pass out magnifying glasses and allow students to look closely at the tips of their fingers. Then have them press their fingertips into an ink pad and make prints onto a piece of paper. Using the magnifying glass, have them identify unique features of their fingerprints. Review the three basic features of a fingerprint – an arch, a loop, and a whirl – and show them pictures of each. Have them draw red arrows pointing to these features on their fingerprints.

LITERATURE

Be Inspiring

As Louie says, books are important because they teach and inspire. What book teaches and inspires you? Ask students to select a book that inspires them and create a sales pitch in order to convince the class to read the book. They can use props, scripts, or the book itself and can present their sales pitch via video or in person. They should consider techniques of persuasive writing as well. Once everyone has presented, the class can do a silent vote on which book they have been inspired to read.

Recycling

Everyone has books that they love but may not read anymore, perhaps because they are stained or have a torn page. But according to Louie, it can still be a pretty good story! Hold a class book swap and ask students to bring in books that they are willing to share with their friends. Set up the classroom according to genre and allow students to “shop” for books they are interested in reading. Books can be on loan for one week or longer... just enough time for them to be loved!

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ART

Scribble Drawings

Art doesn't always have to be perfect. Sometimes a scribble can become a beautiful piece of art! Ask students to close their eyes and use a black marker to draw loops, curves, zigzags and whatever else comes to mind on a piece of paper. When they open their eyes, they should have a scribble outline. They can then color all of the open spaces using a variety of markers, crayons, etc. This can also be done as stained glass – cut out the larger outline of the black marker scribble and fill in the open spaces using colored tissue paper.

Get It Wet

Turn one masterpiece into a new masterpiece with just a little water! Ask students to use a variety of markers to draw a picture on a piece of paper. Then use a spray bottle to get their paper wet. Observe what happens to the marker when the water touches it. It should start to run, which will create a new piece of art. They can even use paper towels to rub the water around their drawing, just like in the book!

WRITING

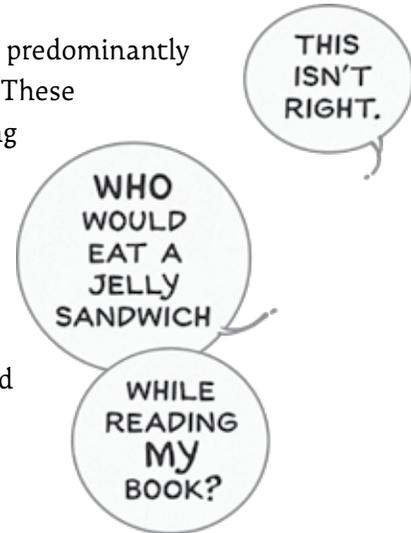
Onomatopoeia

An onomatopoeia is a “sound” word. Louie uses onomatopoeias such as sniff and plop. Ask students to think of other sound words and create a giant class list to post on the wall. Challenge them to use these words in their next writing assignment.



Speech Bubbles

The dialogue in this story is predominantly made up of speech bubbles. These convey words as representing the speech and thoughts of the main character, Louie. This type of writing is most characteristic of comic strips. Ask students to think of a funny story and create a comic strip using speech bubbles. It can be as simple as how they got to school that day or as intricate as a recent baseball game. They can illustrate their comic strip to match the dialogue, and when they are all finished the strips can be bound into a class comic book.



Change in Perspective

Louie's story is continuously interrupted by spills, prints, and scribbles. Who is the person reading the book that is making all of this mess? Ask students to change their perspective and think about the story from the reader's point of view. They should consider the following questions:

- Who is the reader?
- Where are they reading the book?
- What are they doing while they are reading?
- How do they feel about making a mess of their book?

Then have students write “A Perfectly Messed-Up Story” using the reader's perspective. Allow time for students to read their new stories aloud to the class so that they can see how many different perspectives there can be!

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Emotions Color Wheel

Louie experiences a variety of emotions throughout the book. Ask students to create an emotions color wheel that illustrates all of the things he is feeling. Draw a template with a large circle divided into five sections. Discuss with your students how Louie is feeling throughout the book – angry, frustrated, happy, sad, and excited. Label each of the five sections with these feelings and have students illustrate each one. Then attach a spinner in the center of the circle using a paper arrow, hole puncher, and paper fastener. Read the book again to the class and ask them to point the arrow at the correct section of their color wheel as Louie’s feelings change. They can even keep these color wheels at their desk to help explain how they are feeling throughout the day!

Feelings Collage

While Louie goes through different emotions in the book, he finds a variety of ways to make himself feel better. Engage your students in a discussion about what they do to make themselves feel better when they are feeling angry, frustrated, sad, and lonely. Then have them make a feelings collage. Divide a piece of paper into four sections and ask them to cut out letters from magazines to spell the emotions at the top of each section. In each box, they should cut out pictures of things they do to make themselves feel better. For example, a student may read a book to make them feel better when they are lonely, or listen to music when they are sad. Ask students to share their collages with the class and then post them in the classroom so that others can get ideas of things they can do to make them feel happy!



Nothing is Perfect

Louie eventually realized that nothing is perfect and that life is good. This is always important to remember! There are lots of common expressions that can be used to say nothing is perfect:

- Roll with the punches
- Make lemonade out of lemons
- Play the game
- Swim with the tide
- Wipe the slate clean
- Pay no mind
- Grin and bear it
- Go with the flow

Discuss the meaning of each of these expressions and ask students to share situations when they realized that nothing is perfect. Then play a game of charades and have students act out each of these sayings. You can also make it a completely silent game by giving students a set of sentence strips to write the sayings on. Then they can hold up the correct sentence strip when they think they know the answer during the game.

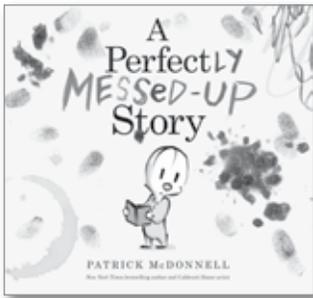
Never Give Up!

Everyone has had to do something that was hard for them, where having a “never give up” attitude was essential, just like Louie who had to work hard and overcome obstacles to make it through his story. Ask students to think about a time that they had to work hard to accomplish something and never gave up while trying, no matter how many times they failed or faltered. Then host an “I Never Gave Up” day in your classroom and ask students to bring in or show off their accomplishment. For example, a student may have learned to ride a bike and can demonstrate this skill on the playground. Allow students an opportunity to teach others their skill, always reminding them never to give up!

A PerfectLY MESSED-UP Story



about the book



A PERFECTLY MESSED-UP STORY

by Patrick McDonnell

HC 978-0-316-22258-7

Also available in downloadable ebook formats

In this interactive and engaging read-aloud, bestselling author and award-winning artist Patrick McDonnell creates a funny, engaging, and almost perfect story about embracing life's messes.

Little Louie's story keeps getting messed up, and he's not happy about it! What's the point of telling his tale if he can't tell it perfectly? But when he stops and takes a deep breath, he realizes that everything is actually just fine, and his story is a good one – imperfections and all.

- ★ "A playful, funny and friendly treatment of anxiety and life's unpredictable messes."
— Kirkus Reviews, starred review
- ★ "Louie's exaggerated reactions to the growing mess will trigger laughs with every page turn. Yet McDonnell (*The Monsters' Monster*) excels at reminding his characters—and readers—that it's possible to keep it together even when life has jelly all over it."— Publishers Weekly, starred review

about the author



Photo © Michael Keel

Patrick McDonnell is the creator of *The Monsters' Monster*, a *New York Times* bestseller; *Me...Jane*, a Caldecott Honor Book and a *New York Times* bestselling picture book biography of Dr. Jane Goodall; and the award-winning picture book *Art*. He is also the creator of the beloved, internationally syndicated comic strip *Mutts*, which features the characters that star in five of his previous picture books including *Wag!*, *The Gift of Nothing*, *Just Like Heaven*, *Hug Time*, and *South*. Patrick sits on the board of directors of the Humane Society of the United States and has won numerous awards for both *Mutts* and his animal welfare work. He lives in New Jersey with his wife, Karen.

