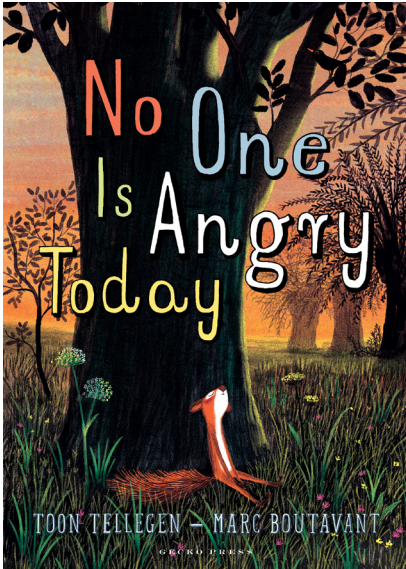


## TEACHER NOTES

# No One Is Angry Today

Toon Tellegen & Marc Boutavant



Resources for teachers working with children aged 6–12 years

## Synopsis

As they navigate the ups and downs of friendship and grapple with life's big questions, the animals in this intriguing collection of short stories discover that finding your way in the world can be tricky—even when your friends are helping you—and there may not be an answer.

*Is it possible to see the world through someone else's eyes? What should we do when things don't make sense? And why do we get confused about our feelings?*

Whether they're being kind and supportive, a little bit envious, or downright mad, bad and dangerous to know, these unlikely sparring partners muddle through and emerge, if not enlightened, at least not too downcast. Their valiant attempts to make sense of an uncertain world are full of wisdom, humour and charm, and will strike a chord with readers of all ages.

Toon Tellegen's intriguing collection of light-touch stories provokes curiosity, stimulates debate, and encourages us to deal with uncertainty by trusting our ability to 'think things through'.

*No One Is Angry Today* is a companion volume to *The Day No One Was Angry*, and is illustrated throughout with charming and expressive artwork by Marc Boutavant.

These teaching notes and activities have been prepared for children aged 6–12 years, and can be adapted or augmented to suit your needs.

## Themes

Our feelings can change quickly, and it's hard to know what's going on in our own heads, let alone other people's. But the animals in these stories want to understand their emotional

landscape and although their efforts don't always deliver an answer, they do seem to bring their own rewards.

Each story stands alone and can be independently explored, but there are key themes running throughout.

### **Understanding our emotions**

Our feelings change and may be hard to interpret, but it's worth trying. From contentment and joy to misery and aggression, these stories address a wide variety of emotions, but anger in its many guises predominates.

### **The benefits and challenges of friendship**

Friendships come in many forms and don't have to be perfect. The friends in these stories can be supportive, but sometimes they provoke each other—and sometimes their interactions don't look friendly, even when they are!

### **Dealing with uncertainty**

These unusual stories don't tell us everything—we help to shape them by imagining possibilities and asking questions. But our daily lives are complex and deliver unexpected challenges, so the skills we learn by engaging with these characters and their dilemmas will help us navigate the real world, too.

## Talking about this book

The stories in this book are open-ended and don't provide ready answers. As a result, they stimulate curiosity and independent thinking, and make great starting points for group discussion.

Talking about these stories in a respectful, supportive and open-ended way helps children

*listen and observe more effectively*

*form opinions and express them*

*consider other points of view*

*understand that their own experience does not apply to everyone*

*deal with complexity or uncertainty*

*gain confidence*

Below are some general discussion starters suitable for a wide age range. Notes are given to help you consider aspects of each question, but children will come up with plenty of their own ideas!

### **Discussion starters**

Does it matter if we don't understand everything in these stories?

*The world is complicated and keeps changing, so it's important to ask our own questions and not rely on what we're told*

*Many things are unpredictable or unknown, and although this can feel challenging, it may not be a problem*

*Despite the uncertainty of an unpredictable world, we can still be happy and contented*

*Living with uncertainty doesn't mean we should stop trying to understand*

*Not every story has to have a moral*

Is it possible to understand how someone else feels?

*There's usually another way of looking at things*

*Understanding how other people experience the world is challenging, but worth exploring*

*We can be friends with people who see the world differently. We don't need to be the same*

Do these stories have happy endings? And does it matter if they don't?

*Where does a story end? The page runs out of words, but maybe the story continues*

*We don't expect happy endings in real life*

What do these stories tell us about communicating with other people?

*There are many ways of communicating*

*Some methods seem to work better than others*

*We have choices about how we communicate (and how we react)*

What do these stories tell us about our feelings?

*Understanding how we're feeling can be difficult*

*Sometimes we get our emotions muddled up*

*Anger comes in different forms, and there are different ways of expressing it*

*We may experience the same emotions differently*

*Anger can be a positive force*

What do these stories tell us about friendship?

*Being a good friend can be hard work*

*People have different ideas about friendship*

*We may not understand (or approve of) everything our friends do*

*Friendships don't have to be perfect*

*Offering—and accepting—support is important*

*Everyone brings something to a community*

## Building on your reading experience

In this section you'll find activity suggestions to help you explore Toon Tellegen's story world and build cross-curricular learning opportunities based on your experiences.

### Activities focusing on friendship

Find examples in these stories of the animals being good friends and helping each other.

Do any of their actions surprise you? Is it easy to be a good friend, do you think?

Make a poster about friendship to help the animals in this book. Will you advise them on how to be a good friend, or warn them about actions you think they should avoid? It's up to you!

#### With older children

Re-read Cricket's letter. How do you think he was feeling as he wrote it? What are Bear's faults, according to Cricket? Why doesn't he want Bear at his party? How might Bear feel when he receives this letter?

In pairs, roleplay Bear and Cricket interacting in one of the ways described. For example, Bear falling asleep and snoring while Cricket gives a speech. Show back and discuss.

How would you describe Bear's actions? What do they tell us about him? Do you think his actions are evidence of serious wrongdoing?

Could you find a kinder way for Cricket to describe his friend's behaviour?

Do we have to like everything about our friends? Should we tell them when they upset us, or keep our feelings to ourselves?

**Extend** Roleplay the two friends interacting at Cricket's birthday party, then write a story about the event.

## Activities focusing on the characters

Choose an illustration. Which characters can you see in this picture? What are they doing? What can they see, hear, smell and touch? What could they be thinking and feeling?

How are these characters standing and moving? Copy their postures. What facial expressions can you see? Copy them, too!

What does the text tell us about these characters? Do we learn anything from this picture that isn't mentioned in the text?

### Role on the Wall

On a large sheet of paper, draw an outline representing one of these characters.

Inside your outline, write words and phrases to describe how this character is feeling.

Outside it, write words and phrases to describe how the other creatures feel about this character.

*You could work as a class, or assign different characters to groups.*

*Younger children could draw their ideas as well as writing them.*

### 'At Home' with Marc Boutavant's characters

Look at the pictures of the animals inside their houses. Why do you think Marc Boutavant chose these particular settings and objects? What do these rooms tell us about their occupants?

Use text and pictures to collect evidence about a character in this book. Based on what you've discovered, invent five additional pieces of information about them.

Draw your character at home, in a room that tells us lots about them. Write a description of your character—and the room you've drawn for them.

## Activities focusing on better communication

In these stories, how do the animals communicate?

For example, they *talk, shout, frown, write letters*

Which methods of communication lead to good outcomes?

Which show the animals communicating in ways that make things worse?

Look at the picture of Firebelly Toad facing up to Hedgehog. Copy their postures.

How do you think they're feeling? Roleplay their meeting as described in this story.

Then rework it to create a more productive dialogue!

### **With younger children**

Create a hands-on roleplay environment where children can give advice to a collection of toy animals. Provide comfortable seating and lucky-dip-style ‘problems’ for your counsellors to address. Invite children to choose a toy, take a problem and advise their client.

Counsellors could make notices and informative posters, or keep records for each client. And they’ll definitely need an appointment book!

*Children could also work in pairs, one playing the counsellor and the other speaking on behalf of their chosen toy.*

### **With older children**

In the final story, we’re not told the reason for the beetles’ argument or the content of their letters. Why do you think they’re so angry? Invent a back-story to explain their disagreement, and write a corresponding set of letters.

The pair might have found it easier if they’d talked. What could they have done or said to ensure their conversation went well? What should they have avoided doing or saying? Roleplay their discussion.

Has someone upset you by writing something? Has a message of yours ever been misunderstood? Have you had an argument via letter, text or email? Find some real-world examples to discuss.

Do we have to engage with everything? Say everything? Or should we sometimes hold back?

## Activities focusing on different viewpoints

### **With younger children**

Choose a story and talk about what happens. Can you summarise the main events?

Discuss this story from the point of view of two different characters. As events unfold, what do they think is going on? How do they feel? What questions do they have?

Draw each character. In a speech bubble, write a sentence in their own words telling everyone what’s happened and how they’re feeling about it. Share and discuss your work.

### **With older children**

Choose a story and summarise the main events.

Pin three strips of paper on the wall. On the central strip, create a vertical arrow diagram of your plot summary. If you’re exploring the first story, for example, you might start by writing

*Firebelly knocks on Hedgehog’s door*

*(down arrow)*

*Hedgehog lets Firebelly in*

*(down arrow)*

*Firebelly tears quills from Hedgehog’s back*

Discuss events from Firebelly’s point of view, then Hedgehog’s. What do they understand? How do they feel? What questions do they have?

On the left-hand strip, note how Firebelly feels as events unfold, and what he knows or understands. On the right hand strip, do the same for Hedgehog.

Do Firebelly and Hedgehog experience events differently? Does their understanding differ? Are there moments when their experiences or understanding match?

Ask half your class to write this story from Hedgehog's point of view, and half from Firebelly's. Share and discuss.

### **Extend**

What will happen if the animals arrest Firebelly for his crimes?

Take witness statements and question Firebelly about his motives. In role as judge, prosecutor, defence lawyer and witnesses, take Firebelly to court and try him.

Is he guilty or innocent? Should he be punished? What will the judge say about his actions?

## Activities focusing on anger

Who is angry in these stories? What makes them angry, and how do they respond?

Are some ways of responding better than others, do you think?

What makes you angry? How does it feel? Talk about your experience and reactions.

Can you think of occasions when it could be helpful to be angry? Find examples in these stories.

Follow up by drawing and labelling pictures of the things that make you angry. Write about how anger feels, and ways to deal with it.

### **Picturing anger**

In 'The Ant', Ant wakes to find "a big, round thing with rough, bristly arms" on the floor. What else do we learn about Anger's appearance and behaviour in this story?

Use sketchbooks to explore this character. What does Anger look like? How does it stand and move? Can you draw it running, or sitting in a comfy chair?

Make models of Anger from clay and found objects. Or stick cardboard onto red balloons and hang your Anger mobiles from the ceiling where they can't do any damage!

### **With older children**

Who is angry in this book, and how does their anger manifest itself?

Are all the characters angry in the same way?

Make a list, or record your answers on a table. For example

*Squirrel doesn't want to acknowledge his anger when his friend Ant leaves him, so feels miserable instead*

*Firebelly is violently angry, but doesn't seem to realise he's hurting people*

Can you find other words to substitute for angry in the examples you've identified?

For example, *frustrated, furious, irritated, rebellious*

Explore different ways of sorting your examples—for example, you could make card for each incident and sort them into groups, or colour-code them—then report back. How could you record your decisions? *For example, as a picture or diagram, on a table or graph, in writing*

Are some types of anger 'better' than others? Are we afraid of feeling angry? Can you think of other questions to discuss?

Write an article about anger for a magazine, using your own knowledge and experience, together with what you've learned from the book, this activity and your discussion.

## Extend

How do the animals deal with the different kinds of anger they encounter?  
Are some of these approaches more effective than others?

Write a recipe for staying calm and contented, whatever life throws at you!

## Activities focusing on other emotions

Some of the emotions in these stories are easier than others to identify. How many can you spot?

Younger children could work as a class, attaching sticky notes to the relevant pages.  
Older children could use 'I-Spy' sheets for independent research, or address more complex ideas and vocabulary.

Examples include *happiness, sadness, anger, pride, fear, fury, curiosity, joy, irritation, forgiveness, excitement, worry, envy, misery, loneliness, reflection, aggression, frustration, bitterness, jealousy, caution, confidence, tranquility, guilt, rejection, contentment, compassion, resentment, composure, exasperation, resignation, anxiety, responsibility, shame, defiance, remorse, inadequacy, denial, vulnerability, dominance, anticipation, acceptance, serenity, introspection, companionship*—but you'll find more!

Choose a set of emotions to explore in more depth. For example: *joy, worry, forgiveness*  
What have you discovered about these emotions from this book?  
Have you experienced these emotions? When, and why? How did you feel?

### Making your feelings visible

*"If his thoughts had been visible, they would have been so bright and glaring that anyone looking in his direction would have had to cover their eyes"* from 'The Scarab'

Make the feelings you've been exploring visible by creating a piece of abstract artwork for each one. Investigate colours and patterns using a range of media and marks, then use these approaches and effects to illustrate your chosen emotions.

### Finding your calm and contented 'special place'

In these stories, which animals seem happiest or most contented? Do they create these feelings for themselves, or do others help them? How?

If we asked these animals for tips on how to be happy, what would they tell us?

Look at the hanging decoration made from natural objects in Cricket's room. Can you spot anything else in these pictures that helps these animals relax? For example *comfy chairs, fresh air, leafy plants, books, a cosy rug*

Work together to create a beautiful, calm area. Use for mindfulness exercises, or as a place to relax and enjoy a book!

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#### For more information

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