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Pizza Bagel Sundays

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Pizza Bagel Sundays

By

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Childhood General Education and Literacy Specialization

Mentor:

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Master of Science in Education
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Abstract

Kate D'Auria worked on an independent study where she created her own children's book. The book is called *Pizza Bagel Sundays* and was illustrated by Yan Gabriella Peropat. *Pizza Bagel Sundays* is a memoir about her childhood and how she grew up in a single parent household. Though single parenting is one of the focuses of the book, it does have other themes such as family, love and how we spend time together. Research was done to see what other types of children's literature is out there and see where the book fit in. Look at the literature that was out there and developing the book, the audience was also considered when writing the story. The book's age range is recommended for six to eight year olds and was read aloud to a second grade class who later gave feedback and made personal connections to the story.

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Rationale

For my integrative master's project, I have selected to work on an independent study where I write a children's book. The decision came after I realized there was a missing niche in children's literature relating to single parent households. Though my book centers around my mother and I, the story itself does not explicitly mention a specific type of single parenting however, it is a representation on single parenting by choice. According to Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Edwards who are early childhood teachers and advocates for anti-bias in education, "Single parenting can be by choice or by life circumstances such as divorce or death" (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p.116). So though my book does not specify a particular single parent household it is a single parent by choice story. I do not focus on the particulars however, since I felt that it was not important to the overall story. Rather the book was about our time together and how special and rare it was that we actually had time together due to the fact that my mother was a single parent with a busy schedule. And as a result of wanting the emphasis to be on the time that a parent spends with their child regardless of the circumstances that led to it, the book evolved while I was writing. It became a story of involvement and how my mother and I spend our special day together rather than just being about single parenting. This shift in focus, I believe, opens up the scope for the audience. In addition to relating to single parenting, which a majority of children would have no experience to do so, many children can better connect to spending time together with someone special. Joanne Oppenheim who writes books for children and teacher/ parent resources talks about how "... books can offer a bridge to understanding that other people have problems, feelings, and experiences like their own"(Oppenheim, 1986, p.143). In her book, *Choosing Books for Kids*, Oppenheim talks about the sense that books give children about the similarities in their life and how others are going through related experiences. In this sense children have an easy way to connect to the books that

they read and feel validated in their own feelings and experiences when they know others may go through similar situations as well. However, Oppenheim also talks about the importance of different and varied experiences in a book and how, “a good story invites [readers] to step outside themselves and into someone else’s shoes for a while” (Oppenheim, 1986, p.143). A story not only invites readers to connect to shared experiences it should also open them up to new insights and different realities. My book has two different buy-ins, most young readers will be able to connect to shared moments of experiences with someone special yet there is also the different reality of a single parenting household.

Single parenting has risen in popularity in the last decades and “according to 2017 U.S. Census Bureau, out of about 12 million single parent families with children under the age of 18, more than 80% were headed by single mothers” (Lee, 2018). As of 2017 there were more single parent families and single mothers were in the majority changing the typical family dynamics. Though there has been an upward trend in single parenting, “in spite of their growing numbers and increasing visibility in the media, the literature on older single women choosing to become mothers is relatively sparse” (Miller, 1992, p. 21). Naomi Miller who is a clinician and family relations expert, might have been writing in reference to guide books and studies about single parents however, her sentiments can be connected to that of children’s literature. There are a number of different family units and different ways for family to be represented. But most children’s books have the typical family dynamic, the nuclear family of two parents and two children. Rather than reflecting the changing times, especially with single parents, children’s literature is steps behind. During my research of finding books that had similar themes of single parenting, I found only three that truly focused on the relationship between a single parent and their child although one of those was a single father with his son, which is a much rarer story than that of single mothers. There were other books that had a single parent but an extended family

member was also living with them or had children dealing with themes of divorce or death. Miller wrote about the lack of literature back in 1992 and as the Census Bureau has recorded the growing trend to 2017, there has been no change to the literature in those 25 years. Rebecca J. Lukens is an author of the book *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature* and in it she says that the "... province of literature [is] to observe and to comment, to open individuals and their society for our observation and our understanding" (2006, p.4). Lukens says that literature should comment on society and open readers to an understanding of that society. However, where single parenting is concerned, the literature has not been built up to comment or connect anything that allows readers to think or talk about. I hope that my book opens the door for discussion on a growing trend of society that is rarely talked about or seen in most children's literature.

Child Development

The target age range for the book's audience would be six to eight year olds. This age range consists of first and second graders although will not be limited to these ages however, they will be the focus for this study. It is during this time of a child's development that the self and ideas about the family are formed. According to Dorothy Cohen who was an educator and writer, publishing *The Learning Child*, believes that "Six- and seven- year- olds have known for some time that they belong to something called a family, but they learned it in relation to flesh-and-blood people..." (Cohen, 1972, p.134). This idea of family being concretely based upon DNA limits the perception of different kinds of family structures. But as children are emerging into school and social life, they will come to pick up on the idea that family can actually be very different and that it is not solely based upon "flesh-and-blood" (Cohen, 1972, p.134) factors. In the classrooms of first and second graders the curriculum is often about the family. Children are exposed to different family dynamics that are not solely related by blood such as adoption, foster care, and blended families who have family members from current to past marriages (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). Usually the scope of the study is reflected based upon the families that are part of the classroom community. It is important when having a family study that all members of the community are given equal exposure. Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Edwards believe that "to truly reach all children... educators must acknowledge, make visible in their programs, and respect all the family structures that are real in children's worlds" (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p.112). This plays an important role in children's development as children can see themselves reflected in the literature and at the same time become exposed to different family structures and understand a broader sense of what family means besides just being about related to each other by blood.

The children at this age are also coming up with ideas about the self and forming a coherent image of themselves as individuals. Cohen brings up family as an important aspect in their quest to discover who they are, "... the child of six and seven continues to identify with parents he still loves and whom he still needs, both as models to imitate and as supports for his growing independence" (Cohen, 1972, p.122). During this transition period children are learning more about themselves and others in their communities. It is important that they see themselves reflected in literature and to be able to question and observe what is being represented to them. Books should offer up reflection and conversation where the child can piece more of themselves together. Chip Woods who wrote *Yardsticks* a reference guide to children's development states that "Seven is an age where children are driven by curiosity and a strong internal desire to discover and invent" (Wood, 2007, p.88). This can be connected to their search for figuring out who they are as individuals. If literature can engage children to discover and learn new aspects about the self and society, than they can grow to be better members of a classroom community where differences are valued and abundant. Connecting back to Cohen and the idea of family and the self, "if family life gives to children a basic sense of who and what they are, it also prepares them for concept of groups and group living, which allows them in time to become members of a community, a country, a world" (Cohen, 1972, 134). As children move from six to seven and than to eight years old, they will be developing ideas about themselves and where they fit into the community. When children learn early about differences and how they are all respected and accepted in the classroom, the eight year old child has a sense of tolerance and understanding towards those that are different. And if the child believes themselves to be different, the community will offer up ways that the child is included and represented into the classroom. My book offers up different perspectives on family dynamics and shows how the structure makes it no less a family than does any factor where love is involved. And with the changing times the

conceptualizations of family looks at the different roles that mothers and fathers, males and females participate in. No longer is the female the head of domestic chores and males are the breadwinners of the family. Instead gender roles are loose and the stereotypical boundaries laid forth are slowly eroding. Patricia Minuchin who is both an educator and works closely with families, talks about the way gender identity is influenced at this age. According to Minuchin (1977), "children come into the middle years with an established gender identity, but social sex roles are in active formation" (p.97). It is around this time that there are more variables for children to act differently not according to gender stereotypes especially if during the younger years of looking at family dynamics and structures they might have been exposed to single mothers or fathers and gay and lesbian couples whom often share the sex roles that a more traditional family has in place. In the changing society, the children are discovering new aspects of themselves and where they fit in the community and what the different roles are. And from there are also discovering more about themselves and where their place in society could be.

All of this introspection and learning takes place when there is an abundance of variation in children's literature. Hopefully classrooms are stocked with books involving different types of family dynamics. In my research for this project, there was not a plethora of books about children in single parent households. My book opens up ideas about single parenting and being an only child. The focus is on my mother's and I spent time together however, also includes busy days of work and school and spending time with other members of the family. But there is the one day at the end where we can just be the two of us. A lot of children will probably relate to the realization of having school and routines every day. They might even connect to having a day that is filled with fun and different intentions than just academic. Children will be able to learn and question this family dynamic, and it can start a conversation of what family is and what it means to them. Joanne Oppenheim talks about how "one of the major developmental tasks of this age group is to

find some acceptance among one's agemates-to be able to hold one's own in the classroom and on the playground" (Oppenheim, 1986, p.141). When the literature is inclusive and represents many different structures, ethnicities, cultures and languages children can learn to accept and fit into communities that are being built in the classroom and in the outside society. They can learn to accept each other and learn to accept themselves as they are developing into who they are.

Literature for Children Review

When researching books that were similar to my own book, I was finding very few books that featured single parents. Out of the fifteen books that I have gathered, only three of them are truly stories that have one single working parent and single parent by choice rather than circumstance. Single parent by circumstance are books about divorce with one parent leaving or has left and about families where one member has died. So I moved my search to family and time spent with each other. Through the journey I was able to collect great resources of love, family and built connections with a wide variety of different household structures. The biggest theme that is overarching with the majority of my books is that of family. Each book in its own way explores the idea of who we are and where we belong.

I also picked up books with beautiful illustrations and language for inspiration in my own creation. These models are reflected in small aspects of my book, either through style of voice, imagery or language. All of the resources were used to better my writing, illustrations and thinking behind what kind of book I was trying to write and create.

Looking at single parent books the readers get a view into the relationship and dynamics within the family. In *The Storm Whale* by Benji Davies and *Love is a Family* by Roma Downey the books center around the child's insecurities of the family dynamic and the loneliness that is felt. Downey presents the reader with a child who is embarrassed about how small her family is and wishes that she could have a father or siblings. While Davies' character discovers a whale and takes it home, where the father links the behaviour due to the boys wanting a companion. Both characters struggle with the fact that they only have one parent and in Davies case, the father is gone during the day due to his work leaving the boy alone. At the end of Downey's book, the girl is no longer ashamed of her family and realizes that many families look different

and come in many shapes and sizes. Whereas, Davies has the father learn of his son's loneliness and at the end spends more time with him. It is in these two books that we meet the challenges faced by both the parent and child of single parent families. *Meredith's Mother Takes the Train* by Deborah Lee Rose on the other hand gives the reader reassurances that even though the mother and daughter are apart throughout the day, either at work or at school, they will come back together again at the end. The book highlights the mothers long hours and tedious work while juxtapositioning her daughter at preschool. The three books that featured single parents are mainly about single mothers raising their daughters, however there was one with a single father and his son. All three were important in creating literature about single parenting because they did not shy away from the realism of family life in a single parent structure both from a parents perspective and also that of the child's. My book, *Pizza Bagel Sundays* is a more subtle combination of the challenges of the isolation and the eventual coming together. I tried to contrast the time that my mother and I spend with others, at work and at school to then finally getting one day to enjoy our time together, just us. There is the separation that occurs in the other books and like in Rose's book there is the eventual coming together.

In other books, the importance of family is highlighted and even celebrated. Authors like Vera B. Williams and Mercer Mayer have stories focused on mother child relationships however they do not come from single parent based structures, they have different family dynamics with other members being involved. In *A Chair for my Mother* by Vera B. Williams there is a mother and a daughter who live together with a grandmother. Family is very important in this book and when the three women are struck with turbulent times when a fire destroyed their apartment, extended family members help them get back on their feet. Though the grandmother is living with them, there are moments when the mother and daughter have their own routines and rituals and the story focuses mainly on them. Mercer Mayer's book *Just Me and My Mom* also shows a

mother child relationship even though the family dynamic is typical to a nuclear family structure with two parents and two children. However, the book highlights the son's one day with his mother. They go into the city and explore many of the tourist attractions but the son finds ways to get into trouble and though the mother gets frustrated with him, he knows that she still loves him and he is happy they get to spend a special day together. Though the two books do not show single parenting, I believe that they were important in relation to my book because they showed the bond that a parent can have with a child and the different ways they can spend time together.

Donald Crews and Patricia MacLachlan look at family and how being together and where they are, are just as important. *Bigmama's* is a memoir of Crews' childhood of going with his family to visit his grandparents home. The story is written with vivid description and detail to not only describe the family members but the house and land as well. The environment is just as important as the people in his family when it comes to remembering the essence of who he is. The same can be said for MacLachlan's book *All the Places to Love*, just like the story is titled, the book introduces each family member and their favorite place. The connection to nature is just as important as who is in the family and the main character introduces the reader to all of this and when his baby sister is born is excited to one day share all of the love with her. In both instances the places are just as important and filled with memories as the people. The details of text or illustration help highlight the vividness of environment and nature, more often than the depiction of the characters. Though my own book does not have much description with setting, there are certain places that are highlighted as being only my mother's and my space. The kitchen though small, where we both have to squeeze in and the living room where we have our picnic is important because it is a place where we do something special. The attention to detail is not as strong but I believe that the different spaces have their own importance just like in Crews' and MacLachlan's stories.

Other books like Jamie Lee Curtis and Alma Flor Ada show different types of family dynamics from the child's point of view. In Jamie Lee Curtis' book *Tell Me Again About the Night I was Born*, the story is about how they become a family. The young girl wants her parents to tell her about the night she was born before she goes to bed. She knows all the details and through her reminiscing the reader finds out that she was adopted. This is a different family structure than what has been present so far in family books, and represents the becoming of a family. The parents wanted a child but could not have one, so they found someone who could not take care of theirs. There are many different types of families and in Alma Flor Ada's book the reader is introduced to a biracial family. In *I Love Saturdays y domingos* by Ada, a young girl talks about how she spends her weekends with two sets of grandparents. On Saturdays she hangs out with her father's parents and on Sundays she hangs out with her mother's set of parents. Throughout the story she compares the different ways she spends with each of them, often highlighting the language difference as well with her Spanish speaking grandparents, hence the use of Domingo, which is the Spanish word for Sunday. Like Curtis, Ada shows us a different type of family but how it is no less a family. There is still much love present and each child narrator is happy when talking about their family. Just like them, my book represents a different family dynamic and although I do not explicitly say, my own story is that of adoption. My mother was a single parent by choice and decided to adopt because she wanted a child even though she had no partner. In all of our books there is family, love and difference, whether culturally, linguistically or how the family came to be.

There were other books that I also used for inspiration in my writing and illustrations. *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats and *The Scraps Book: Notes from a colorful life* by Lois Ehlert both have similar styles of illustration where they use collage to create their art. Both use different types of textures, materials and mediums to create their illustrations. I really loved the

simpleness of the style as well as the intricateness of actually piecing together so many different pieces of material to create a whole. Ehlert really discussed the importance of some of her materials and objects and that you are able to choose something that is meaningful to you and holds significance is important. Especially when you are writing a book that holds big memories. The story is very personal and so it is important for me to really think about everything that is going into my book. My best friend who I have known for twenty years is going to be illustrating for me and she will be doing a digital collage for the illustrations. She is going to take a more modern spin on the collage idea and scan the different papers and textures and use her computer to render the drawings. She will also be using Kevin Henkes as inspiration for her illustrations. Henkes has a very whimsical feel to his illustrations and his use of watercolor and ink and pen are what help create the atmosphere in his art. My book will have many similar style illustrations to that of his book *Jessica*, all about a young girl with an imaginary friend. He uses comic book style with boxed illustrations to show many things going on within the text. This box technique allows the illustrations to further the author's words, giving more space to represent what is going on. Like Henkes, many of the techniques such as boxes and watercolor, ink and pen illustrations will be mixed with the influences of paper art from Ehlert and Keats to form the illustrations.

I also looked at *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson for their language use. The book is about a grandmother and her grandson who are taking the bus to go help out in a soup kitchen. The grandson does not like the chores however through his grandmothers perspectives on life and what is around them the grandson eventually comes to appreciate a lot of things that he once overlooked. The language that was used was prose to develop their story and was almost lyrical at times winning them the Newbery Medal. I really enjoyed both the language that is represented which felt real to the characters and the way text was presented. My book is not lyrical or written in prose but I tried to strive to make my book

have flowing text that the reader feels engaged. Another story I used to inspire my book was *Pancakes for Breakfast* by Tomie DePaola. The book has no text but I used it to inspire my pizza bagel section. The book shows a lady making pancakes and gathering all the ingredients and going step by step to make them. I wanted to know how I should write out my own recipe both within the text and after. I tried to make sure the ingredients were present in the text and illustrations. DePaola was able to create a story with no words but the reader knows what is going on with out them. I wanted to have something similar since at the end of my book, I will have the recipe represented both textually and graphically.

Annotated bibliography

Ada, A. F. (2002). *I love saturdays y domingos*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.

Ada's book is recommended for children between the ages of five through eight years old. The book focuses on a young girls weekends spent with her grandparents. Saturday's are spent with one set of grandparents and Sundays are spent with the other. Saturday and Sunday are always adjacent to each other in the book highlighting the multicultural diversity the young girl experiences. The book ends with both sets of grandparents and cultures together celebrating the girl's birthday. This book has themes of family, diversity and is multicultural, with the book in both English and Spanish. The illustrations are simple watercolor drawings with one or two images on a page and show the comparison between both sets of grandparents. Though the images are often simple they are very colorful and every once in awhile the illustration takes up the whole page. Those pages that are the whole page are the most vivid and colorful, where the author uses bright colors.

Crews, D. (1998). *Bigmama 's*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.

Crews' book is recommended for children four to eight years old. Crews delivers a beautiful memoir about his early days going down to his grandparent's house, though he called it bigmama's place. The book details every nook and cranny of the house and surrounding areas and gives notes about what him and his siblings do and how they feel being there. At the end the reader gets to see an image of Crews much older and reflecting on his past times at the house. The book has themes of family, love and home/ belonging. The illustrations are watercolor and gouache that represents the warmth of the family and environment with bright colors. Everything is fully detailed from the children to the setting, never missing a small detail. The illustrations are just as important as the text and take up the whole page.

Curtis, J. L. (1996). *Tell me again about the night I was born*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Curtis' book is recommended for children between the ages of four to eight years old. The book centers around a young girl asking her parents to tell her the story of the night she was born. The girl is telling the story while at the same time asking her mother and father to tell her the details. So the reader knows it has been a story that she has heard over and over again. The book centers around adoption, what it is like to become a parent and how families are created. The illustrations have bold and bright colors, often filling up the entire page. They can often be comical, showing many emotions and funny expressions, even relating to the animals not just the people. The pictures also tell the story not just the words.

Davies, B. (2013). *The storm whale*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co.

Davies' book is geared towards four to eight year olds. It focuses on a young boy who is left alone at home due to his father's occupation. During the boy's search of the island after a storm, he finds a beached whale that he takes home and cares for. Upon discovering the whale, the father realizes his son's loneliness and helps him bring the whale back to the ocean. In the final pages of the book, the son and father are seen spending time together rather than apart. The book has themes of family, parent- child relationship as well as a little mysticism. The illustrations are very graphic with simple repetition of basic colors. At times showing nature very dark and the household with lighter more vibrant colors.

DePaola, T. (1978). *Pancakes for breakfast*. New York, NY: Harcourt, INC.

DePaola's book is recommended for three to seven years old. DePaola's book is a wordless picture book about a lady wanting and making pancakes. The only text that is represented in the book is the labels on the woman's kitchen supplies and her recipe book with the instructions on how to make pancakes. The book is funny and the images represent a lot of character and emotion so that the reader understands everything that is going on. The book has a theme of food, cooking, and making something yourself. The illustrations tell the story with basic neutral colors that fill the entire page.

Downey, R. (2001). *Love is a family*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Downey's book is recommended for children ages four and up. The book focuses on a young girl who is about to attend family night at school but is insecure about how small her own family is. It is just her and her mother and the girl feels like that is not a real family. She starts off by comparing them to her friend's family who has two parents and lots of siblings and wishes that they could be different. However, upon attending family night the girl is immersed in many

different ways that families can look like, from single mothers, to single fathers, to no parents just grandparents, to adoption and many other forms. It is here that she realizes her family is just as perfect as anyone else's. The book centers around family and how that is defined but also how families spend time together and how each is different but all encompassing love. The illustrations are big and bold which use warm and bright colors. The illustrations often take up the whole page and represent more of what the text is trying to say. The faces show a lot of human emotion, particularly the scenes where there are big crowds, the attention to detail is impressive when there is a lot of people and emotion being represented.

Ehlert, L. (2014). *The scraps book: Notes from a colorful life*. New York, NY: Beach Lane Books.

Ehlert's book is geared towards five to ten year olds. She describes how art found her in the simplest and sometimes unexpected places. The book is a montage of her journey and artistic expression. Ehlert takes bits and pieces of her life and the environment to create collages and tell her story. She hopes to inspire others to work with art and let creativity spread. The book is a variety of collages with different mediums and materials from pictures, to flowers or twigs, scraps of fabric and paper. The illustrations are made up of what she has created for past books, her notebook and sketches of ideas that she has.

Henkes, K. (1998). *Jessica*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.

Henkes book is recommended for three to eight year olds. The story is about a young girl Ruth and her imaginary friend Jessica. Ruth goes everywhere and does everything with Jessica even when her parents are adamant that there is no Jessica. But Ruth sticks to her resolve and knows that though they cannot see Jessica, does not make her any less real. However, when Ruth

goes to school she meets a new special friend who happens to be named Jessica. The girls are very close and sync together almost naturally. Henkes has whimsical illustrations of watercolor and pen and ink drawings including tiny pieces of dialogue or text in the illustration. His book has themes of friendship, play, isolation and imagination.

Keats, J. E. (1962) *The snow day*. New York, NY: The Viking Press.

Keats' book is recommended for children two and up. The story features a young African American boy who goes out to explore the snow and is really captivated by it. He takes this journey alone and once back home shares his adventures with his mother who listens quietly. The boy then goes off to dream and wakes up to find more snow has fallen and once again goes outside, this time taking a friend to explore with. The book has beautiful collage images and the text has inviting vivid imagery. The illustrations are paper collage and a wash, which is watercolor and something else. Keats uses very simple illustrations that have bold patterns and textures which make his scenes and characters come to life.

MacLachlan, P. (1994). *All the places to love*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

MacLachlan's book is recommended for children ages four to eight. It is a memoir detailing that love is where the home is. It begins with MacLachlan being born and how he comes to connect with his family and their home through their stories and connections with nature and the land. The book details the family members and their love and respect for the places surrounding them. It ends with tradition when his sister is born and he plans on showing her all the places there is to love. The book has themes of family, home and tradition and is steeped in visual imagery and sensory details. The illustrations are realistic, almost photographic in their

portrayal of the characters and setting. Each page has one side of text with a small detailed painting and then next to it a whole page illustration.

Mayer, M. (1990). *Just me and my mom*. New York, NY: Random House.

Mayer's book is recommended for children three to seven year olds. The book is about a mother and a son spending the day together, just the two of them. They go to the city and explore many of the attractions but due to the son's curiosity, they keep getting kicked out. The mother is very patient with the son even though he happens to get in trouble at every place they go to. However, they get to spend a whole day just the two of them. The book has themes of family, especially focusing on the relationship the son has with his mother and about their time together going on adventures. The illustrations are animated and cartoonish with muted colors but lots of detail and good facial expressions.

Peña, M. D., & Robinson, C. (2015). *Last stop on Market Street*. New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Peña's book is recommended for children three to five years old. The book centers around a young boy and his grandmother. The young boy has many questions, wants and doubts about his life. It is his grandmother who answers his questions, stifles his doubts and points out things that cannot be seen or heard but has to be felt. She gives the boy a new perspective on how to look at life and at the end he is thankful for his grandmother and her ability to see the good and hope in everything. The main themes of the book are family, volunteering, learning how to look at the world differently and understanding our place in all of it. The illustrations are simple and quiet, allowing for tiny details and the focus to be on both the setting of the urban environment and the array of characters who are on the bus.

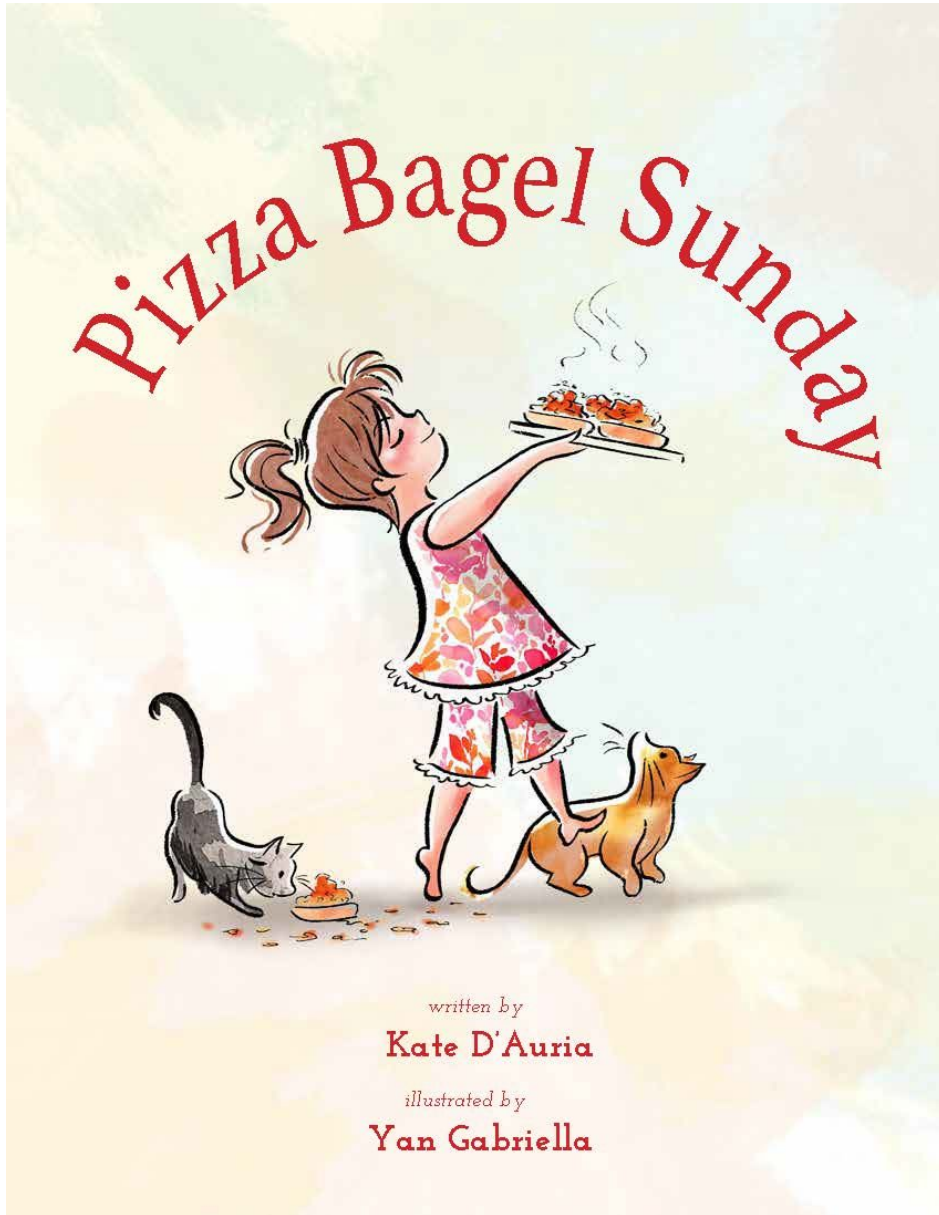
Rose, D. L. (1991). *Meredith's mother takes the train*. Niles, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.

Rose's book is recommended for children five to six year olds. The book tells a story of a single mother with her daughter. The book focuses on how each spend their day apart but at the end they come together again. Meredith is seen at daycare or preschool while her mother is shown working in the office. The book is written in rhyme and always shows both mother and daughter separate, each doing their own thing but eventually bringing them back to be together. There are themes of family, single working parent and the separation that causes. The illustrations are colorful and the watercolor and pencil drawing enables a lot of action to be showed.

Williams, V. B. (1982). *A chair for my mother*. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books.

Williams' book is recommended for four to eight year olds. The book centers around a young girl and her mother and grandmother. They live in an apartment after their house burned down but the mother's brother helped them find a new place near them. The mother works long hours at a diner and most days comes home tired and exhausted. The women have a goal that spare change and tips go into a jar to buy a big chair for the mother to rest in at night and the grandmother to relax in during the day. Due to the fire, the family has barely any furniture of their own and they work towards the goal of obtaining a new chair. The book is about the value of money, community and family. The book has different colorful borders that reflect what is happening in each of the pages. The illustrations themselves are beautiful yet simple with bright colors and each has their own page, separate from the text.

Pizza Bagel Sundays



To Mom,

I am sharing our story.
In a tiny apartment with our two cats,
we had what seemed like the whole world.
You never made me feel like I was missing out on
anything and each day was filled with adventures.
This book would not exist if it weren't for you.

As we used to say, I love you as much as
there are stars in the sky and grains of sand on the beach.

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Designed by Yan Gabriella Peropat

Sundays are my favorite days.
They are mommy and me days.



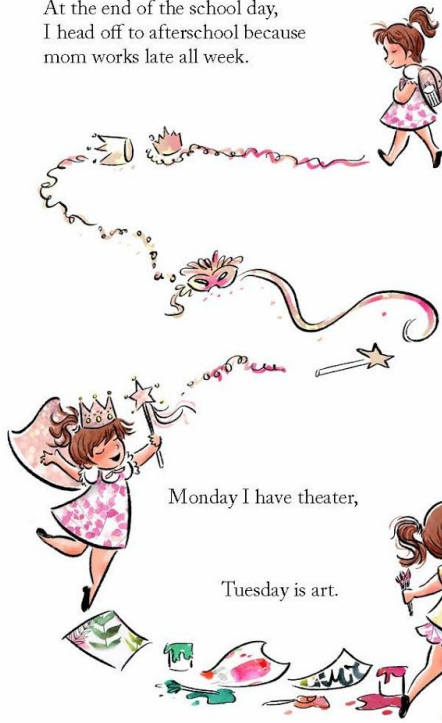
In our apartment it is just me, mom,
Sammy and Christina.



Mom and I are very busy during the week,
we do not get to spend much time together.



At the end of the school day,
I head off to afterschool because
mom works late all week.



Monday I have theater,

Tuesday is art.

Wednesday is woodworking,



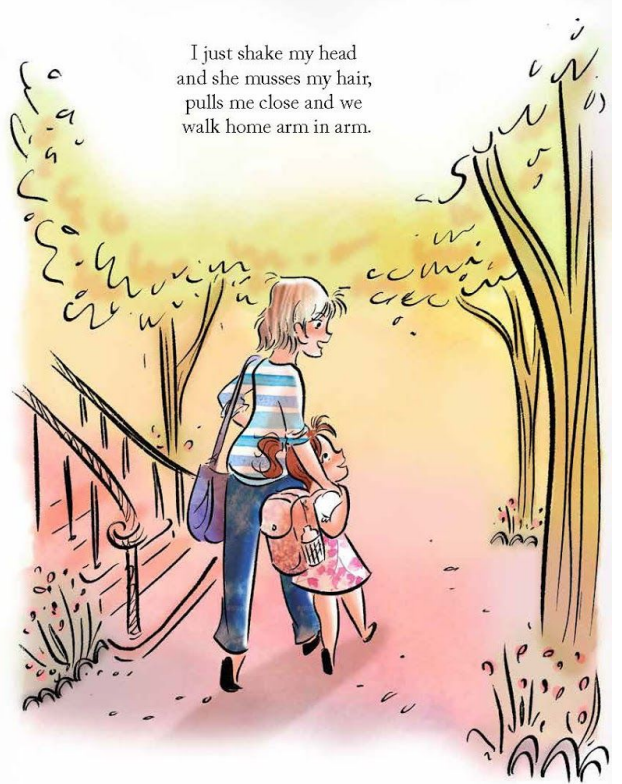
Thursday is pottery

and Friday
is photography.

Later in the evening when mom
picks me up, she jokingly says,
"Let's have ice cream for dinner."



I just shake my head
and she musses my hair,
pulls me close and we
walk home arm in arm.



Saturdays we get up early and take the train to Brooklyn to see Grandma and Grandpa.



We spend the whole day together and Grandpa makes his delicious pasta with sauce that we take home for our special day tomorrow.

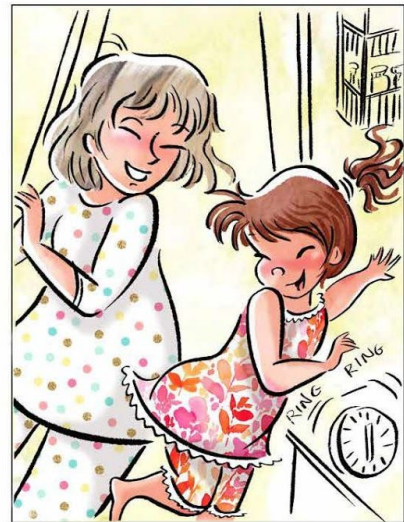


Sunday we sleep as long as we can. The endless meowing of our cats finally wake us up.

We get out of bed and stay in our PJ's all day long.



At noon, it's time for **Pizza Bagels!**



We race into our small kitchen, both having to squeeze in and laugh whenever we bump into each other.



"Alright, what do we need?" asks Mom.

cheese, and



mini bagels!"
I shout as I grab all the items from the fridge.

"Grandpa's sauce,



My mom takes out a couple of bagels from the bag and cuts them in half, handing them to me.



I open the sauce and start smothering my bagels by taking huge spoonfuls and piling on shredded cheese.

"What a mess," mom says.

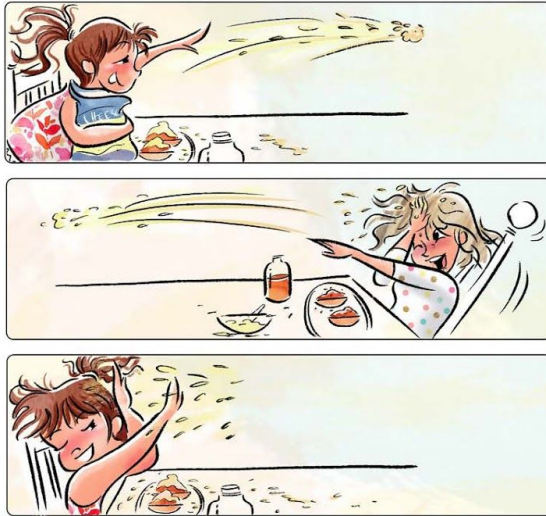


Soon enough my bagels start to look like mini volcanoes.



She sighs and points over to her perfectly constructed bagels.

I stick out my tongue and fling some cheese over her bagel.

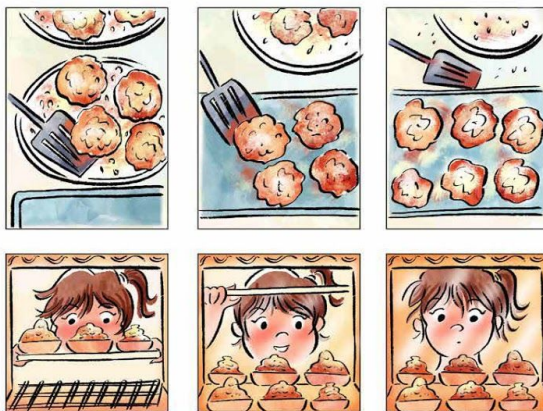


She lets out a yelp and flings cheese towards my side.

Soon enough there are many mini volcanoes and a mess of cheese and sauce spread everywhere.



Mom grabs a spatula and gently scoops the bagels onto the toaster oven tray.



I close the door and set the temperature and timer.

"But wait, we need lemonade!"



I say as my mom grabs the mix and the jug.



while I grab a couple of ice cubes.



While the pizza bagels are cooking, I run to my room and ask, "Ok, who wants to come to our picnic?"



I grab a couple of my favorite stuffed animals from my bed and run back to the living room.

Mom laughs when she sees my arms full of stuffed animals.



"So what's the count today?" she asks as she spreads a blanket on the rug.

I place my stuffed animals in a circle on the floor and my mom gives each of them a plate and a cup.



By the time I finish the circle, the cats have already knocked over the stuffed animals and are smelling the cups and plates.



I pour lemonade in each of the cups and



mom takes out the pizza bagels from the toaster oven and places them on the plates.

Then we would fill the space with singing, dancing, talking, playing, drinking and eating pizza bagels.



As we sit down to eat,
I think that we are missing something.



"I know!" I say as
I rush over to the stereo.



Music.



That's why Sundays are my favorite days.



Pizza Bagels

(makes 2 servings)

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup marinara sauce
 - 2 mini - bagels
 - ½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
-
- Slice the two mini-bagels in half, lengthwise to have 4 sides up.
 - Place on baking sheet or toaster oven tray.
 - Slather the tops with sauce so they are completely covered.
 - Sprinkle the shredded cheese on the tops of the bagels.
 - Put the tray in the oven set at 350 degrees for 10 minutes or until the cheese melts.
 - Allow to cool slightly.

Enjoy!

Applications

Since my book was meant for children between the ages of seven to nine year olds, I decided to read my book to a second grade class since the ages of the children would be in the middle of my age range. The teacher introduced me to the class and prefaced the read aloud which she calls “dessert”, by saying that I had written the story. The children were at once very excited and eager to hear about the process I took and to learn more about the book and to hear it read aloud. As I introduced my book, the children were in awe of the wonderful illustrations and impressed that I had actually written the book. Before I got to reading the actual book, I talked about how my friend had done the illustrations and I had worked on the story since there were many questions about the basics. After I had talked a little about the process and how long it had taken me to write the story, I settled the class down to begin reading. Since read alouds are an important aspect of the classroom, the children were steady and quiet in their seats. As I read, I made sure to show each picture to the whole class and when heads would move to try to see the picture, I knew I had to stay on the page longer and move the book around so that everyone sitting could see each page. While I was reading I stopped once to ask and talk about after school activities and which children went and which ones did not. I learned a lot of cool new activities that were not offered back when I was in school like magic, cooking, swimming, science/technology and jewelry making. Though I wish I had also chosen to ask about how children spend their time who do not go to after school programs. I missed out on including those that did not go to after school, however when I did stop to ask a question and get responses, it became more of an engaging activity for the children and brought them into the story. If I would read the book again, I would probably stop a few more times to bring children into the reading and ask more thoughtful questions and chances to connect and reflect on certain aspects of the book. When I

had stopped to ask about children's after school activities, the children were engaged and not just passively listening. I believe that if I had stopped in other places that would also allow children to be active participants. Though I do know the drawback of stopping too many times, since it could ruin the flow of reading and make it harder for the children to keep up with what is happening in the story. I would want to find a good balance for this by finding places in the story where children would not lose out on anything but rather gain from the conversation or time to think. I would also read slower with more emphasis, taking my time on each page and word that I had carefully put into my story. I feel that with my excitement and nervousness reading my book aloud, I found myself going through the book at rather a fast pace. When I did notice my speed I had stopped to ask children about afterschool, giving myself time to calm my nerves a little and allowing the children to brought in the story and see where they were in terms of listening and understanding.

At the end of the reading was when I decided to talk about how the book was written to highlight the relationship between my mother and me and the story being about single parenting. I was finishing my writing the story transformed to be about how we spend time together not just the fact that I have a single mother. The children were surprised that it was a story about a single mother, that aspect of the story was not important nor seemed to be something they picked up on. We continued with a conversation about families and how families can look different and when some children talked about their own single parent households, other children were surprised and responded with things like, "I didn't know that" or "You mean you also have only one parent?" and the young girl who had shared she also had one parent just shrugged and responded that it was just her and her father. I liked how the discussion of the story and families prompted others to share about their own families and how it lead to the class learning new information about each other.

At the end of the discussion as we were talking about what made a good story, one of the children pointed out the chart the class had composed about craft elements and what they thought should be included to make a successful story. I had not at first noticed the chart but was glad that it was present because I believe that it helped some of the children to think more critically about my own story and what they thought might need to be added or what was good about it. I told the kids that I would be handing out index cards and that on one side I wanted them to write about a connection they made with the book and on the other side I wanted them to write about something they liked or thought I could improve on. I gave them some time to talk about it with their turn and talk partner first so that they could get their ideas flowing and then had them go off and write on their own, allowing them to draw a picture of a connection if that was easier for them. As I was reviewing the students responses I noticed that a lot of the students liked the action in the book and made connections about having stuffed animals and cooking with either their mother or father. There were some that suggested humor, “you could add humor. Ha! Ha! Ha!” (Appendix A), another who wrote that they “liked how [I] added the recipe in the back of the book” (Appendix B) and others that wrote about connections like, “when my dad goes to work, I’m with my mom” (Appendix C) and “this story reminds me of like almost every Sunday my dad come home late so me and my mom bake something” (Appendix D). All the feedback and connections really made me see what aspects of the book stood out to the children. Most of the girls related to the fact that they also had stuffed animals or would have tea parties and humanize their toys. Whereas the boys commented more about how I could add more humor to my story or even add more action and dialogue. Then the majority of the children both male and female, talked about family connections and how they spent time with one or two parents and would relate that to cooking or baking. I am not sure how I would change my book to allow students to see deeper connections than just the ones on the surface or if I needed to change how I read and presented

the story. I might have started talking about families first before I started reading the book, to get them thinking about who is in their family and how they spend time with each other before the book put into their minds cooking and stuffed animals. I find that within this age group, once an idea is presented children are more likely to focus on that one singular idea rather than create their own. I wonder if I went to the third grade class, if their suggestions and connections would be any different.

Looking at the different types of curriculum that are in place for most elementary lower levels, there is always a study or unit about the family. My book would fit in such units as it is a book with a different type of family dynamic and can also be geared towards the way families or loved ones spend time together. For younger grades like first grade and maybe even second grade, the book would be a good read aloud and for stronger readers and those in third grade, students could read it independently since the language was planned for this age group. The book is a great way to get children talking about how they spend time with people in their families or anyone important, rather than only focusing on who is in the family. Children could discuss special moments they have with someone and reflect on who usually shares those special moments with them. The book can also be used to look at a family dynamic besides the typically portrayed one in many stories and how this one looks different from other families and maybe how it is the same. I believe for the single parent aspect, a read aloud is important so that the teacher can lead the discussion and conversation about what it is like to have a single parent. From there, the discussion could move onto other types of families and what families are within the community of the classroom. My book paired with many of the books from my literature review such as *A Chair for my Mother* by Vera B. Williams, *Love is a Family* by Roma Downey and *Tell Me Again About the Night I was Born* by Jamie Lee Curtis are good books to think about who is in our family and books like *Bigmama's* by Donald Crews and *All the Places to Love* by Patricia

MacLachlan are representations of the time we spend and where we spend it are all as important as who we spend it with. *Pizza Bagel Sundays* is very versatile when it comes to family units and curriculum because there are many different focuses. It is a good resource to have so that children can see more than one portrayal of family life and how just because it might be different, it does not make it any less a family.

Conclusion

Thinking back on the beginning of my writing and the ideas I had before I started, the process and the final product were truly surprising. I remember how I had first wanted to write a fairytale but could not seem to complete any of the stories that I had started. It was only when I was thinking back on certain memories that I realized I had a lot more inspiration to write about things that happened in my own life. The title came to me while I was at work one day and I had quickly grabbed the nearest scrap of paper to write down the idea that had sprung into my mind. And from there it quickly sparked the book itself. Of course I went through many drafts but somehow I knew this was the book I had wanted to write all along. Truth be told I actually finished the first draft of my book in one day because I knew exactly what I wanted to write and how I wanted it to flow. People were very receptive to the story idea and I was glad my idea had been successful. When I started to think about the rationale and what other literature is out there that might be similar or connect to my book I had felt daunted. What if there were too many books that had a similar story, what if I could not think about how the book was important or reason where it fit in children's literature? I had all these doubts and at first I was actually astonished that I did not in fact find many books that related to single parenting by choice. It was actually a struggle to find any and the ones I did find were hard to get ahold of. But it also made me realize that there was a niche for my book to fit in, I had found some answers to my questions by just trying to find books that related and after I exhausted my search I moved on to other books that had similar themes to mine but were not necessarily about single parenting.

My book filled a missing niche in children's literature and has a versatility that offers many readers the chance to make many different connections. When I read my book to a class of second graders, they were impressed and inspired by the fact that I had written my own book,

wondering if they could ever do the same. I was glad to inspire the students and welcomed their feedback on how I could improve my own work. They had enjoyed the book and really loved the illustrations, I got a few suggestions and was glad though that overall they seemed to enjoy it. My book seemed to work for the age group I had considered and though I would change how I delivered the book and maybe the discussion that came with it, I felt everything worked out well. The story is now out there and I have continued to share it with many people. It somehow feels strange that I have written a story about my life with my mother and that people are enjoying such a simple aspect that was our life together. I never thought of it being special to people outside from meaning a lot to us, since that was our day together. But it is special and now everyone can enjoy it.

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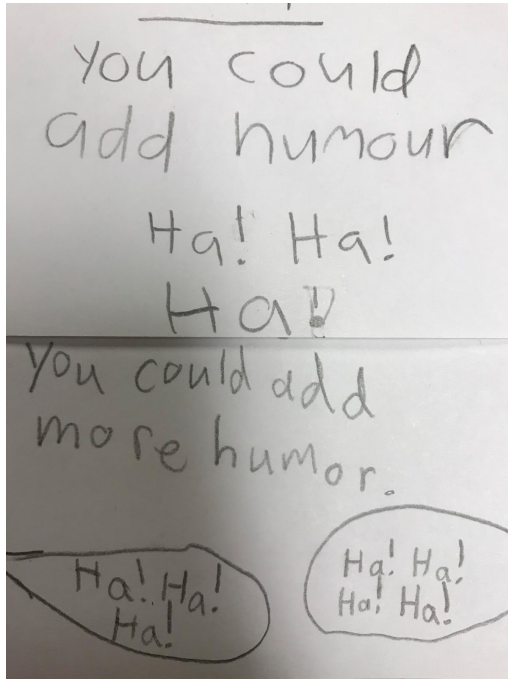
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Children's Literature

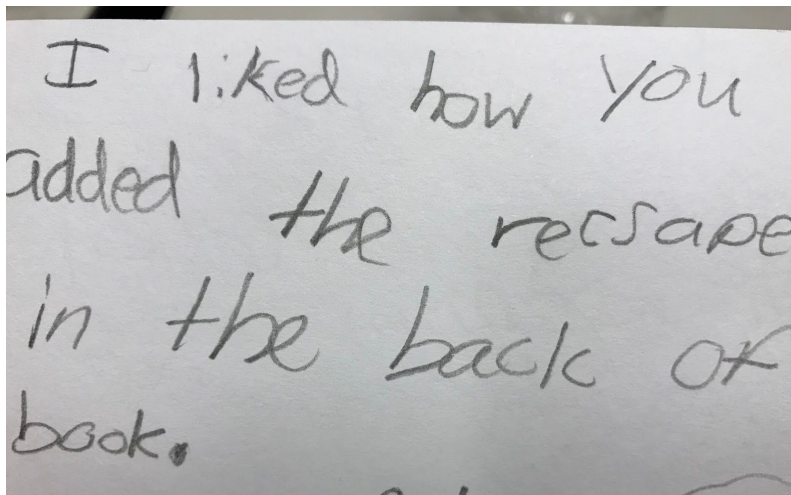
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Appendices

Appendix A (Students Suggest Humor)



Appendix B (Student's comment about recipe)



Appendix C (Eating bagels not pizza bagels)

connection
When my dad has to go to work, I'm with my mom, but we also eat bagels. (NOT pizza bagels)

Appendix D (baking with mom)

This story reminds me of like almost every Sunday my dad come home late so me and my mom ~~but~~ bake some thing.