
UNVEILING COURAGE: A REVIEW OF TRUDY LUDWIG'S *BRAVE EVERY DAY*

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Abstract

The authors review the children's book *Brave Every Day* (2022) by Trudy Ludwig and illustrated by Patrice Barton, providing a brief summary, background information on Ludwig, and potential audiences and instructional strategies.

Keywords: children's book, Tracy Ludwig, Patrice Barton, *Brave Every Day*, social-emotional learning, anxiety, courage

Brave Every Day (2022), written by Trudy Ludwig and illustrated by Patrice Barton, showcases one of Ludwig's many successful picture books. *Brave Every Day* is a relatable fiction that depicts the life of Camila, a shy elementary school student battling social interactions and self-expression. The book takes place within an elementary school, skillfully addressing major issues such as bullying, peer pressure, and anxiety with sensitivity and empathy. Themes of empathy and courage are included in the storyline, offering elementary readers an interesting and reflective journey. Each day, Camila confronts difficult tasks like voicing her thoughts in class and creating new friendships. She is faced with the "what-ifs." Then Camila meets a friend, Kai. Throughout the book, they conquer these challenges together. Like most children, Camila has her share of hobbies, one being playing hide-and-seek, however, she uses it to cope with her concerns. A class trip to the aquarium causes Camila's worries to pile up even more. However, when an anxious classmate asks for help, Camila discovers that she can fight her fear together with Kai. Throughout the layered stories to be kind to one another, Camila's journey of overcoming her fears could inspire students to face their challenges with courage and resilience.

Brave Every Day will appeal to upper elementary readers and their teachers because it addresses difficult topics that are understandable and relevant to young children. This book can be used for author study in the classroom. Trudy Ludwig is a renowned author known for her impactful work in children's literature, particularly focusing on themes of empathy, kindness, and social-emotional learning. Born and raised in the United States, Ludwig's passion for writing stemmed from her own childhood experiences of feeling misunderstood. Ludwig's decision to start writing was fueled by her desire to make a positive difference in the lives of children, empowering them with the tools to navigate complex social dynamics and build healthier relationships. She is also an active member of the International Bullying Prevention Association—collaborating with organizations like Sesame Workshop and Passport to Peace Foundation to name a few. Ludwig uses simple, clear language and vivid illustrations to display complex emotions and situations throughout each of her stories, making this story an exceptional tool for teaching emotional intelligence.

Teachers can use *Brave Every Day* to teach students the importance of positive relationships and a supportive classroom environment, aligning with the idea of character education and inclusivity. However, educators may encounter challenges in discussing sensitive topics like bullying and anxiety. Establishing a safe and nurturing space for discussing such issues is important, ensuring students feel empowered to share their experiences and perspectives. Possible challenges in teaching through this book might alert various fears and anxieties similar to what Camila also experienced. Some students may find these topics sensitive or unsettling; discussion should come from a place of care, ensuring a safe, and supportive environment for all students.

Despite this challenge, we believe that using *Brave Every Day* is great for integrating reading aloud and social-emotional learning in elementary classrooms. Teachers can use this book for read-aloud sessions to discuss characters' feelings, actions, and decisions; and teachers can pause reading and ask questions about students' emotions throughout read aloud. Another way this book could be used in the classroom is for writing activities that give students the opportunity to reflect on the book's themes and their own experiences. The realistic portrayal of a child's fears that are hidden in plain sight lead to the empowering message of courage, which can be relatable in the classroom. This book does a great job showing that bravery is not about being fearless, but about facing our fears and overcoming them. We think this book is perfect in the classroom as it could potentially decrease bullying or any form of conflict in the classroom that may serve as a distraction from learning. Equally important is providing appropriate resources and support to students battling similar challenges, fostering an environment conducive to effective instruction and emotional well-being.

Author Biographies

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Baylee Reyes is a stiving teacher studying elementary education at Wichita State University. She is placed in a first-grade classroom for the remainder of her college career. Outside of her studies, she works as a patient care technician at the Little Clinic, working diligently in this role to assist in maintaining a healthy lifestyle for individuals and families. Through this line of work, witnessing the good and bad of youth has provided her with appropriate responses and approaches towards pedagogical care as an educator. She can be reached at bmwright3@shockers.wichita.edu.

Mattelyn Swartz is studying Elementary Education while competing for the Wichita State University Track and Field team. Her love for education stems from the power of knowledge and the ability to help gift her future students with that power. Mattelyn looks forward to teaching and coaching children in a rural town within the next few years. Outside of her athletics and studies, she teaches swim lessons, babysits, and works in her church's nursery. Mattelyn can be reached at mmswartz1@shockers.wichita.edu.