

# Daddy’s Having a Horse

TEACHERS’ NOTES

[www.emmaquay.com](http://www.emmaquay.com)

Written by Lisa Shanahan

Illustrated by Emma Quay

Published by Hachette Children’s Books Australia (formerly known as Hodder Headline Australia), March 2005

## Before reading the book:

- Show the book cover, point to and read the title “Daddy’s Having a Horse” and ask the students to guess which of the four characters in the cover illustration they think is voicing those words.
- What do the students think the book might be about?
- Turn to the half title and title pages and show the illustrations on these pages. Do these illustrations confirm the students’ initial thoughts and ideas?

## After reading the book, encourage the students to:

- Talk about how they felt at each stage of the book. Did they identify with Lachlan, or Caitlin? What about with mum or dad? Encourage the students to talk or write about their own experiences with siblings, parents, carers and/or new additions to the family, extended family or community.
- Go back through the book, looking at each illustration in turn. Can the students find references to Lachlan’s love of horses on each page—in his dress, play, body language, environment? Encourage the students to notice the disappearance of these horse references after the children’s visit to the hospital when Lachlan’s hopes are dashed.
- Look at the illustration of the hospital scene. Discuss how we are made aware that both Lachlan and Caitlin are disappointed.
- This can lead into a discussion on body language and how indicative it can be of people’s feelings. Turn the pages of the book again, encouraging the students to interpret Lachlan’s feelings in each illustration. In which illustration is Lachlan the saddest, happiest, calmest etc.? Make a list of the different words the students suggest. Call the words out one by one, encouraging the students to express each emotion through their own body language and facial expressions. This could develop into a game of charades where one student acts out a particular emotion from the list and other students try to guess the emotion being silently expressed.
- Look at the rocking horse on the final double page spread. Examine the elements Sam the Handyman has gathered and assembled to make the horse. Go back to the two earlier scenes in which Sam the Handyman appears. Can the students find some of the components of the rocking horse in these illustrations? The tail, the rockers, the mane, the legs, the red vinyl seat covering?

- Revisit the endpapers at the beginning of the book. Compare with the endpapers at the end of the book. Discuss the fact that a baby horse is not directly illustrated in the main body of the book and why the illustrator might have chosen this approach. Explain the practical purpose of the endpapers (in the book binding process when the endpapers are glued to the inside of the hard covers.) Look at the endpapers of other hard cover picture books and discuss how endpapers are often used as decorative elements or to extend the story beyond the bounds of the pages of text.

## Lisa Shanahan’s Inspiration:

Like many writers, I tend to get the original inspiration for a story from the world around me; from things that I hear, things that I see and from things that I feel.

When I was pregnant with my second child two years ago, I can remember going to playgroup, desperately asking the other mothers there how their kids had coped with the idea of a new baby. You see, I was anxious about my first little boy. I was anxious that he might feel that I was trying to replace him. One of the mothers, who was also pregnant but with her third child, told me this story—she said, "My children are very excited about me having a new baby. They go around telling everyone. The butcher, the newsagent, the drycleaner. This is what they say. Caitlin says, 'My mum's having a baby!' And Lachlan, my little boy says, 'And my daddy's having a horse!'" I did a double take. "Sorry!" I said. "Could you tell me that again." So she did.

For me, it was the beginning of a story.

I couldn't stop thinking about that little boy. What would it be like to be so convinced that your daddy was going to have a horse, that whenever you rested your head against his hairy belly, you were sure that you could hear it burp? What would it be like to turn up at the hospital with your grandparents, expecting and hoping to see the horse? How would this little boy feel when he realised, that after all that hoping and expecting that there was no horse and never would be? What would he do? Out of that one little conversation came the whole story for my second picture book with Emma Quay, called *Daddy's Having a Horse*.

- Students can find out more about Lisa Shanahan online by visiting her page on the Lateral Learning Speakers' Agency website at:  
<http://www.laterallearning.com/authors/shanahan.html>

## Emma Quay’s Illustrative Technique:

Wax crayon and watercolours on hot press watercolour paper.

*Daddy's Having a Horse* took Emma Quay 450 hours to illustrate.

- For insights into the illustrative process and to see some of the pencil roughs and early character sketches for *Daddy's Having a Horse* visit the illustrating picture books page of Emma Quay's website at:

[www.emmaquay.com](http://www.emmaquay.com)