Teacher Guide

From the Jacket:

Perched in the branches of her favorite tree with her sketchbook, Anne Marie watches the world go by. While recording her observations of neighbors, friends, and family, she thinks about her father, who left two years before; about Mike, who seems to be trying to take his place; about her twin sister, Mary Anne, who looks like her (at least to adults) but sees things very differently. Poems in Anne Marie's voice, sometimes humorous, sometimes poignant, and always honest, take readers through a year of change in the life of a family and in Anne Marie's heart. Illustrations that include paintings, drawings, and collage capture the texts emotional range and Anne Marie's own artistic vision.

Discussion Guide

Twins:
Everyone thinks that Anne Marie and Mary Ann are identical but are they? How are they alike? How are they different?
Do you think twins like being treated as a matched set: "like a pair of shoes/or gloves/worthless if one/gets lost." What does Anne Marie mean by this? Did you learn anything from Anne Marie about twins? What?
Reread: "Not to Brag But" and then decide: do you wish you had a twin? What would be great about it? What would get old?

Parents:
Describe Anne Marie's mom, dad, and Mike. How does she get along with them? What would you find most difficult in Anne Marie's story? Do you think it is fair how she feels about Mike?
By the end of the book, what is Anne Marie trying to do?
Reread: "Dad's Roses" What did Anne Marie do to her dad's rose bushes? Why? What does she mean when she says, "Only the roses came back?"

Neighbors:
Which of Anne Marie's neighbors did you find most interesting? Who would you like to live near? Is there anyone (or animal) that you're glad doesn't live by you? Why? In poems the author doesn't have much room for description. How can you still "see" the characters? What techniques can a writer use? Which poem is your favorite about the neighborhood? Why? How is Anne Marie's neighborhood like yours? How is it different?
Growing up:
Reread "The Book Lady." What types of things does Anne Marie want to do when she is older? Why do you think she said "build my own fence/ change my own oil?" What on her list would you like to do too? What things would you include on your own list? Why do you think Anne Marie thinks it is important to "buy new books/ with all the rest/ for each kid who/never had one"? Who would you like to help when you get older? What could you do? Is there anything you could do now?

Friendship:
Discuss Anne Marie and Mary Anne's friendship with May Ching. How do things change with a new friend? What other friendships do they have in the neighborhood? How are they similar to the friendships you have outside of school? Are friendships different at home and at school? How?

Art:
Why is Anne Marie's sketchbook so important to her? What does she learn by creating pictures and poems about the people she knows? How does it make her like her dad? What, like Anne Marie's sketchbook, is important to you? What does Anne Marie mean when she says she's "hidden by these green and paper leaves?" Which illustration is your favorite? What technique did Andrew Glass use to create it? What colors did he use? Why do you think he chose that palette?

Comprehension

Pre-Reading Activity: Do you know any twins? Do you think it would be fun to be a twin? What would be great about it? What might be hard?

Check out the cover: What do you think this story might be about? Who do you think is doing the spying? Why?

Comprehension Check: 1. Who is the narrator of this story? Describe her.
2. Why does Anne Marie say that she's the "one with hate/painting my heart black"?
3. Explain what's going on between Mike and Anne Marie.
4. Retell the main events in the story.
5. Predict what happens after the close of the collection.
## Character Chart

**Sketches from a Spy Tree**

Readers learn about characters in four ways: what they say, what they do, what they look like, and what others think and say about them. Find details about each character that help you understand them from the book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Appearance</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne Marie</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Anne</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Marie’s Dad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miss Emory</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Kramers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Poetry Lessons:

Experimenting with Poems: Line Breaks

Work together with a partner to practice line breaks for poetry. Just add a / wherever you would switch to the next line. Be prepared to defend your choice! You'll compare your results with the author's original poem, but don't worry there's no right answer on this activity.

"Across the Back Fence"

Mr. O'Brien (red brick house across the back fence) tries to train his grass- not his dog to fetch or his son Paul to pitch but one million blades of bluegrass- to behave! Twice a week he cuts it down whips back the edges blows the cuttings and sweeps the strays. He even claps his shoes like dirty chalkboard erasers out in the street so the whiskers of grass can't follow him home. I know I shouldn't but when the puffs of dandelions appear in our yard, I twist their rubbery stalks and blow the seeds light as snowflakes across the back fence.

from Sketches from a Spy Tree, Clarion Books 2005
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Discussion:

How were your choices different from the author’s? Why do you think she made the choices she did? Do you think yours are better? Why? How arbitrary are line breaks? Do you think they can change the meaning of a poem? How? Give an example.

Projects:

Spy Journal: Keep a writer's notebook or sketchbook and go exploring in your own neighborhood for great characters, settings and scenes. Write at least five poems or descriptions about what you see, hear or smel. Choose one of these to revise and share.

Make a Venn diagram comparing Mary Anne and Anne Marie. What do they have in common? What is different? Think about not just what they look like, but what they do, think, say and how others view them.

Anne Marie explores a wide variety of art techniques throughout the collection. Create three different pictures inspired by your own neighborhood and use a variety of media as well. Be sure to try one as a collage because, well, it is so much fun!

Anne Marie says in "The Book Lady" that she’d like to buy new books for all the kids who never had one. So, host a book drive for a homeless shelter or other place for kids. Be sure the books are of high quality (like NO cartoon characters, for example) and in good shape. Or, purchase and donate your favorite book of the year to celebrate a birthday.

Create a map of the neighborhood from Spy Tree. Make it out of 3D materials and use stuff from around the house- no buying! Try to add as many details as you can from the story.

Write a letter from Anne Marie to her real dad. What would she say to him? Write his response.
### Poetic Element Scavenger Hunt

**Sketches from a Spy Tree**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poetic Element</th>
<th>Example from the Text</th>
<th>Create one of your own</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Simile</strong></td>
<td>Compares something using “like” or “as”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metaphor</strong></td>
<td>Compares something without “like” or “as”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Personification</strong></td>
<td>assigns human traits to something that's not human</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Onomatopoeia</strong></td>
<td>creates a word to represent a sound “perlump”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apostrophe Poem</strong></td>
<td>Speaks directly to something (that can’t answer back)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rhyme</strong></td>
<td>words that have similar end sounds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alliteration</strong></td>
<td>a repetition of sound at the beginning of words</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Related Books:

Kids books with divorced and blended families:
- Sahara Special by Esme Raji Codell
- The Wedding Planner's Daughter by Coleen Murtagh Paratore
- Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary
- It's Not the End of the World by Judy Blume
- Amber Brown Series by Paula Danziger
- Don't Make Me Smile by Barbara Park

Curriculum Connections:

**Sketches from a Spy Tree** teacher’s guide supports these Standards for the English Language Arts from IRA & NCTE:

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

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