



A teacher's guide
created by Marcie Colleen
based upon the picture book
written by Nancy Churnin & Shayna Vincent
illustrated by Wazza Pink

This classroom guide is designed for students in first through third grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

It offers activities to help teachers integrate *Mama's Year with Cancer* into the curricula.

All activities were created in conjunction with the Common Core and other relevant content standards.

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To learn more about Nancy Churnin, visit her at www.nancychurnin.com. To see more artwork from Wazza Pink, visit www.behance.net/WazzaPink.

Before You Read...

Before reading *Mama's Year with Cancer*...

Look closely at the Front Cover ~

- Read the title aloud.
- Describe what you see.
- Who do you think the woman is? What is she doing?
- Who do you think the girl is? What is she doing?
- How does this cover illustration make you feel?
- Can you guess what the story might be about?

The Back Cover~

- Describe what you see.
- Read the text on the back cover.
- Can you guess what the story might be about?

English Language Arts

Reading Comprehension

Now read or listen to the book.

Help students summarize in their own words what the book is about.

- What is Mama sick with?
- If Mama does with the doctors say, when might she get better?
- What is the significance of ringing a bell?

- Describe in your own words what Mama does at the hospital every Friday.
- Do you think Mama is brave? Why or why not?
- Why does Mama’s hair fall out?
- What are some of the ways the girl makes Mama feel better?
- Gigi makes a special birthday cake for Mama with a bell on it. Why a bell?
- Why do you think the girl calls her mother Super Mom?
- What is Kindness Day?
 - What is different about Kindness Day when Mama has cancer?
- What are some of the things that make the girl in the story angry?
 - The counselor says she is brave. Do you think she is brave? Why or why not?
- Children are not allowed at the hospital, but the girl is able to be there and ring her own bell. How?

Let’s talk about the people who made *Mama’s Year with Cancer*.

- Who are the authors?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Now, let’s look closely at the illustrations.

- This story takes place over the course of a year. The seasons of the year depicted in each illustration. Make a list of the seasonal details that are included.
- Draw your own picture of a seasonal moment spent with your family. Be sure to make the season clear.
- Display the finished drawings in the classroom.

Reading for Information

Mama’s Year with Cancer introduces a very difficult issue that many families around the world deal with. However, cancer might be a new concept for some young readers. While reading *Mama’s Year with Cancer* aloud to the class, have students take notes in two columns:

- *Things We Learned*
- *Questions We Have*

Pause before each page turn to add notes to the columns. These columns can either be individual or hung on the board and worked on as a class.

Things We Learned (Facts)	Questions We Have	Answers We Found

- Once the story is read, discuss the *Questions We Have* column.
 - Were any of these questions answered as the story went along?
 - If so, ask students to find the answer within the text.
 - Record the answer next to the question in a third column labelled *Answers We Found*.
- For all remaining questions in the *Questions We Have column*, that have yet to be answered, students will need to take the steps to find answers, either through Internet or book research.

- Discuss how to find answers to questions through research. (hint: there are a list of resources in the back matter)
- Assign students to specific questions to help them focus.
- Record all answers in the *Answers We Found* column.
- After the answers have been shared with the class, engage in a discussion on research practices.
 - What was the most difficult about finding answers?
 - Was it easier to find answers on the Internet or in a book?
 - Which source is more reliable, the Internet or a printed book? Why?
 - How can you determine whether to trust a source?
 - What tips would you give someone who is about to do research?
- Read the back matter at the back of the book.
 - Create an additional chart to document what information in this section was included in the story and what information was not included.

Extension: Design and illustrate posters representing each Fact, Question, and researched Answer based on *Mama's Year with Cancer* and display them within the classroom.

Writing Activities

Feelings and Color

As a class, discuss the feelings and emotions that the family in *Mama's Year with Cancer* experience through the year.

Make feeling charts.

- List feelings from *Mama's Year with Cancer* in the Feelings column (sad, scared, angry, hopeful, etc).
- Add other feelings to the chart that might not have been mentioned in the book (guilty, bored, grumpy, disappointed, lonely, jealous, etc.).
- Have children choose a color for each feeling and explain why they are choosing each color for each feeling.
- Then, in the "When I Felt That Way" column, students should write about a time they felt that feeling.

FEELING	COLOR	WHEN I FELT THAT WAY

- Look closely at the illustrations in *Mama's Year with Cancer*. How is art used to convey these emotions?
- Choose one of the situations in the "When I Felt That Way" column and illustrate it using the color included on the chart.

A Year of Story

Think about memories you have of spending time with someone who is or was special to you.

- Who is the special person?
- What are some of your favorite memories with this person?
- How does the memory make you feel now?

Write your memory like a story with a beginning, middle, and end.

Beginning	Middle	End
<p>Introduction of your special person. Describe them and who they are to you.</p>	<p>Describe, in detail, a memory you have of a time you spent with this special person.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When was this? 2. Where were you? 3. Was anyone else there? 4. What happened? 5. How did it make you feel at the time? <p>Use your five senses and other descriptive language, when possible, to make the story come alive.</p>	<p>Thinking back on the memory, how does it make you feel?</p> <p>What was the best part of the memory?</p>

Share your story with that special person or people who knew that special person.

Speaking and Listening Activities

Picture books are written to be read aloud. Here are some other ways to bring *Mama's Year with Cancer* to life in your classroom and have fun with speaking and listening skills.

Listen and Share

Sometimes understanding someone simply comes from listening to them and allowing them a chance to express themselves. Who do you think does a good job of being a listener in *Mama's Year with Cancer*?

With students sitting in a circle, hand one student a small plush bear or kitty. Explain that only the person who is holding the stuffed animal can talk. Everyone else's job is to listen. When the stuffed animal is put down again, the teacher/classmates respond to that student, then the stuffed animal moves to the next person to talk (a volunteer or the former talker can pull a name from a basket).

Use the Listen and Share method for sharing sentences or personal stories about feelings.

Mixed up Feeling Jars

Using clear wide-mouth plastic jars, create some mixed-up feelings jars.

Provide students with slips of paper, each including the name of a feeling on it.

Students should color each feeling in whatever color they think fits. And on the back of the paper students should write why they feel this way. Then put the papers into the jar.

- Explain to students that sometimes we feel several different feelings all at once (pull a few feelings out of the jar and hold in your hand).

- Then with the lid on the jar, shake the jar. Explain to students that sometimes, especially at times of big changes and loss, we may have mixed-up feelings. Having mixed-up feelings can be confusing so it is helpful to talk about our feelings.
- Shake the jar again. Ask the students to predict what three feelings you will pull out of the jar with your eyes closed.
- Pull three feeling papers out of the jar. Were the predictions correct? Explain that especially in a time of grief or big change or stress, feelings can be unpredictable.

Science

Mama's Year with Cancer, co-authored by Nancy Churnin and Shayna Vincent, a young mother with breast cancer, tells the story of a parent's journey with cancer from her child's point of view as, together, they wait until Mama can ring the bell, signifying her treatment is over. This book offers an authentic opportunity to talk about what cancer is, to dispel myths about it, and to discuss ways to support people with cancer in your community.

Understanding Cells and Cancer

Explain what cells and cancer are in words and hands-on activities.

Cells are small units that make up all living things, including the human body. There are billions of cells in each person's body that grow and divide. Normal, healthy cells know when to stop growing. Cancer cells, in contrast, grow out of control.

Cancer occurs when a group of cancer cells multiply until they become tumors that replace normal cells and disrupt normal cell tissues and tissue function. When someone has cancer, doctors try to eliminate or remove the cancer cells using surgery or medicines called chemotherapy and medical treatment called radiation and often with a combination of all of these. Chemotherapy and radiation attack cells that multiply quickly. That helps eliminate cancer cells, but it also attacks normal cells that multiply quickly like hair, digestive cells, and blood cells, including the white blood cells that fight infection. That is why a patient having chemotherapy and radiation treatment will lose hair, have an upset stomach, and have trouble fighting germs. Uncomfortable as this treatment can be, it is important because if not stopped, cancer cells can break away from the original tumor and travel to other areas of the body where they keep growing and form new tumors. When cancer cells spread, that is called metastasis. The more cancer cells spread, the harder it is to get rid of them and the more damage they can do.

Looking at Cells through a Microscope

Show what cells look like through a microscope.

Show students prepared slides of dyed cheek cells from your cheek or a student's cheek.

Ask students to guess how many cells are on each slide.

Place a slide under the microscope and adjust the viewer until you can see the outlines of the cells.

Give each student a chance to look through the microscope at the cells.

Point out that each slide contains numerous cells.

Have students draw pictures of what they see.

Ask the kids how big the largest cell is. Then show them a picture of an ostrich cell – a single-celled structure known as the largest cell in the world!

For a more advanced lesson, explain that there are three main parts of the cell: the cell membrane which surrounds the cell and controls the substances that go in and out; the nucleus, which is a structure inside that cell that contains the

nucleolus and most of the cell's DNA; and the cytoplasm, which is the gel-like fluid inside the cells where chemical reaction occurs.

Make Models of Cells

Have students make models of cells by cutting construction paper, felt or foam or by using modeling clay. Have them make a key so others will know what the parts represent on their models.

You can also make a "pizza" cell. Make a pizza using the round crust to represent the cell membrane, with the sauce and cheese as cytoplasm and toppings as the nucleus. Bake and enjoy.

Other possible variations: cookie dough as your cell membrane base frosting or icing as the cytoplasm and candies as the nucleus or bread as the cell membrane covered with peanut butter as the cytoplasm and raisins as the nucleus.

Blow bubbles near your models. Tell the students that the bubbles are the cancer cells that could get into the cells and spoil them. Have them pop the bubbles as quickly as they can. Explain that chemotherapy and radiation are the tools that medical professionals use to "pop" cancer cells.

Make a flow chart that explains the cancer journey from diagnosis to treatment. If there is anyone in your classroom who has cancer or who has a family member with cancer, they can share where they are on the flow chart if they would like to do that.

1.Diagnosis of cancer, usually involving X-rays and blood tests. Sometimes an oncologist -- a doctor who treats cancer -- will do a biopsy. That means the doctor will surgically remove a piece of tissue or sample of cells so it can be examined under a microscope.

2.Treatment: surgery or chemotherapy or radiation or a combination of some or all. Sometimes chemotherapy medicine is given as a pill, but usually it is given as a liquid from a bag that drips down an IV through a "port"-- a small hole made in the patient's body for the medicine. Radiation uses high-energy waves that are invisible to the eye to damage and destroy cancer cells. The treatment, while necessary, can be difficult. It can cause a loss of appetite, exhaustion, vomiting, irritated skin and hair loss. A child with cancer might need to miss school to rest while undergoing treatment and an adult with cancer might need to miss work.

3.When treatment is completed, patients may get to ring a bell. This is a happy time! When the treatment has ended, hair will start to grow back.

4.Once a patient's cancer is gone, they are in "remission." The patient will continue to be checked to make sure the cancer doesn't return. If cancer does return, they will need to start treatment again.

True or False

1.Cancer is catching.

False. You can talk to, play with and hug someone with cancer. Just be careful if YOU have a cough or cold. You can't catch cancer, but a person with cancer has also reduced resistance against illness and is in danger of becoming ill from you.

2.Accidents cause cancer.

False. No one knows what causes cancer. Some people may have a gene that makes them more likely to get it.

3.Once cancer is gone, you can forget about it.

False. Once cancer is gone, patients will need to visit their medical professional regularly to make sure it doesn't return.

4.You can laugh and enjoy your family and friends when you have cancer.

True. In fact, support and fun with family and friends is some of the best medicine you can get when you're trying to get well.

5.Cancer makes you tired.

True. Cancer and the treatment for cancer can make patients in need of more rest. That is why it is so helpful to bring food or help with errands for families living with cancer.

Handwashing experiment

It is important in general to wash hands to get rid of germs so that you don't make yourself or others ill. It is especially important to wash hands before being in contact with cancer patients because it is easier for them to get ill than for a person who is healthy.

Try this experiment to determine the best way to get rid of germs:

Ingredients: 3 tbsp cooking oil, 3 tsp cinnamon, 3 volunteers, cold running water, warm running water and soap.

- Rub 1 tbsp of cooking oil each on the hands of the three volunteers.
- Sprinkle 1 tsp of cinnamon in the oil each on the hands of the three volunteers.
- The cinnamon represents the make-believe germs.
- Volunteer #1: Wash hands by rubbing them together for 20 seconds using cold water and no soap.
- Volunteer #2: Wash hands by rubbing them together for 20 seconds using warm water and no soap.
- Volunteer #3: Wash hands by rubbing them together for 20 seconds using warm water and soap.

Whose hands are clean?

Who still has "germs"?

Social Studies

First Aid Kits/Comfort Kits

A First Aid Kit is helpful in emergencies. First aid kits hold bandages, ointments, tweezers and other things that are helpful if someone is physically hurt.

Another kind of First Aid Kit can be used for situations when people are hurting emotionally—as in grief, or homesickness, or moving—or for comfort when they are nervous or anxious. These types of kits are sometimes called Comfort Kits and they may contain objects that soothe—a piece of soft cloth, putty, photos, etc.

Decorate a small box to create your own Grief First Aid Kit or a Comfort Kit. Fill it with items that make you feel good, that provide comfort, or remind you of happy things.

- What sorts of comfort items did you put inside?
- Explain why you chose each item.
- Where will you keep your kit?
- In what situations do you think your kit will be helpful?

Healing with Kindness

While different cancers call for different treatments, all cancers and all illnesses can be helped by kindness. Shayna and Nancy hope you will join our Healing with Kindness project and share how you are showing kindness to someone who has cancer or someone who is helping someone with cancer. Please send photos of your acts of kindness to nancychurnin.com and, with permission, we will share on our Healing with Kindness page and social media.

Here are some examples of ways to heal with kindness; we look forward to learning from and celebrating your ideas, too:

Purchase, print, or create your own card to send to someone in your life that has cancer.

Find your local cancer center and drop off:

purchased or homemade cards to the patients

purchased or homemade cards to the amazing oncology nurses

packaged snacks, new warm fuzzy socks, or new beanies/hats to the patients

Make a Mad Lib/fill-in-the-blank page that you can print, fill out, and give to a loved one with cancer and to an oncology nurse that treats your loved one.

Some examples:

I love you like an (animal) loves (the animal's favorite food). Which is A LOT!

You're special because when I'm with you, I'm so (how he/she makes you feel)