

## Teaching Worksheet for **ME AND MY SISTER** by Rose Robbins

In "Me and My Sister" we get a glimpse into the day-to-day life of the sibling of a child on the autistic spectrum. While the events in the story may well be very familiar to children who have a similar family situation, there may be a few unusual or surprising moments to others!

### Different not Less

The main message of the book is to embrace difference. Discuss with the class moments in the book where the siblings do things differently, and where they are doing things that they enjoy together. Do any children have examples of things that they like to do alone and things that they prefer to share with others?

### Young Carers

Children who particularly sympathise with the book are likely to be performing a caring duty in their home, for their sibling or other member of the household. Life as a young carer can be emotionally challenging, and every child's story is different. Invite the class to draw or write about their household/family, and at the end they can choose to share what they have made or put their work in an envelope and "post" to the teacher at the end (suggestion: a cardboard postbox would be a nice touch, but not essential). Sharing can be very helpful for some children, but not all are ready.



## Reading Guide

### Pages 1-2:

The Sister is autistic and “Non-verbal”, meaning that she uses communication other than speech. However she still makes a lot of sounds with her voice and they can be just as communicative as real words.

### Pages 3-4

Some autistic children can be very particular about what kind of food they choose to eat or can tolerate, even more so than neurotypical children. This can make mealtimes quite confusing for siblings!

### Pages 5-6

Autistic people often have intense interests, and so it is not uncommon for autistic children to watch the same tv programme (or even episode) over and over again. Understandably, the sibling may not always want to join in with this!

### Pages 7-8

Finding a shared interest is a wonderful way for siblings to bond.

### Pages 9- 10

Autistic children can find it a lot more difficult to understand and follow social norms, this can lead to behaviours that may be interpreted as being rude or inappropriate. However, family members who take the time to understand the child's condition will be more accepting of these moments.

### Pages 11-12

Quite often, neurotypical and autistic siblings will go to different schools to cater for their abilities and needs. This can lead to resentment either way, as the autistic sibling might want to go to the same school as their sibling, or the neurotypical sibling might be jealous that their sibling doesn't have to do as much homework. Clear communication from parents is important, so that the children understand why the situation is as it is.

### Pages 13-14

Following on from the previous spread, the brother shows that he understands the circumstances of their different educations, and that the two schools suit their different needs.

Pages 15-16

One of the joys of having an autistic sibling is the different perspective that they put on the everyday, nothing is ever boring with an autistic sibling!

Pages 17-18

In contrast, one of the greatest difficulties of having an autistic sibling is dealing with intolerant strangers. Judgemental looks, comments or interferences from outsiders who do not understand Autism can be very upsetting for both the Neurotypical and the Autistic child.

Pages 19-20

In an Autism-Aware family set up, the parents will often not blame the Autistic child for any mess or mischief that they might cause, and there is a good reason for this (sensory overload, social understanding etc etc). The unfortunate drawback to this is that the Neurotypical child receives a disproportionate amount of scolding in comparison to their sibling, and will sometimes get blamed for their Autistic sibling's actions. It is important for the household to reflect and examine whether or not this is happening, as it can lead to resentment.

Pages 21-22

As the sibling of a vulnerable person, a child is often named a "young carer". This is because quite often they are enlisted to perform caring duties when required. There can be a feeling of needing to be available for any event, which could simply include comforting their sibling if they are hurt or upset.

Pages 23-24

Different, not less.

Pages 25

Although the Autistic sibling may not be able to communicate their feelings as well as others, that does not mean that they don't love their sibling just as much as any other.

