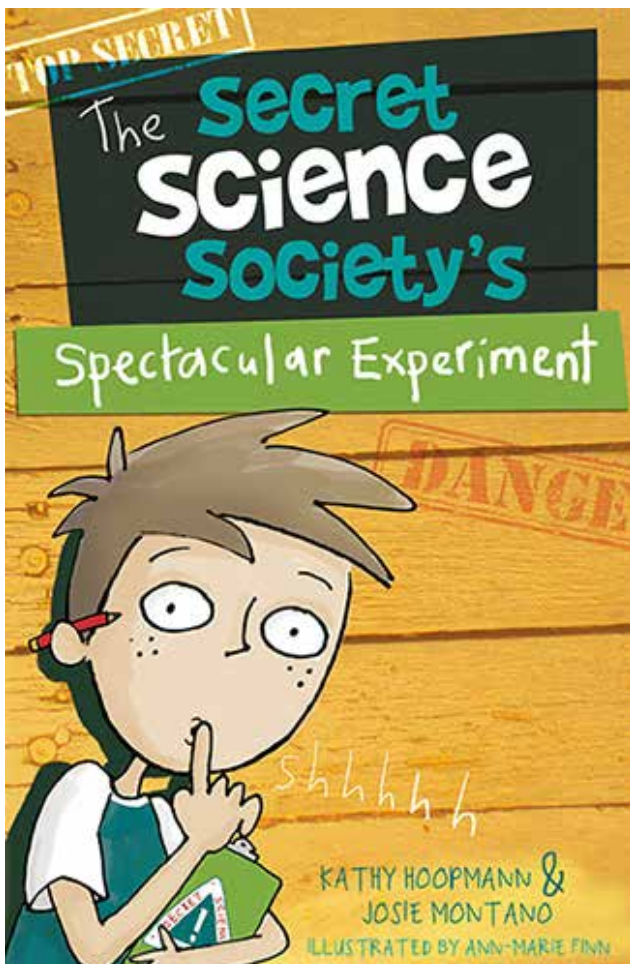




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Stories you'll want to share

Teacher's notes



The Secret Science Society's Spectacular Experiment

Kathy Hoopmann and Josie Montano

ISBN: 9781925563764

Recommended retail: \$12.99

Reading level: Age 8+

Book summary

Mona likes to moan. Kiki is a worry-wart. Bart loves following rules. And Zane HATES following rules.

When the four of them are put into the Secret Science Society together, this could only mean one thing: DISASTER!

Will they be able to work together to create an experiment that Mona won't moan about, Kiki knows is safe, Bart will think is perfect and that is really, REALLY exciting for Zane? But sssshhh, the ending is a secret.

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Why study this book?

In a society that is increasingly aware of mental health issues, it is important to reach children of all ages with literature they can relate to. By showcasing a group of children who work together as a team for a common goal, using their differing personalities cohesively, students may see themselves represented and feel valued. This book encourages diversity and acceptance, with links to English, Science and HPE. It artfully demonstrates that relationship-building can be fun and exciting, and how great science can be, especially working on classroom experiments!

Themes

- Diversity makes our society stronger
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Teamwork and differing personalities
- Labels do not define a person
- The joy of science

About the authors



Kathy has written over twenty books for children and adults, best known for her photo-illustrated books on developmental and mental health. Her work sells widely in Australia, the US, the UK and the Middle East. She has been shortlisted for many literary awards, including the CBCA Award for *All Cats Have Asperger Syndrome* and has four times been awarded a silver Nautilus Award (US), given to books that make a better world. The simplicity, charm and insight of these books has made them must-haves for children and adults worldwide.



From age nine, Josie's dream was to be an author and at age 13, she received her first rejection letter from Golden Books. Decades later, she is now an international award-winning author of over 60 books. Josie also writes under the pseudonym of Santomauro on the topic of autism. She's always holding a pencil and writing down ideas. Josie wants to write until she's a really, really, really old lady in a nursing home full of other authors.

Authors' interview

1. The characters in your book have ADHD, autism and anxiety. Why focus on these traits?

Between us, we have considerable background knowledge in these areas and we know that often only the negative sides of diagnoses or mental health issues are promoted. We wanted to show, in a light-hearted way, how our character's strengths can shine when they are accepted and supported.

2. Many kids and YA books deal with mental health these days. Why do you think it's become a common theme to explore?

Awareness of mental health issues in our society has been raised significantly over the years. As children and youth especially suffer from mental health issues, it is vital that they have access to literature aimed at them. Often the greatest quandary for those with mental health issues is that they feel that no-one could possibly understand what they are going through and can see no way out of their dilemma. Seeing characters like Kiki, who has anxiety, may help them realise they are not alone.

3. One of the main themes of this book is putting aside differences to work together. How can we do that in our everyday lives?

Listen to each other. It's that simple. Throw away preconceived ideas and take a moment to step into someone else's shoes. Once you know where a person is coming from and why, it's so much easier to accept them for who they are and enjoy what they have to offer. Friendships may emerge from that!

Questions and reflections

1. Which character do you think you are most like? Why?
2. Would you want to be part of the Secret Science Society? Why/why not?
3. How do the characters change throughout the book?
4. Mona does not seem to like the rest of her science group members. What does she say and do that shows this?
 - Where are some examples in the book that demonstrate her nice side?
 - How can you show someone that you are accepting of them?
5. Zane's behaviour at the beginning of the book puts him at risk of being expelled from school. Do you think that was fair?
 - Come up with a list of things he might have done in the past to warrant this threat.
 - If you were Zane's friend, how could you help him follow school rules?
6. Zane says that he only has one friend. Do you think that's true?
 - Would you like to be his friend?
 - What advice could you give Zane to help him make new friends?
7. Kiki has anxiety. How could you help her when she feels worried?
 - What did Zane do to help Kiki feel good about herself?
8. Why do you think Bart likes dinosaurs so much?
 - What is your favourite dinosaur and why?
9. Do you think the Secret Science Society's spectacular experiment was a success? Why/why not?
10. How do you think the different characters felt when they went home after the science fair? Fill in the table below.

	How they felt
Zane	
Bart	
Kiki	
Mona	
Mrs Mythos	
Mr Crumpets	
Mona's dad	
Grandpa	

Activities

- Investigate the authors and find out more about them. Look into books they have written about the different diagnoses in the Secret Science Society (Zane has ADHD, Bart has autism and Kiki has anxiety).
- Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Fill in the table below for the Secret Science Society members, then add your own strengths and weaknesses.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Zane		
Bart		
Kiki		
Mona		
You		

- Choose your own lava experiment from the list below, and investigate how different ways of making lava produce different results.
Hints: Colour can be added by mixing food colouring or jelly granules with the baking powder/ soda, and powder can be added by funnelling it into a balloon, putting the opening of the balloon over the bottle, and tipping up the balloon when ready.

You will need:

2 tablespoons baking soda

Plastic waterbottle

¼ cup vinegar

2 tablespoons baking powder

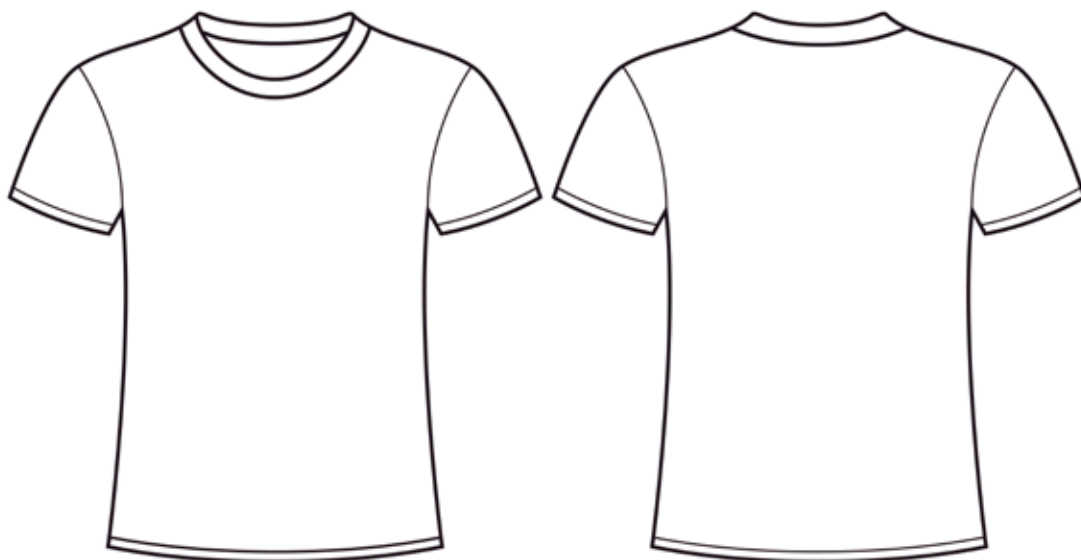
One squirt dishwashing liquid

Experiment	Observations
Baking soda in bottle, then add vinegar	
Baking soda and dishwashing liquid in bottle, then add vinegar	
Baking soda in bottle, then add vinegar and dishwashing liquid	
Vinegar in bottle, then add baking powder	
Warm water 2/3 full and vinegar in bottle, then add baking powder	
Warm water 2/3 full, vinegar and few drops of dishwashing liquid, then add baking powder	
Warm water 2/3 full and baking powder in bottle, mix well and then add vinegar	

- Make a class model of the Secret Science Society’s volcano (pg. 56–61).
- Write an acrostic poem using the word ‘secret’, ‘science’ or ‘society’.
- Imagine you are a reporter at the science fair. Write an article about the Secret Science Society’s experiment.
- Write a backstory about why one of Mona’s pigtails was cut off (pg. 16).
- Make as many words as you can from the word CRUMPETS, using each letter only once in the new word.
- Design a new t-shirt for the Secret Science Society (using the blank t-shirt below).
- If you were a member of the Secret Science Society, what would you invent for the space-themed science fair next year?
- Bart often got words mixed up or didn’t understand what sayings meant. In your own words, explain the meaning of the following idioms and add a couple of your own.

Pull your socks up	
Get your act together	
Break a leg	
It’s not over until the fat lady sings	
Butterflies in my stomach	

Blank t-shirt template



Key curriculum areas

Year 3 English

ACELA1476

ACELA1482

ACELT1599

Year 4 English

ACELA1488

ACELT1603

ACELT1604

Year 5 English

ACELA1505

ACELA1508

Year 6 English

ACELA1518

ACELA1523

ACELT1616

ACELY1675

ACELY1792

ACELY1678

ACELT1605

ACELY1688

ACELT1609

ACELY1796

ACELY1709

ACELY1816

Year 3 Science

ACSSU046

ACSSU049

AC SIS053

Year 6 Science

ACSSU095

ACSSU096

AC SIS232

Years 3–4 HPE

ACPPS033

ACPPS037

Years 5–6 HPE

ACPPS051

ACPPS055

ACPPS056

AC SIS054

AC SIS058

AC SIS060

AC SIS103

AC SIS108

AC SIS110

ACPPS038

Authors' note

We met in 1999 at the Ipswich Writers Festival and have been friends ever since. We have both written extensively on Autism Spectrum Disorders (Asperger Syndrome), plus we publish in other genres as well (Josie also writes as Josie Santomauro). For years, we had dabbled with the idea of working together, however nothing seemed to feel right. That all changed when Kathy moved back to Australia after a long stint in the Middle East and found that Josie now lived five minutes from her. It had to be an omen!

So, over a coffee one week, we came up with the concept of the Secret Science Society's Spectacular Experiment and had a blast creating a bunch of quirky, lovable rascals who get up to all sorts of mischief, whether they mean to or not. With our combined understanding of diagnoses that have lots of letters (ASD, OCD, ODD, ADHD, etc) we hope that the Secret Science Society's Spectacular Experiment will delight, entertain, and hopefully educate, our readers, young and old alike.



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