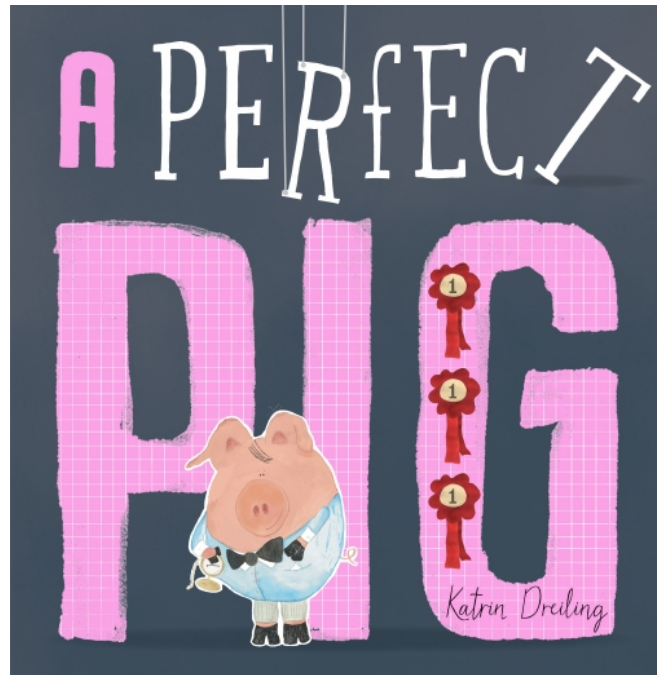


A Perfect Pig

Author/Illustrator
Katrin Dreiling

Synopsis

Anton is a perfect pig. He likes everything in his life to be absolutely perfect, from the angle of his food on his plate, to the way his hair is combed. He is always happiest when everything is in perfect order. So when Anton sets out to plan a surprise party for his best friend Lola the plans are, of course, perfect. But sometimes life is not amenable to perfection, and the best of plans can be derailed by the unexpected, so when it starts to rain, and the bakery sells out of birthday cakes, there is very little that Anton can do to return things to a state of perfection. Anton might be finding it difficult to cope with the way things keep going wrong, but he is not the type to quit and he forges ahead through puddles, crashes, and decorating disaster, and finally Lola is most definitely surprised and also delighted by the perfect lack of perfection at her party. And in the end Anton realises that he doesn't actually need perfection to be able to enjoy life, for a friend's happiness is the most important thing after all.



About the Author/Illustrator

Katrin Dreiling was born and raised in Germany, but has called Australia home for many years. She lives in Brisbane with her family and Golden Retriever Loki in a wooden house on stilts. Their house sits beneath a sky filled with strange birdsong, and by a creek filled with snakes and poisonous toads. Katrin's work is heavily influenced by the European children's literature she grew up with, and features a variety of media, textures, and techniques. Katrin also teaches art to children, and conducts workshops for adults and children alike.

Themes

Key Themes include: Parties; perfection; self-criticism; routines; planning; time-management; determination; persistence; friendship; compassion; acceptance; difference; caring; coping with frustration, flexibility, and resilience.

Writing Style

Written throughout in the third person, the story follows the point of view of Anton, the titular perfect pig. Language used is clear and simple, and sentences are short and direct, well suited for the youthful readership. Dreiling makes good use of repetition, alliteration, and metaphor to maintain reader interest and manages to craft a sympathetic portrait of a fretful perfectionist, acknowledging his quirks without implying criticism. The inclusion of the character of Lola, who positively revels in the uncertainty that stresses Anton, provides a delightful and relaxing counterfoil to Anton's upset and worry, and emphasises the importance of accepting difference and change in one's life.

Illustration Style

Crafted using a combination of gouache, watercolour, ink, acrylic markers and coloured pencils, as well as digital elements created with Photoshop and Procreate, the artwork consists of a variety of double page spreads, single page spreads, vignettes, and multi-panel pages. Figures are consistently anthropomorphic in nature, and inhabit a world of exaggerated landscapes and homely and realistic interior spaces. Backgrounds are predominantly white space, with occasional sweeps of contrasting single-colours, and Dreiling's palette consists of soft natural shades, pastel tones, and contrasting splashes of brighter hues. Linework is subtle and for the most part restricted to outlines and details, while blended colour gradation provides form and depth for the figures. The visual narrative faithfully parallels the textual narrative throughout, while providing further details that expand upon the main action of the story.

TEACHER NOTES

- 1) Before reading the story, as a class look closely at the cover and title, and discuss what you can learn about the book from the title and artwork. Some things you might like to include in your discussion could be:
 - What can you see happening on the front cover of the book?
 - What is the title of this story?
 - What can you see happening on the back cover of this book?
 - Who do you think might be the main character of this story, and why?
 - What do you think the main character of this story might be like?
 - What do you think the pig on the back cover of the book is feeling? Why do you think this?
 - What do you think might happen in the story?
- 2) After reading the story, think of three words that you think could be used to describe Anton. Share your words with the class, and explain why you think they describe him well.
- 3) What does it mean to be perfect? Why do you think the book is called *A Perfect Pig*?
- 4) How do you think Anton feels when he finds out that there are no birthday cakes left in the bakery? How would you feel if this happened to you?
- 5) When Anton discovers that there are no birthday cakes left, he buys a wedding cake. What are some other things he could have done instead, and how well do you think they might have worked and why?
- 6) Plan a party for your class.
 - As a class make a list of everything that needs to be done. What is on your list?
 - Is it different from Anton's list?
 - In what ways and why might it be different?
 - How important do you think it is to make a list when you are planning something?
 - Draw a picture of what a party might look like if no one makes a list to remember everything that needs doing!
- 7) Bake and decorate a cake.

- 8) Ride a bike or go for a walk in the rain. What makes walking, or riding a bike in the rain a problem? What are the good parts about riding or walking in the rain?
- 9) Anton likes to arrange his breakfast at a right angle on his plate. As a class discuss what a right angle is, and how realistic it might be to arrange one's food in a right angle every day. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
- What is a right angle?
 - What foods contain right angles?
 - What foods don't contain right angles?
 - What did everyone in the class have for breakfast?
 - What shape plate or bowl did everyone use?
 - What shape was your food?
 - Was your breakfast the sort that can be arranged (like toast) or was it a food that is more challenging to arrange in an angular shape (like porridge)?
 - If Anton ate porridge for breakfast, how do you think he might like to arrange it, and why?
 - Draw a picture of a bowl of porridge arranged to make Anton happy that it looks perfect.
- 10) What gymnastic drills do you think Anton might do every morning? As a class design a five minute exercise program of quick and easy activities that you can all do every morning before starting your classwork.
- 11) Look carefully at the page where Anton is looking at the calendar. His shelves are all arranged neatly with different coloured canisters on them. Can you see a pattern in the canisters? Draw a picture of a set of shelves with lots of differently coloured containers on them, and arrange your containers in a pattern that you think looks good. Share your picture with the class, and take turns trying to work out what pattern everyone has used for their containers.
- 12) Look at the picture on the page where Anton is riding to town and it starts to rain. Use this picture as inspiration to help you draw a picture of your own school or home and local area in a similar style to the one that Dreiling has used. Colour your picture in, and write a caption below it describing what it is a picture of, and where you got your inspiration for it.
- 13) What sort of things do you think Anton, Lola, and their friends did at their party? As a class make a list of fun party games and activities, and test out at least three of them in your classroom. Which activity or game was the most fun? Which ones worked well and which ones were tricky or confusing? Record everyone's opinions about which was the best game or activity on a large bar graph. Individually write a recount of the experience, including what happened, what you found, and what your personal response was.
- 14) How do you think Anton feels when he realises he is running late?
- 15) How do you think Anton feels when Lola says *What a perfect surprise?*
- 16) What do you think might have been the most fun aspect of the party?
- 17) How would you have felt if you fell over and landed in a cake like Anton did?
- 18) When Lola thought the party was wonderful, and everyone had fun, Anton started to feel much better. What are some other things that people can say or do to make someone feel better when things don't go according to plan?