

A Space For Me

written and illustrated by Cathryn Falwell

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Format: Hardcover, \$18.95
32 pages, 8.75" x 10.25"

ISBN: 9780892392391

Reading Level: Grade 2

Interest Level: Grades PreK–3

Guided Reading Level: K

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Childhood Experiences and Memories, Conflict resolution, Empathy and Compassion, Families (Siblings), Forgiveness, Home, Imagination, Kindness and Caring, Realistic Fiction, Sharing and Giving, Problem-Solving

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/a-space-for-me

SYNOPSIS

It's just not fair! Alex's big sister has her own room, but Alex has to share a room with their little brother, Lucas, who makes noise, plays with Alex's toys, and takes over both sides of their room. One day, when Lucas breaks Alex's favorite dragon, spills all the crayons, and throws puzzle pieces into the air, Alex has had enough!

All Alex wants is a quiet space for himself. In the backyard he creates the perfect spot to read, play, think, and dream. But when Lucas misses him, Alex helps his brother build his own special space too. Some days Alex spends time in his space by himself. Some days Lucas plays in his space by himself. And some days the brothers play in their room—a space for both of them together.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Room Sharing

"According to *The New York Times*, (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/25/parenting/siblings-sharing-a-room.html>), the practice of having separate bedrooms for individuals is a relatively recent one; shared sleeping quarters were the norm until the Victorian era, during which the wealthy began to see individual bedrooms as a status symbol. In many cultures and communities around the world, shared family sleeping quarters are still common. Room sharing between siblings is still common, especially for families who live in apartments or for children who split time between two different parents' households."

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What do you like about being in your own space, and what do you like about sharing a space with others? Give some examples.
- Do you share a bedroom or have your own room, and what do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- What is (or could be) good or bad about having a sibling? What are examples of things siblings do together?
- What are some ways you make space and time to be alone? Why do we sometimes want alone time?
- How do you show your family members that you care about them? What are some things you do to help your family? Why?
- How is family important to you? What kinds of things do you like to do with your family? Do you have siblings or cousins with which you enjoy spending time? What do you like to do together? Why?
- Have you ever felt frustrated with anyone in your family or with a friend? What did it feel like to you? How did you let the other person or persons know you were feeling frustrated?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- Talk about the title of the book. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What

information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

- Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, author/illustrator biography (on jacket back flap), title page, dedication, and illustrations.
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how Alex feels about sharing a room with his brother, Lucas
- how Alex finds a space of his own, and what happens once he finds it
- how the characters' feelings change during the story
- how familial love helps us when we're feeling sad or frustrated

Encourage students to consider why the author, Cathryn Falwell, would want to share this story for young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

Content Specific

tape, branches, broom, wagon, give-away box

Academic

fair, a pain, had enough, by myself, to himself

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Who are the family members in this story?
2. Where does each of the children sleep?
3. Who is the narrator of this story? How do you know?
4. How does Alex describe Lucas? What reasons does he give?
5. How does Alex try to manage his frustration about sharing a room with Lucas? Does it work? What else does Alex try?
6. How does Alex make his outdoor space?
7. How does Alex feel about his space when he is finished making it? What does he do in his space?
8. How does Alex react when he sees Lucas looking sad in the window? Why is Lucas sad?
9. What do Alex and Lucas do next? How do they make Lucas's special space?
10. Once Alex and Lucas each has his own space, how do they spend their time?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Why do you think Lucas acts the way he does at the beginning of the story? How does his behavior change during the story? Why do you think that happens?
2. When Alex gets frustrated with Lucas about his messes in their room, how else could he have reacted? What do the choices he makes show about him as a character?
3. What does the space Alex makes show about him as a character? How do the different materials he uses help make the space feel good to him?
4. When Alex sees Lucas looking out the window, what could he have been thinking? Why do you think he decides to help Lucas make his own space?
5. How are Alex's and Lucas's spaces the same and how are they different? How is each space a good fit for each boy?

6. Which character do you identify with the most? Why?
7. How might this story have been different if Lucas told it?
8. What do you think Alex learns in this story? What do you think Lucas learns?
9. Study the illustrations to find out about the imaginative games Lucas and Alex play. Have you played any of the same games? What makes imaginative play fun for kids?
10. Read the biography of the author, Cathryn Falwell, included on the jacket back flap of the book. Why might she have wanted to write this story for children? How does her description of her special treehouse relate to the story?
11. There are no adults in this story. Why do you think the author chose not to include the children's parents in the story?
12. Why do you think it is important to show young people solving problems on their own? Do you think an adult would have been helpful in resolving Alex's problem? Why or why not?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Draw a possible map of Alex's family's house and yard. Be sure to show the spaces described in the book. Label each space. Draw Lucas and Alex each doing something that fits with the story.
2. Imagine that Alex and Lucas are grown up and talking about their childhood together. Write an imaginary conversation between the two of them remembering the events from the book.
3. Why is time alone important for people? Why is time with others important? Include examples from the book and your own life to answer both questions.
4. Make a list of good things and bad things about sharing a bedroom with a sibling. Use examples from the story, and others from your own life or imagination.
5. Draw and write about your perfect space. It could be real or imaginary. What would the space look like? What would it have in it? Would you be alone or with someone? How would you feel when you are in your perfect space?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss

the answers to the questions.

3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about a special space for them.
5. The book contains some content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
6. Have students build their own version of a special space using recycled or reused materials.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Flip through the pages of the book and focus on the characters' faces on each page. Describe how their faces look and name the emotions they convey. (You might also notice their body language.) Use sticky notes to label various emotions.
2. At which points in the story do you think it may have been challenging for Alex to manage his emotions? What strategies did he appear to use? How could these strategies help you in your own life?
3. How did Emma help Alex in the story? If you were Emma watching her two brothers in this story, what might you have thought about their interactions? What might you have done?
4. What are some emotions or other reasons why a person might want his or her own space? Act out some different scenarios. Practice what you could say or do if you want to be alone.
5. This story is told from Alex's point of view. How would the story be different if it was told from Lucas's point of view? Try writing the story from Lucas's perspective, or write a letter from Lucas to his older brother, Alex, in which Lucas expresses his point of view.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students design on paper, then build, “alone” reading spaces in your classroom using a simple materials list (e.g., table, chairs, sheets, or fabric).** Have a “reading space for me” reading time, and then give students a chance to invite others into their spaces. Afterward, have students reflect on why they created their spaces the way they did. Why did they make certain decisions about their spaces? What was important to them? What was important for them to have in their spaces? Students may share with partners, small groups, or the whole class.
- **Envision a sequel to *A Space for Me*.** Ask students to think about what would happen in the follow-up story. Who would they choose to write about and why? What would happen in their story? Encourage students to create their sequel with accompanying illustrations.
- **Read other books that describe characters wishing for their own space, such as *My Very Own Room/Mi propio cuartito* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/my-very-own-room-mi-propio-cuartito>).** What do the main characters of both books have in common? What are the creative ways the main characters come up with to have their own spaces? Why was their own space important and necessary for the main characters?
- **Read other books about the experiences of siblings. Compare and contrast the characters’ experiences in several different stories, such as *A Space for Me*, *Cora Cooks Pancit* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/cora-cooks-pancit>), and *No Mush Today* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/no-mush-today>).** Discuss how whether a story is told from a younger or older sibling’s point of view impacts a story.
- **Use passages from the book to study narrative writing craft strategies. For instance, use the description of Lucas’s mess-making, or how Alex builds his space, to model the writing strategy “show, don’t tell.”** See additional articles for support on how to teach students about this particular technique of writing (<https://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet/TabId/270/ArtMID/888/ArticleID/138/Activities-for-Image-Driven-Writing.aspx>) (https://www.csustan.edu/sites/default/files/groups/Writing%20Center/documents/showingvstelling_revised.pdf)
- **Have an author study of Cathryn Falwell with some of her other books, including *David’s Drawings* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/david-s-drawings>),**

Butterflies for Kiri (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/butterflies-for-kiri>), and ***Rainbow Stew*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rainbow-stew>). Make connections between the texts. How does each character demonstrate creativity and adaptability? What themes do Cathryn Falwell's books have in common? How are the characters similar? How are they different? What do you think Cathryn Falwell's message is to her readers across all the books?

Social Studies & STEM

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Talk about how being outdoors made Alex's and Lucas's spaces even more special. Read other books about characters enjoying time in nature.** As a class, learn more about the benefits for people of time spent in nature, and record students' findings on a chart.
- **Study the pictures of Alex's and Lucas's outdoor spaces to notice what makes them sturdy. How are the parts held up?** Experiment with building a sturdy, cozy space for a stuffed animal or figurine using similar techniques. If a structure breaks, brainstorm strategies for making it stronger.

Art

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Study the page that shows Alex thinking and dreaming in his space, which shows his daydreams drawn in white.** Have students create a portrait of themselves in a special space and use the same technique to add their thinking or a daydream with white chalk, crayon, or colored pencil.
- **Study the book's illustrations to notice Cathryn Falwell's use of cut-paper collage.** Have students use this technique to create a picture of their bedroom or another special space. Students may refer to Cathryn Falwell's other Lee & Low titles for more inspiration, including *David's Drawings* ([leeandlow.com/books/david-s-drawings](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/david-s-drawings)), *Butterflies for Kiri* ([leeandlow.com/books/butterflies-for-kiri](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/butterflies-for-kiri)), and *Rainbow Stew* ([leeandlow.com/books/rainbow-stew](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rainbow-stew)).
- **Encourage students to select illustrations that resonated with them from *A Space for Me*.** Have students write reflections about their chosen illustrations. What stood out to them? How did the illustrations make them feel? What did the illustrations make them think about?

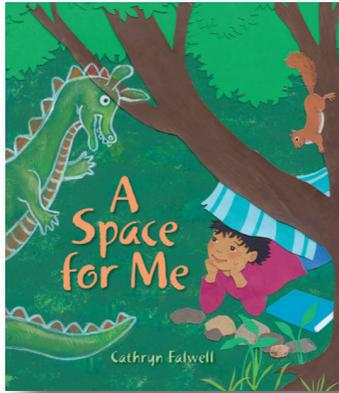
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **As a class, brainstorm questions for adults related to their experiences with siblings—or lack thereof—as children.** Include questions about room sharing, spending time alone, playing together, and conflict resolution. Share responses at school and discuss connections among them.
- **Challenge students to build a special space from recycled or repurposed materials at home.** If possible, have them share a photo of themselves in their spaces with the class.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Cathryn Falwell is the author and illustrator of twenty-five picture books. In her stories, she loves to encourage children to explore nature and foster their imaginative play as a way to develop empathy and nurture their social-emotional learning. Falwell lives alongside a small pond in Maine and has a special place—her very own treehouse—that she happily shares with her grandchildren. You can find her online at cathrynfalwellbooks.com.

REVIEWS

"Pesky siblings will be pesky siblings—but the final page-turn shows they can be welcome playmates, too." —*The Horn Book*

"The theme will resonate with siblings who share rooms and offers a practical solution to get one's own space, when a separate room isn't an option." —*School Library Journal*

"Find space on the shelf for this sweet family story." —*Kirkus Reviews*

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