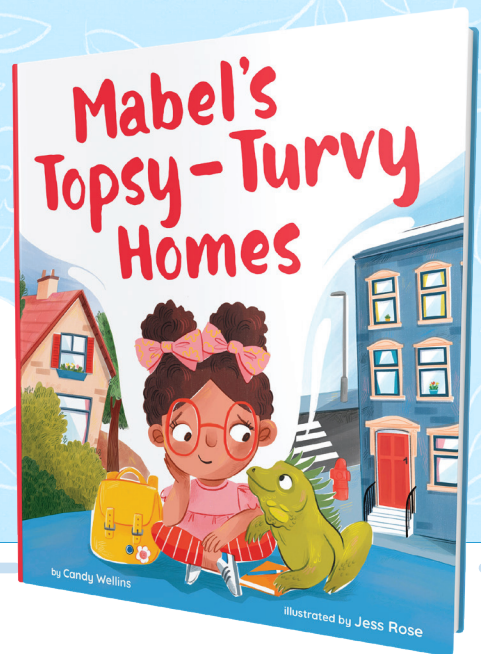# Mabel's Topsy-Turvy Homes

by Candy Wellins • illustrated by Jess Rose

Educator's Guide

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This classroom guide is designed for K–6 educators. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

ABOUT THE BOOK

New routines, rules, and bedrooms: after her parents' divorce, Mabel's new living situation has her feeling topsy-turvy. As she learns to adjust to having two different houses, she struggles to understand her anxiety and frustration. But a weekend caring for the class pet helps Mabel realize that having more than one home isn't such a bad thing after all. Mabel and Izzy the Iguana make a colorful duo in this lighthearted picture book, helping kids adapt to their own new, topsy-turvy adventures.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Candy Wellins is a former elementary school teacher and has a BA in journalism and a master's in literacy education. She's now a full-time mom to three wonderful children who keep her up-to-date and immersed in children's literature. She is the author of *Saturdays Are for Stella* and *The Stars Beckoned: Edward White's Amazing Walk in Space*. She and her family make their home in central Texas. When she's not reading, writing, or mothering, Candy loves running, traveling, and taking naps.
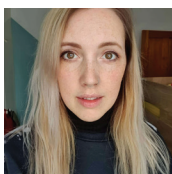
Jess Rose is an illustrator and designer living in Yorkshire, England. She has loved to draw her entire life, creating characters and helping tell stories that children can relate to. She has two children and uses her experience as a parent to inspire her work.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Before reading

- Think about the title. What does the expression *topsy-turvy* mean? (Dictionaries say it means upside-down or in a state of confusion.) Why do you think Mabel's homes are topsy-turvy? What other things might be described as topsy-turvy?

- Do you notice that the word *home* is pluralized to *homes*? Why would Mabel have more than one home?

- Who is the author? What do authors do? Who is the illustrator? What do illustrators do?

- Take a book walk. Look through the pages of the story and discuss the pictures before reading. Can you tell what is happening? Do you think you know why Mabel has more than one home?

During reading

- Can you make any connections to the story (text-to-self, text-to-text, or text-to-media)?

- On page 4, it says, "Mabel doesn't like having two houses. She finds it very confusing." Why do you think it would be confusing to have two homes?

- Look at the picture of Mabel on page 10. Can you tell how she's feeling? How do you know she's feeling this way?

- Izzy goes on a lot of adventures. Which is your favorite? What would you do if you got to take Izzy home for a weekend?

- Compare Mabel's expressions from the beginning of the story to the end of the story. How have they changed? How has Mabel changed?

After reading

- Mabel has two homes because her parents are divorced. Can you think of other challenges she might face besides just having two homes?

- Can you think of other reasons a person might have two homes besides having divorced parents? (Kids may mention things like foster care, new jobs, immigration, visiting Grandma for the summer, getting a home renovation.) What other challenges might kids in these situations face?

Compare and contrast

- Use a Venn Diagram to track differences and similarities between Mabel's two homes.

- Or compare Mabel's topsy-turvy homes with other unusual literary homes. Maybe the old woman who lived in a shoe, or Dorothy's house that lands on a witch in *The Wizard of Oz.*

Venn Diagram

Different   Same   Different
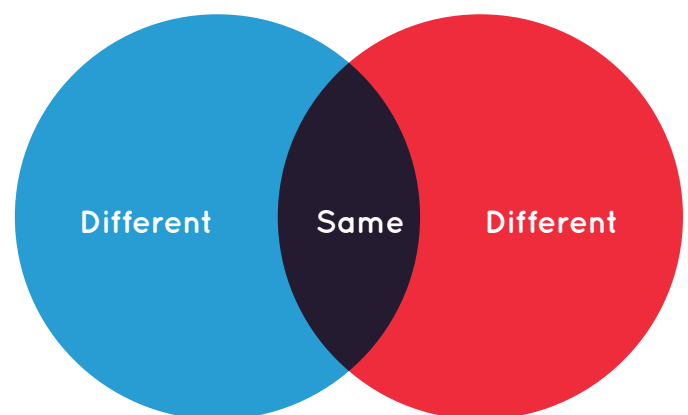
Possessives vs. plurals

Notice that there are two words that end with the letter "s" in the title of the book: *Mabel's* and *Homes*. What is different about these two words?

Homes is a plural word. In English, plural words generally end with an "s." Because Mabel has two homes, an "s" is added to the word *home* to show there is more than one.

In this story, there is only one Mabel. Yet the title has the word *Mabel's* in it. In this case, the "s" does not show a plural, but rather a possession. In English, you can add an apostrophe (') and an "s" to a singular noun to show possession of something. In this case, Mabel is showing possession of the topsy-turvy homes. Think of an apostrophe as a tiny lasso rope to hold the things that belong to that noun.

Nouns can be plurals or possessives (or even both).

If another girl named Mabel joined the story, we might say something like "Both Mabels wanted to take Izzy home for the weekend."

Likewise, if we wanted to point out a detail about one of Mabel's homes, we could say, "Her home's front door is red."

Try making the following nouns plural and possessive, then use one pair correctly in a sentence or paragraph.

Noun	Plural	Possessive
Example: home	homes	home's
ilguana		
bedroom		
travel journal		
storm		
space ninja		
Challenge: slice of leftover pizza		

Travel journal

Create a travel journal for students in your class. If you do not have a class pet, choose a stuffed animal that can serve as the class mascot. Allow students to take the animal and journal home for a weekend and record the adventures they share. During the week, leave the journal accessible for students to read in their free time.

Writing prompts

- Pretend Izzy is your class's pet. Write a journal entry explaining what you did together over the weekend. Your entry can be totally made up or based on what you actually did over the weekend.
- Would you like having two houses like Mabel? List some advantages and disadvantages of having two homes.
- Mabel feels like her homes are topsy-turvy because they aren't the same. Can you imagine another way a house could be topsy-turvy? Maybe it's upside down or floating on a cloud? Dream up a topsy-turvy house and write a paragraph describing it.
- Pretend you are an animal. What kind are you? What kind of home do you live in? What do you like about your home? What do you dislike about it? What might make your animal home feel topsy-turvy?

SOCIAL STUDIES

Help someone who feels topsy-turvy

Find someone in your community who feels a bit topsy-turvy. You may want to choose someone yourself or brainstorm as a class. Think of ways you can help that person feel better. You may choose to send notes of encouragement, deliver a care package, or support in some other way.

Some ideas of who to help may include:

- A refugee family who has just moved to your community.
- A family displaced by fire or natural disaster.
- Homeless children in your community.
- Children in foster care.

Hold an election

Pretend your class is going to have a class pet (or class mascot). (Your class pet can be real or stuffed.) Divide into groups of three to four. Each group should nominate an animal for the election.

- Come up with at least five reasons why your animal should be the class pet.
- Have one member of each group share the reasons with the rest of the class. You can do this by giving a speech or sharing a poster or slide presentation.
- Create ballots and give one to each member of the class. Have everyone vote in secret. Then tally the results.
- Celebrate your new class pet!

Study Native American homes

Homes may not always reflect *who* you live with, but many times they can show *where* you live. Look at examples of the following Native American homes (teepee, longhouse, adobe house, igloo, wattle, and daub house).

(You can see pictures of each type and more at this website: www.native-languages.org/houses).

Look at each house for clues as to where the house might be located and why.

For example, students may note that teepees have open roofs, which means they might not be somewhere that has a lot of rain. They might also note the animal hides that make up the tent and infer where those animals might live.

House	Clues	Where it might be
teepee		
longhouse		
adobe house		
igloo		
wattle and daub house		

STEAM

Collect data

Mabel always has the same thing for breakfast: a bowl of oatmeal and a green smoothie. Unless she doesn't.

Track the foods you eat for breakfast (or any other meal) for a week. Is it always the same or are there differences? Compare your data with your classmates. Create a graph of your findings.

Challenge: Track everything you eat for an entire week.

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Create a glyph of your home(s)

Students will need the following materials:

- A cutout of a house on black construction paper. (Students can cut these out themselves to make them unique.)
- Glue
- Access to one-inch-square pieces of paper in the following colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink, and brown.

Give students the following directions. The colored squares are going to be windows on your house. The number of windows you have depends on who lives in your house.

Yellow = you

Blue = dad/stepdad

Red = mom/stepmom

Orange = sister

Green = brother

Purple = pet

Pink = someone not related to you (like a roommate)

Brown = grandparent or other relative

Build your own home

Students can use various STEAM materials to design and build their own houses or try one of the activities below:

Option 1: Milk Jug Houses
Turn old milk or juice jugs into homes. Students can draw windows and doors or use an adult's help to cut them out.

Option 2: Paper Bag Houses
Give each student a brown paper lunch bag. Students may decorate the front and back of the house as they see fit. Filling the bag with scrap paper or another filling material will help give it weight. Use a rectangle of construction paper to make a roof. Staple the roof onto the house (students may choose to add a chimney too). Students can choose to add their house onto a green piece of construction paper to make a yard. Students may display their houses together in a larger community.

Option 3: Faux Gingerbread Houses
Use graham crackers and icing to build a house. As a challenge, ask students to add a chimney, doors, second story, etc.

For fun, you can give students small candies (M&Ms, etc.) to decorate.

(For a less messy version, give students uniform pieces of thick cardboard and glue to do the same activity.)

Other Ideas
- Have students paint on rocks and construct a house with them.
- Use clay, straws, and popsicle sticks for building.
- Use found natural materials to create a full-size house outside (branches, palm fronds, stones, or whatever is native to where you live).

Animal Homes

Challenge students to think about the different kinds of homes animals live in.

- Give groups of students small animal figurines or laminated animal cards. Have the groups make a list of each animal's home, or have students group animals with similar homes.
- Using STEM materials, construct animal home models.
- Chart animal homes based on ones that are below ground, on the ground, and above ground.
- For a specific animal, list the advantages of its home.

ART

Artful iguanas

Give each student a copy of an iguana's body outline. (Alternately, students could draw their own.)

- Using small paper squares, students can make a mosaic on the iguana's body.
- Students can draw repeating patterns on the iguana using markers or crayons.
- Show photographs of real iguanas and challenge students to paint or color a realistic iguana.

A community of homes

- Students may begin by creating a model of their own home.
- You might encourage students to make a model of a different type of home than what they may be used to (apartment building, RV, boat, cottage, etc.).
- Students may also want to create a mural of different animal homes (shell, log, nest, etc.).

Physical education

Create a topsy-turvy obstacle course

Include obstacles that will make course-runners feel a bit topsy-turvy. Consider using some of the following items:

- Balance beams or boards
- Tunnels
- Bridges (especially wobbly ones)
- Hoops (to crawl through, over, or around)
- Hanging bars
- Rope swings
- Scooters

Also consider some of the following limitations:

- Completing using only one foot
- Using non-dominant limbs only
- Wearing a blindfold for certain events
- Holding the obstacle course on uneven terrain