



Beat the Jitters!

Read Julie Danneberg's *First Day Jitters* aloud to your class. Follow with these activities, and you're sure to beat those first day jitters!

Discussing the Story

Before reading the book, show students the cover of *First Day Jitters*. Ask them what they think the story is about and if they can guess what will happen. List guesses on the chalkboard. After reading, compare the class's guess to reality. Can you judge a book by its cover?

Ask students:

- How does Sarah feel about her new school? Why do you think she is nervous? Have you ever been in a situation like Sarah, where you were scared or nervous to do something?
- Why is meeting someone new scary for some people? What do you think they are afraid of?
- What would you say to help someone feel comfortable around new people? How can you tell Sarah is nervous? Do similar things happen to your body when you get nervous? What are some other things that can happen when a person is anxious? Possible answers: bite your fingernails, shake, heart beats fast, heavy breathing, sweaty palms, etc...
- What kind of children does Sarah imagine will be at her new school? How does she think they will behave? What kind of children does Mr. Hartwell imagine? Why do you think Sarah and Mr. Hartwell have such different views of Sarah's new classmates?
- Were you surprised that this book is really about a teacher? Why is the ending a surprise?

Telling Your Own Story



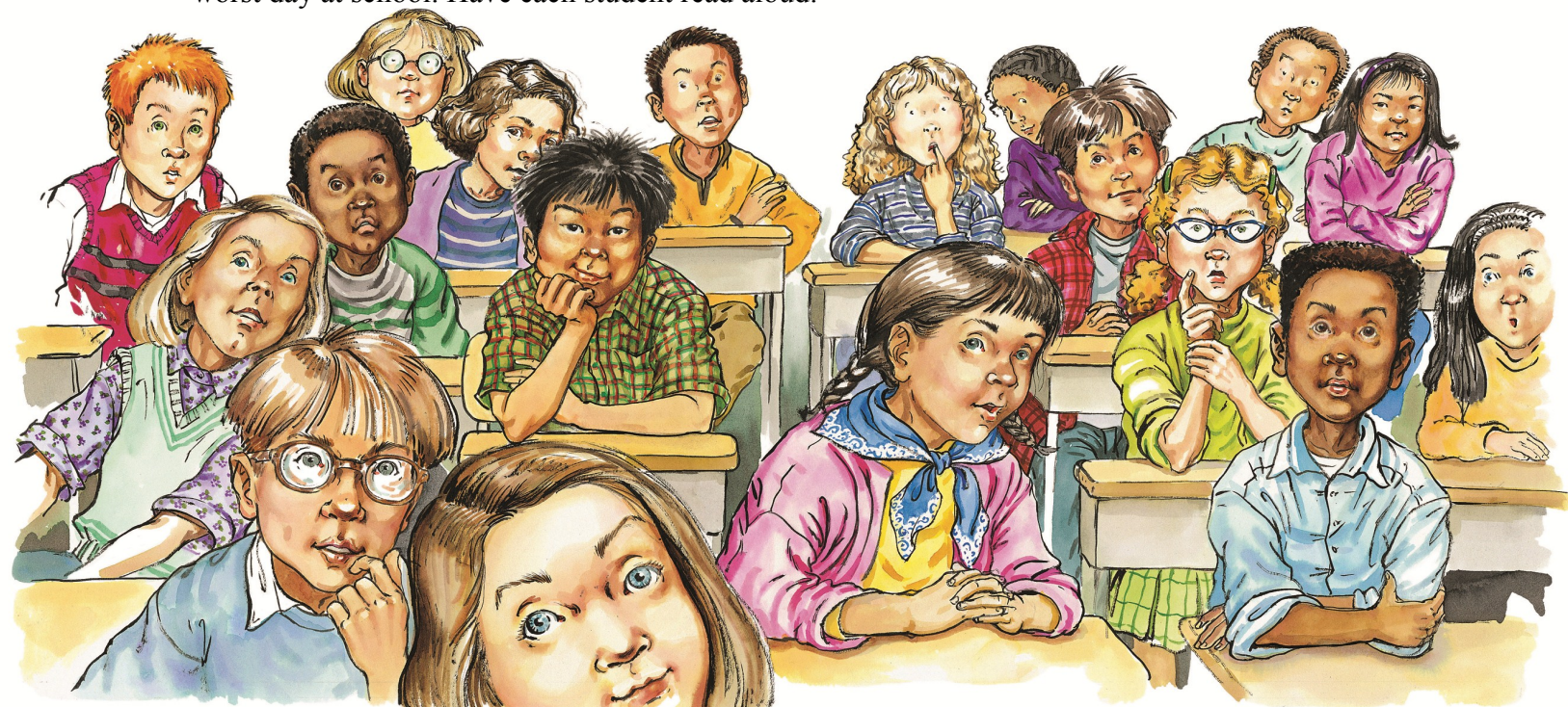
1. *First Day Jitters* is about a first-time teacher's first day at school. It may surprise students to know that teachers get nervous too. Share *First Day Jitters* with your students, and then tell them a funny story about your first day of teaching (or any first day of school story). Incorporate visual aids or create a timeline of events as you go, demonstrating narrative and strategies of communication.

2. Have students think about what made them nervous this morning, and then write a class-generated list of what your students report. Possible responses include: they didn't know how they were going to get to lunch, that they were scared the teacher was going to be mean, or they didn't know where the bathroom was. As you write the list, you can help to alleviate some of your students' fears by answering or explaining some of the unknowns. If possible, after the activity is complete, take your students on a tour of the school to help get rid of as many unknowns as possible.

3. Using a large piece of chart paper, make a list of surprises that students had from the year before. Next make a list of things that your students are looking forward to this school year. Have students draw one of the things they are looking forward to and if they can, write a sentence about it. Their completed pictures can go on a bulletin board titled, "It's Going to be a Great Year!"

4. Have students write their own *First Day Jitters* book. This activity is especially appropriate for kindergartners or first graders, who have limited writing abilities. The teacher should have multiple pages copied for each student. On each page is a sentence with a blank that the student should fill in with his or her own word. Then they can draw a picture to match. When they have filled in their pages they can practice reading to a partner. At the end of the day, each student will have a personalized book to take home and read to his or her parents.

5. Ask students to imagine the perfect first day at school. What would happen? What would they do? Then ask students to imagine their idea of the worst first day of school. Next have students write a paragraph or page reporting on their idea of the perfect day at school and the worst day at school. Have each student read aloud.



6. Encourage students to expand their writing into a short story. They may cast themselves as the main character, or create a new character who must undergo either a perfect or horrible first day at school. For more advanced students, review writing elements such as plot, dialogue, description, and of course—the element of surprise!

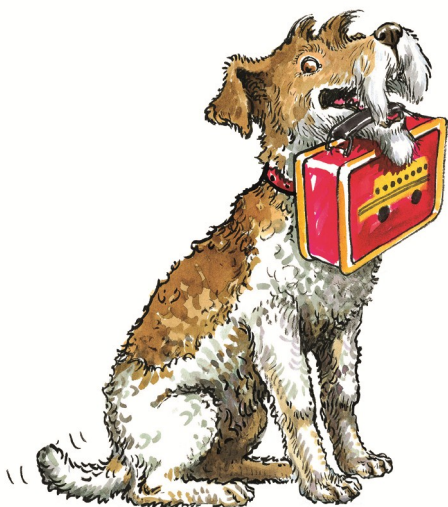
Breaking the Ice

1. Put students into pairs. Each student must tell their partner about a time when they were nervous or anxious. How did they feel? How did they act? What made them feel better? Once students are finished discussing, go around the room and ask each student to describe the experience of their partner. Optional: Have students illustrate the time that they were nervous in an unknown situation. They can draw a picture of what they imagined, and then draw a picture of what really happened.

2. Trace every student in the class on roll paper using a black marker. On one side of the body have students write some of their favorite things. Examples include school subject, music, color, TV shows, etc. On the other side of their body have students write their goals for the year. Examples include making friends, making good grades, joining a team, etc. Students can also color and decorate the outline of their body to reflect their goals and interests. Next, hang the projects up in the hallway or your classroom and discuss each person’s goals and favorite things. You’ll be surprised how much everyone has in common!

3. On scraps of paper, write situations in which people usually get nervous and put the scraps into a hat. Examples could include flying on a plane, meeting someone new, giving a speech, or taking a test. Next divide the class into two teams and toss a coin to see which team goes first. The lucky team must pick two members to go in front of the class and pick a situation from a hat. Give the players a moment to prepare. Setting a time limit of one minute, the players must act out the situation. The team that guesses the situation correctly wins a point. After each skit ask the class to name some ways that a person in that situation could have gotten over his or her nervousness. Write each suggestion on the board until you have a useful list on coping with the jitters.

4. The game “Two Truths and a Lie” is a fun getting-to-know-you game that incorporates the idea of surprise. Players must come up with three statements about themselves—two that are true, and one that isn’t. For example, the first player might say:
 “It might surprise you to know that my middle name is Marie.
 It might surprise you to know that I drove a motorcycle to work.
 It might surprise you to know that my dog just had puppies last week. It might surprise you to know that two of these things are true and one is not. Which are the facts?”
 Have students try to guess which “surprise” is not real. Then have each student tell his or her own set of two truths and a lie.





Julie Danneberg

“As a kid, when I daydreamed or played at being grown-up, I never imagined myself as a writer. Instead I dreamed of being a famous girl reporter, a secret agent, and a teacher.”

With an imagination like that, it’s hard to believe that Colorado native Julie Danneberg never considered a career as a writer.

After graduating from the University of Colorado, Boulder, Julie became a teacher. In her classroom, she read many children’s books, and witnessed the profound impact a good book can have on a child. “I was motivated to try and write books like the ones I enjoy reading.”

When Julie became a mother, she began to seriously consider a career in writing. During weekly trips to the library with her children, she found herself enjoying the picture books as much as they did. “The funny thing is that my kids eventually graduated from the children’s section of the library and I never did!”

Writing children’s books was the perfect medium for blending Julie’s many interests – working with kids, being home with her family,

being creative, and being her own boss. She even fulfilled her childhood dreams of becoming the intrepid reporter and world-class secret agent through her research, writing and character development in her books.

Julie earned great success with *First Day Jitters*—the funny and engaging story of Sarah Jane Hartwell’s first day at a new school. The surprise ending charms and delights readers time and again. Teachers and students alike love these stories and they are perennial favorites for back-to-school.

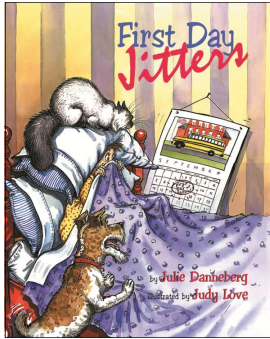
Julie lives with her husband and two children in Denver. She teaches at a local middle school where she garners ideas for her books. When she’s not writing, Julie enjoys reading, quilting, gardening, and spending time with her family.

Visit Julie at www.juliedanneberg.com.

A Visit with Julie Danneberg

Being a writer gives Julie the chance to learn new things, go to new places, and meet new people. During a typical visit, Julie reads one of her books, shares pages from her writing journal, and talks about the writing process.

To arrange a visit, contact Julie at (303) 793-9945, or call Charlesbridge at (800) 225-3214, ext. 122.



First Day Jitters
Illustrated by Judy Love

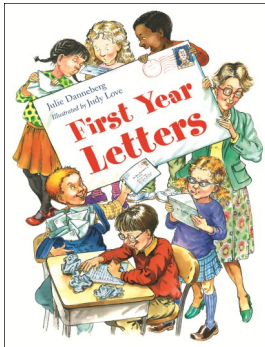
- *Publishers Weekly* Children's Bestsellers September 2002
- *Publishers Weekly* Children's Bestsellers September 2003
- *Publishers Weekly* Children's Bestsellers September 2004
- *Publishers Weekly* Children's Bestsellers September 2005
- New Jersey State Library Pick of the Decade 1995-2005
- 2001 *Storytelling World* Award

"Students will be delighted with the surprise ending when Sarah's true identity is revealed, proving that just about everyone has first-day jitters when it comes to starting school."—*School Library Journal*

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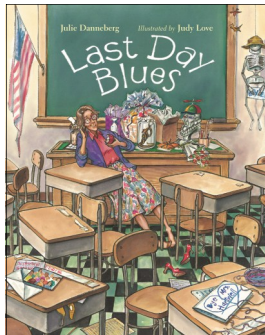


First Year Letters
Illustrated by Judy Love

- 2004 Learning Teachers' Choice Award for Children's Books
- "Veteran teachers should purchase multiple copies of this book to distribute to rookies before the first day of school each year."

—*Journal of Children's Literature*

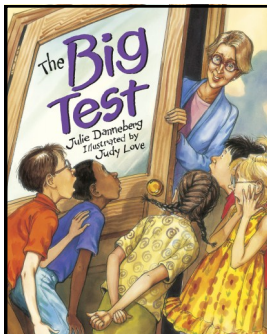
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Illustrated by Judy Love

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Illustrated by Judy Love

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