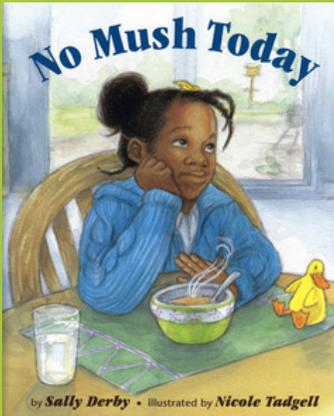


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

# No Mush Today

written by Sally Derby  
illustrated by Nicole Tadgell

## About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

\*Reading Level: Grades 2–3

Interest Level: PreK–3

Guided Reading Level: I

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: 1.7/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: AD470L

\*Reading level based on the Spache  
Readability Formula

**Themes:** Siblings, Sharing and Giving, Overcoming Obstacles, Food, Families (Grandparents), Conflict Resolution, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Growing Up/Independence, Gratitude, Self-Control/Self-Regulation, African/African American Interest

## SYNOPSIS

“Not gonna eat my mush.

Not gonna eat it,” I say.

Squishy, yucky, yellow stuff—  
mush is baby food.

Nonie’s had enough!

Enough mushy mush for breakfast.

Enough of her baby brother’s crying.

So off she goes to live at Grandma’s house.

No mush or baby there.

Grandma attends to Nonie.

Grandma takes her out into the world of grown-ups.

After a day away from home, will Nonie reconsider her move and return to Momma, Daddy, and baby brother?

Maybe . . . maybe . . .

if she can make a deal about breakfast!



## BACKGROUND

**Mush (From the author):** Mush is cornmeal that has been stirred into boiling water and cooked until it has turned into a thick, soft sort of porridge. Nonie eats hers out of a bowl, like oatmeal, with milk and sugar or syrup poured over it. Mush may also be chilled overnight in a loaf pan, then sliced thin and fried crisp in bacon drippings. Served with butter and maple syrup, friend mush is a hearty breakfast. Grits and polenta are also types of cornmeal similar to mush.

A recipe for cornmeal mush can be found at <http://www.bobsredmill.com/recipes/how-to-make/bobs-red-mill-cornmeal-mush/>.

**Awards and honors for No Mush Today:**

**Children's Books of the Year**, Bank Street College of Education

### Additional titles to teach about family and siblings:

**Cora Cooks Pancit** written by Lazo Gilmore, illustrated by Kristi Valiant

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2840>

**Bringing Asha Home** written by Uma Krishnaswami, illustrated by Jamel Akib

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2367>

**My Very Own Room / Mi propio cuartito** written by Amada Irma Pérez, illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2798>

**Elizabeti's Doll** written by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, illustrated by Christy Hale

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2387>

**Mama Elizabeti** written by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, illustrated by Christy Hale

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2425>

**Rafi and Rosi** written and illustrated by Lulu Delacre

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2919>

**Rafi and Rosi Carnival** written and illustrated by Lulu Delacre

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2921>

**Rainbow Stew** written and illustrated by Cathryn Falwell

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2816>

**Only One Year** written by Andrea Cheng, illustrated by Nicole Wong

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2715>

**The Jones Family Express** written and illustrated by Javaka Steptoe

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2414>

**The Birthday Swap** written and illustrated by Loretta Lopez

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2363>



## 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.

### Content Specific

mush, sweet pea, Sunday hat, offering, paddleboat

### Academic

squishy, bawling, attend, streaming, nod

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, 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:

1. Have you ever had to eat something you really didn't like? How did it make you feel?
2. What can be hard about having a baby sibling?
3. Have you ever been mad at your family? Why? What did you do? Did you eventually feel better? What helped you?

### 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's note, title page, author and illustrator's dedications, and illustrations.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out about:

- what makes Nonie mad and what she does about it
- how Nonie's feelings change during the story

Encourage students to consider why the author, Sally Derby, would want to share this story with young people.



## 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 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. What does Nonie say about her breakfast? Why doesn't she like mush?
2. What does Nonie do?
3. Where do Nonie and Grandma go? What happens on the way there?
4. What happens after church?
5. What does Nonie eat at the picnic?
6. What do Nonie and her dad do together?
7. Who is waiting when Nonie gets home? What does Momma say?
8. What does Nonie ask Momma to promise? Why?

### 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. Based on the illustration, what's happening during breakfast? What do you think Nonie's parents might be doing and saying?
2. Where does Grandma live? How can you tell? How do you think being neighbors impacts Nonie's relationship with her Grandma?
3. What's different about Grandma's house that Nonie thinks will be better? What does Nonie mean, "Grandma attends when I'm talkin'?" What do you

think she wanted her parents to "attend" to during breakfast?

4. Based on the illustrations, how does Nonie feel when she's walking to church? Why does she frown at her dad during church? How does she feel when she hears about the picnic? What about when she starts to eat?
5. How is being at the church picnic different than being at Nonie's house? Why are these differences important to Nonie?
6. What does it mean when Nonie says, "Grandma's bones want a Sunday sit, my bones want to move?" What could Nonie be thinking when she's deciding how to respond to her dad about the boat ride?
7. Why do you think Nonie's dad says, "Lots to learn from ducks?"
8. Based on the text and illustration, how does Nonie feel when she's on the swing?
9. When Nonie notices, "Families leavin' one by one, goin' home together," what might she be thinking?
10. Why does realizing "Baby's been missin' me some?" help Nonie decide to "sleep home one more night?" What about when "Momma nods, attendin' now?" Look closely at the illustration. What are she and her brother holding? What's the significance of the toy duck?

### 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. What might cause a child to want to run away? Have you ever felt like running away? Why? What happened?
2. Describe how each of Nonie's family members responded to her anger. How did their responses



“The warm, realistic watercolor double-page spreads show Nonie’s anger, jealousy, and feeling of connections with her loving African American family and in the multiracial church community.”

–**Booklist**

“Using watercolors, Tadgell creates a soft dreamlike world filled with details. The text ... is simple and straightforward. Overall, a delightful book.”

–**Kirkus Reviews**

“The spare text deftly conveys Nonie’s reactions...which are clearly reflected in Tadgell’s realistic, folksy watercolors... Ultimately, this gentle story addresses the universal frustration older siblings often face.”

–**School Library Journal**

help her manage her feelings? What helps you when you’re angry?

3. Imagine Nonie keeps a diary or journal. What might she write in her diary about the day this story happened?
4. Nonie’s dad says, “Ducklings stick with their families. Lots to learn from ducks.” What makes a strong family? Give examples from the text and your own life.
5. How is the expression, “There’s no place like home” relevant to this story? What does that expression mean to you?

## ELL/ESL 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 how they spend time with their families.
  5. The book contains several 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. Explicitly teach and practice using various words for emotions relevant to this story, such as angry, furious, proud, resentful, lonely, joyful, relieved, etc.



## 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 and Craft and Structure, Strands 5 and 6 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 9)

(Writing Standards, Production and Distribution of Writing, Strand 4)

1. Create a summary of the book using Nonie's emotions as a guide. Use post-its to label the emotions conveyed by her face and body language at key points in the story. Then ask students to compose sentences to expand upon each post-it and put the sentences together to retell the story.
2. Write letters from one of Nonie's parents or her grandmother to Nonie. Think about how the adults would describe the day from their perspectives and what they'd say to Nonie.
3. Act out this story as a class, with students playing the roles of Nonie and her family members. If you have a house corner or dramatic play area, provide bowls and spoons for "mush" and a baby doll so students can act out scenes from the story on their own.
4. Write a recipe for cornmeal mush on a chart for students to read. Prepare it at school for students to taste. (Use this slow cooker recipe if you don't have a stove available: <http://www.food.com/recipe/crock-pot-method-for-polenta-grits-or-mush-212077>.) Record students' reactions and compare them to Nonie's.
5. Read *Sunday Shopping*, also by Sally Derby (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2883>). Compare and contrast this book with *No Mush Today*, focusing

on the experiences of Nonie and Evie and their relationships with their families.

#### Art

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)

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

1. Have students complete the coloring pages found here: [https://www.leeandlow.com/images/pdfs/activities/coloringsheets-no\\_mush\\_today.pdf](https://www.leeandlow.com/images/pdfs/activities/coloringsheets-no_mush_today.pdf). Have them add speech bubbles or captions sharing what the people (or animals) might be saying related to the story.
2. Read the interview with illustrator Nicole Tadgell found here: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2698/interviews>. Ask students to create pictures of their families using a simplified process similar to the one she describes (e.g., brainstorm/talk to partners in detail about how family members look, draw outlines with a pencil, then paint with watercolors.)

#### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Craft and Structure, Strand 4)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 6)

1. Have students write a brief summary of the story focusing on the problem and solution. Share the summaries at home and ask students to discuss with their families what "attending" looks like to them. Share and compare responses at school.
2. Have students interview a parent or other adult family member about their experiences as a child. Generate related questions as a group, such as "What food did you dislike as a child? What did your family members do that made you mad? How did you respond? What did you do to spend time with your family?"



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Sally Derby** is the author of numerous books for children. Among her popular stories are Lee & Low's *My Steps*, winner of a *Child* magazine Best Children's Book Award, and *Sunday Shopping*. Her books are notable for their heartfelt family stories told from a spot-on childlike point of view. The inspiration for *No Mush Today* came from a young girl at Derby's church, and from her own childhood dislike of cornmeal mush. The mother of six grown children, Derby lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, with her husband.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Nicole Tadgell** was born in Detroit, Michigan. She has over twenty books and numerous educational pieces published for trade and educational publishers, including the Americas Award-winning *Josias*, *Hold the Book*. Many of her books have been selected to be among the Bank Street College of Education Best Children's Books, the Smithsonian Notable Books for Children, Cooperative Children's Book Center "Choices" Annual List, and New York Public Library's Best 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing among others. Find her online at [nicoletadgell.com](http://nicoletadgell.com) and on her blog <http://nicoletadgell.blogspot.com>.

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](http://leeandlow.com).

## ORDERING INFORMATION

### On the Web:

[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

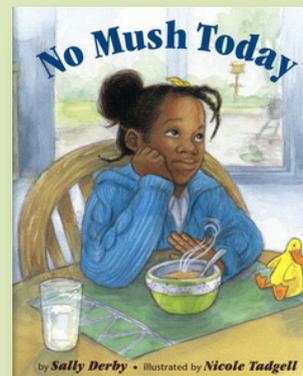
[www.leeandlow.com/books/2698](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/2698) (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for *No Mush Today*



\$17.95, HARDCOVER

978-1-60060-238-2

32 pages, 8 x 10

\*Reading Level: Grades 2–3

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades PreK–3

Guided Reading Level: I

Accelerated Reader® Level/  
Points: 1.7/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: AD470L

**THEMES:** Siblings, Sharing and Giving, Overcoming Obstacles, Food, Families (Grandparents), Conflict Resolution, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Growing Up/Independence, Gratitude, Self-Control/Self-Regulation, African/African American Interest

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2698>

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