

I Can't Go to School
but I Can Do
Lots of Things

Cathryn O'Sullivan



Illustrations by
Rachel Moss



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Written by Cathryn O'Sullivan and Illustrated by Rachel Moss with funding from Do Good Jamaica

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Here are some suggestions to help you as you read the book together with your child(ren):

- ▶ For children who are starting to learn to read, you can point out simple sight words. These are words they should be able to recognize easily and read without sounding them out e.g. "you, us, to, the, we."
- ▶ They can also practice to sound out simple words such as "sad" or "bug."
- ▶ You can talk about rhyming words, which are words that sound the same at the end, such as "glad" and "sad" which end in "ad." You can also play rhyming games where you make up rhyming words (made up/nonsense words are fine).
- ▶ While you are reading, ask children open-ended questions that don't necessarily have a right answer, but encourage them to think and answer with more than one word. For example, "how do you think the child is feeling about not being able to go to school?"; "why is it important for us to wear masks and keep a safe distance when we are around others?" or, "can you think of other fun things we can do while we are not at school?"
- ▶ After reading, you can talk with your child(ren) about how they are feeling about what is going on. Be honest with children about what is happening and answer their questions in a child-friendly way but do not overshare with young children. They can't handle as much information as adults, so you can explain that some people might get sick, and we want people to stay healthy so we might not be able to go out or visit older relatives during this time. Ways that we can help are to wear masks and wash our hands (which you can turn into a fun activity by singing songs, dancing while you wash hands etc.) Encourage your child(ren) to share their feelings and talk about things they can do to help them feel better when they are sad, such as drawing, playing games, taking deep breaths etc.

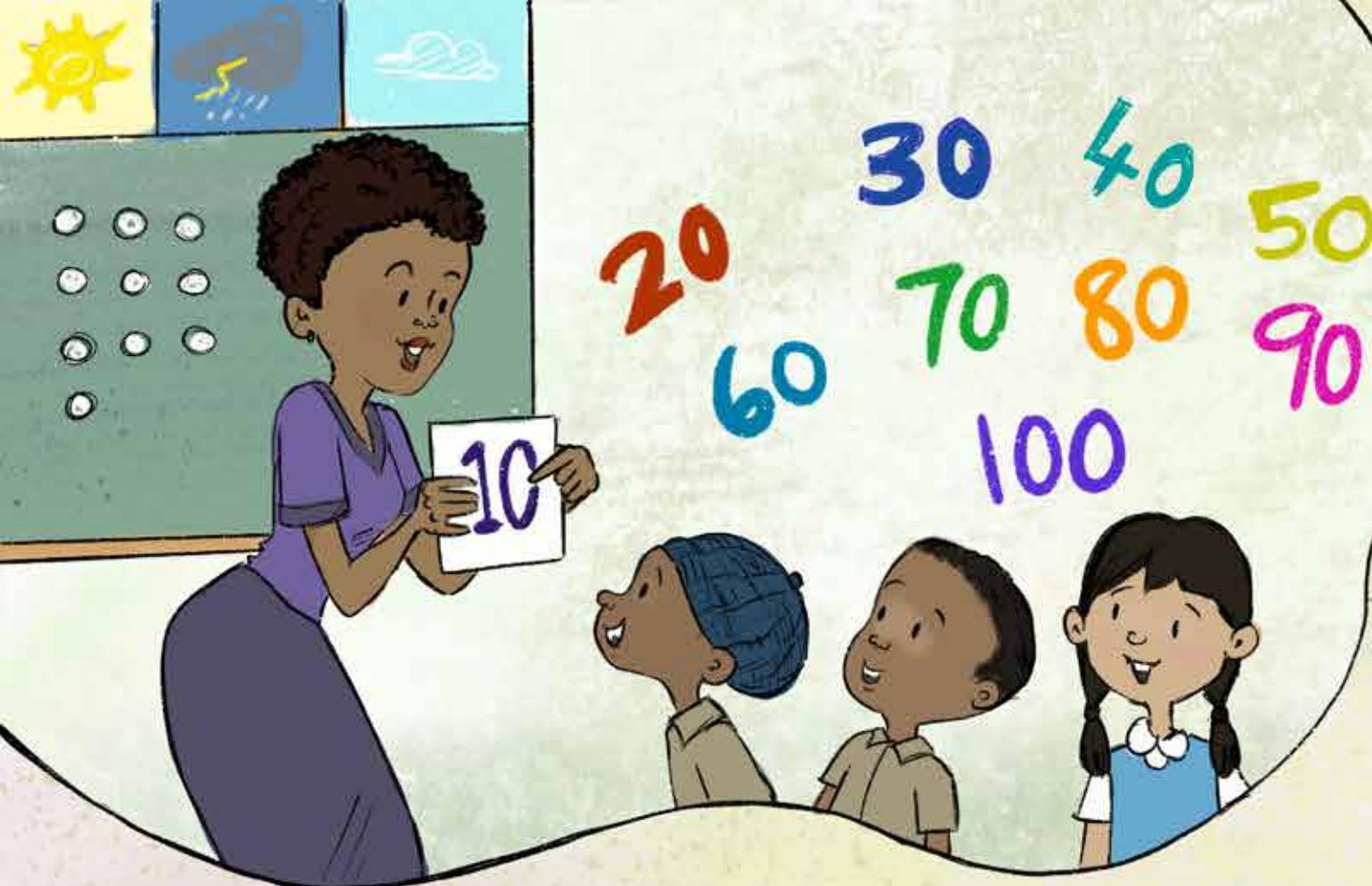
Here are some activities you can do after reading the story:

- ▶ Make up simple games that you can play together at home and allow your child(ren) to take the lead while playing.
- ▶ Encourage your child(ren) to think of something they would like to learn more about and set up a mini project to find out about it. You can do "research" by looking at books, calling and interviewing people, researching online if possible etc. Then, share information in a creative way of their choosing e.g. drawing pictures, making up a song or dance, role playing, and playing a game.
- ▶ Plan a simple party or celebration for someone you can't see right now. Children can come up with games and draw special signs and cards to share during the celebration. They can think of ways to celebrate - by calling them on the phone, using a video call or computer, and staying outside of their house with a decorated sign that they can see through the window etc.
- ▶ You can extend the ending of this book or make up a new story when interacting with someone on the phone or computer. Each person, including your child(ren), can take turns making up a line, then following on from the line as everyone creates the story together.
- ▶ Even when children return to school you can still use this book to help them to understand the school closure and the changes to their school schedule that might have taken effect (e.g. smaller class sizes, going to school a few times per week instead of every day etc.).
- ▶ You can also discuss other times that your child(ren) might need to be home from school e.g. during a prolonged illness or after a natural disaster, and think of fun things you can do together during this time.

Yesterday I went to school but today I couldn't.
I don't feel sick, but still I shouldn't.



I don't understand why I can't go.
But when I ask, my parents just say no.



I miss my teachers, my toys and my friends.
And I was just learning to count by tens.

My parents sit beside me and give me a hug.
They say there is a virus, a strange kind of bug.



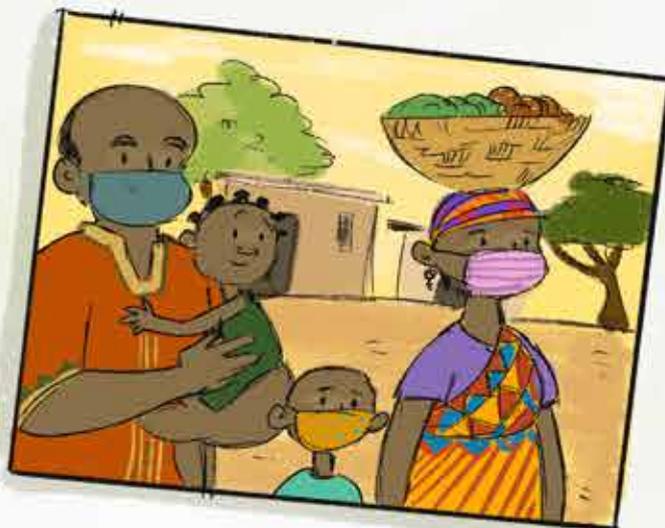
“Some people are sick from COVID-19.
We want you to stay safe, we aren't trying to be mean.”



If we keep our hands clean and stay home from school,
We can help people stay healthy. That's really cool!”



Is it only here or in other places?
"Almost every country has some cases."



Photos of people in masks are a surprise.
But I look again and still see their kind eyes.



“We are sorry you won’t be at school for a while.
But let’s think of things we can do to help us smile.”



We can talk to our friends and our teachers on the phone.
And we can still eat a super yummy ice cream cone.”



We can play games like 'Guess Who?'
And discover something new.



We can even have a party online.
We can decorate and make a great sign.



“Sometimes you might feel mad, frustrated or sad.
Then we can think of ways to help us feel glad.”



We can still dance and we can still sing.
We can still do a whole lot of things!

