

Evie's New Start



This book is part of the Tulliniliara Reading Series, developed by the Department of Family Services in Nunavut. The Tulliniliara Reading Series is a unique, Nunavut-developed literacy initiative that infuses awareness of skills, interests, and careers into a culturally appropriate reading program.

The Tulliniliara Reading Series was developed to support the reading level guidelines outlined in Uqalimaariuqsaniq, the Department of Education's reading program. Uqalimaariuqsaniq is a sequential and progressive Inuktitut reading program that supports students in their development as readers.

The Tulliniliara Reading Series will inform readers about jobs available in their community. It will also provide opportunities for readers to consider their own interests and skills when thinking about future work. Awareness of career possibilities at a young age will better prepare children to understand the opportunities that are open to them and the importance of staying in school.

These books represent the Department of Family Services' investment in the early development of our future workforce.

Book details

Level:	13
Text type:	Fiction
Subjects/themes:	Starting at a new school, having trouble paying attention in class, learning disabilities
Key features:	28 pages, short chapters, spot illustrations, dialogue, past tense, third-person point of view

Evie's New Start



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Chapter I: The First Day



Evie was nervous. This was her first day at her new school. She stood in front of her new classmates. She kept thinking about what her anaana had said to her that morning. “Try to do what you’re told, okay? This is a whole new start for you,” her anaana had said.

Evie often got into trouble at her old school. She wasn’t always great at doing her assignments. But she loved to make her friends laugh. She was the class clown.

“Hello, Evie. My name is Julie,” the teacher said. Julie had a kind face. She wore round glasses that were hanging from a chain around her neck. “Class, everyone say hello to Evie. Today is her first day at our school.”

“Hello, Evie,” everyone said.

“Can you tell us a bit about yourself?” Julie asked.

I want to go home, Evie thought. Not to the house down the road from the school where her ataatsiaq lived, but home to her old community.

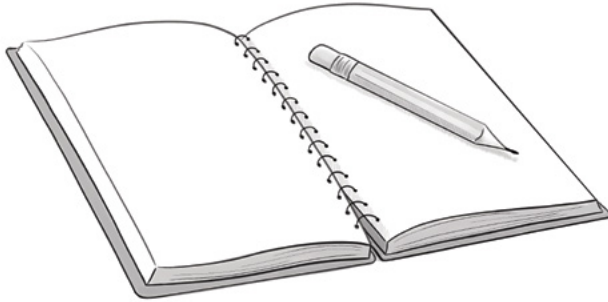
Out loud she said, “We moved here last week. My ataatsiaq needs some help, so my anaana got a job here and we moved in with him. My anaana’s a nurse. Um, I like playing soccer and drawing.”

“We’ll have art class tomorrow,” Julie told her with a smile. “Now, why don’t you take that empty desk next to Noah?”



Evie's first day was great. Noah was really nice and he laughed at her jokes. They shared their snacks at recess. Some of the other students asked her what her old community was like, and everyone had fun together in gym class.

Chapter 2: Getting into Trouble



The next day, the trouble started again. It was in language arts class. Everyone was told to start working on a presentation to give the next week. Evie was supposed to pick a community member or famous person from the Arctic, but she couldn't think of anyone. She didn't want to do the presentation.

Evie felt like she was never any good at concentrating on assignments like this, and she didn't want the rest of the class to make fun of her if she did her presentation badly.

By the end of the class, she still hadn't picked someone. She closed her notebook and tried to slip out of class without Julie seeing her. But it didn't work.

"Evie, who did you pick?" Julie asked.

Evie thought fast. "I didn't know I was supposed to pick anyone," she said. "Can I go outside now?"

"Okay, but I want you to choose someone by tomorrow," Julie said.



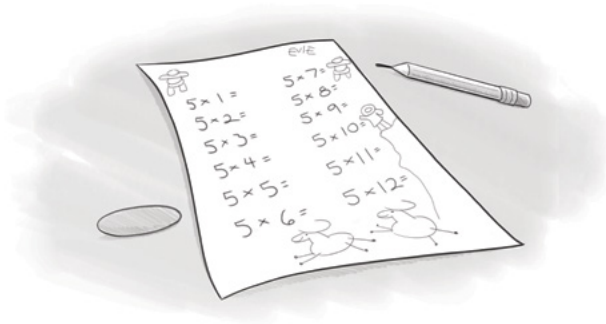
The next day, Evie got in trouble for making Noah laugh during silent reading. She didn't really mean to disrupt the class. It was just that the book she picked off the shelf was confusing. So, instead of reading, she drew a funny picture of Noah and his friends as monsters. Julie took the picture away.

The day after that, she made funny faces during choir practice and the music teacher sent her to the principal's office. It was just that she couldn't remember the words to the song. She thought that if she could make some of the girls across from her laugh, no one would notice that she wasn't singing.

"What are we going to do with you, Evie?" her anaana sighed that night when Evie told her about school.

"Let me tell you a story about a boy who made funny faces," her ataatsiaq said. Evie grinned. Her ataatsiaq was a great storyteller.

Chapter 3: Math Class



Evie really didn't want to get in trouble. It just happened that way. It kept happening during her second week at her new school.

In social studies, Julie asked her questions she didn't know the answers to. In science, she was the only one who didn't seem to understand what the experiment they were doing was about. In language arts, she got in trouble for doodling on her desk. And the thought of giving that presentation made her stomach feel sick. She would never be able to concentrate enough to get it done!

The day ended with math class. “Why can’t we just do art all day long?” Evie muttered.

“Or gym,” Noah said, smiling sympathetically.

“Let’s focus on the board, everyone,” Julie said, and Evie and Noah stopped talking.

Evie tried to pay attention to what Julie was saying. It was something about multiplication, but Evie just couldn’t keep her mind on it. She never could.

Julie handed out worksheets so the students could practise the lesson. “Let’s complete our worksheets before the end of the day,” Julie said.

Evie looked around at her classmates. Everyone else got right to work. She listened to pencils scratching against papers. She looked at her worksheet. None of it made sense. Her frustration grew. Why could everyone else understand what was on the paper? What did all these symbols mean?

Evie didn't want to be the only one not writing something down. So she began to draw. She thought about a story her ataatsiaq had told her about hunters from long ago.

On the math worksheet, she drew a few inuksuit. Then, between two math problems, she drew some caribou, running fast through a valley. Next she drew two hunters with spears standing on top of a mountain, looking down at the caribou.

Before Evie knew it, Julie began to collect the worksheets. She hadn't done any of the math problems. She was going to get in trouble again for wasting time! *And what if Julie realizes I don't know how to do multiplication?* Evie thought. *What if the whole class laughs at me?*

If they were going to laugh, she wanted them to laugh with her, not at her. She quickly folded the worksheet into a paper airplane and launched it across the classroom. "Here comes the flight from Iqaluit," she announced, and all the kids around her laughed.



Julie looked surprised and then disappointed. “Evie,” she said, but the bell rang. Evie grabbed her books and ran for the door.

She knew she hadn’t escaped getting into trouble. But maybe Julie wouldn’t be as angry with her tomorrow.

Chapter 4: Julie Helps Evie



The next morning, Julie asked everyone to get into their reading groups. Then she said, “Evie, why don’t you come read with me?”

Julie’s voice was very soft and kind. She didn’t seem upset about what had happened the day before. Evie walked over to a table where there were some books and sat down next to Julie.

“What do you like to read about?” Julie asked, and Evie frowned.

“I don’t really read much,” Evie said.

“Why don’t we take a look at this book?” Julie handed her a book with a polar bear on the cover.

Evie cleared her throat and tried to sound confident. “Can I tell you a story that my ataatsiaq told me about a giant and a polar bear?”

Julie raised her eyebrows. “Of course! Go ahead.”

“Okay.” Evie thought for a moment. Then she began to tell a story her ataatsiaq had told her many times. “In times long past, there was a giant named Inukpak,” Evie began. And then she told the whole story of Inukpak the giant and his fight with the great polar bear.

When Evie finished, Julie smiled at her.

“That was a great story!” Julie said.

“Thanks, it’s one of my ataatsiaq’s favourites. He tells it to me all the time.” Evie grinned.

“Would you go back to your desk and draw a picture of Inukpak and the polar bear for me?”

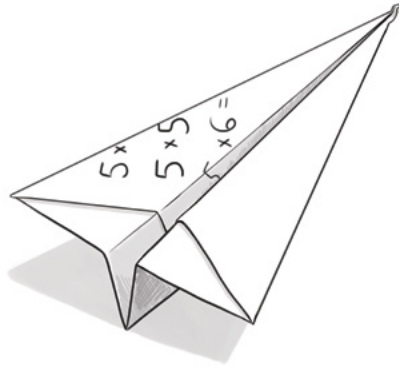
“Yes!” Evie loved to draw. She might not like math or reading, but she was proud of her artwork.

Evie spent the rest of the reading block working on her drawing. She spent a lot of time working on the shading of the tundra. She couldn't wait to show Julie when it was finished.

Then it was time for gym class. Evie and Noah headed out together. They had a great time during dodgeball. Evie felt relieved. This was a pretty good day.

But her relief only lasted until the final bell. That was when Julie called her over. "Please give this to your anaana, Evie," she said. She had a sealed envelope in her hand. "I'd like to see you and her for a little chat."

Chapter 5: How Evie Learns



The meeting with Julie happened the next day after school. Evie’s anaana came, and so did her ataatatsiaq. Evie felt nervous about the meeting and all mixed up. She was frustrated at school and even a little ashamed. She felt bad about disappointing her family.

“Thank you for coming,” Julie said. “I’ve really enjoyed getting to know you, Evie!” Julie smiled at Evie’s anaana.

Evie was confused. This didn’t sound like getting into trouble. “Thank you,” she said uncertainly. “I like being in your class.” It was true. Julie was kind, and she let Evie draw a lot.

“What I wanted to talk to you about is how Evie is doing in some of her subjects,” Julie said. Then she took out a scrunched-up piece of paper. When Evie realized what it was, she felt herself blush. It was her math worksheet, the one she had doodled on and then folded into a paper airplane.

“This was an assignment from a couple of days ago,” Julie said.

“Oh, Evie,” her anaana said.

“Good caribou!” her ataatsiaq exclaimed.

“I thought so too,” Julie said. She smiled at Evie. “You’re really good at drawing. But I think you had some trouble understanding what the lesson was, didn’t you?” When Evie didn’t answer, Julie continued, “Evie, I think you have some trouble with your memory.”

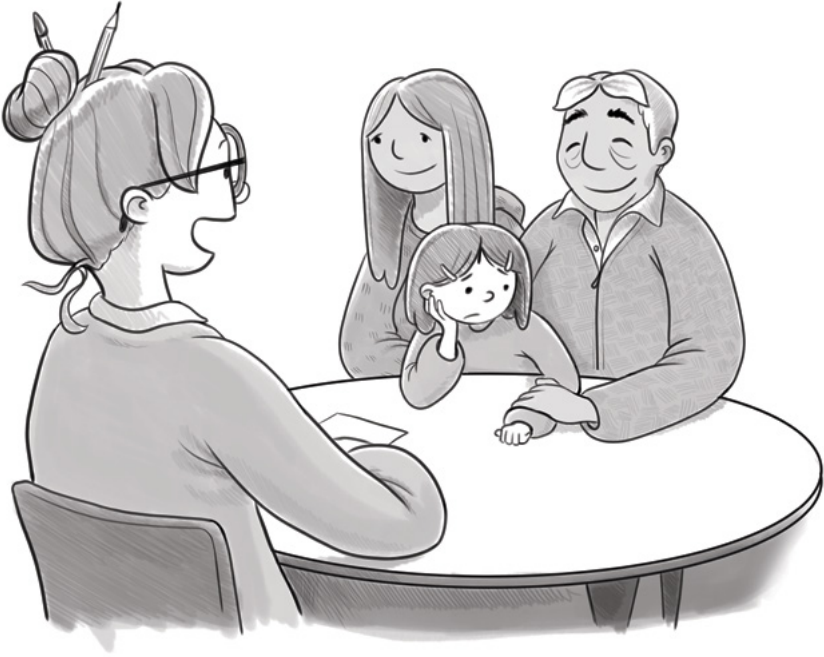
Evie looked up at her teacher in surprise. “I’m not forgetful,” she said.

“Evie is a good girl,” her anaana said. “She always remembers to do her chores, and she remembers all the stories her ataatsiaq tells her.”



“I think you have some trouble with a certain part of your memory,” Julie said. “It’s called your working memory. It’s the part that helps you remember new information. During a lesson, it’s the part of you that remembers what I say and what I write on the board. Then it lets you take that information and do assignments.”

Evie felt like she was going to cry. She didn’t say anything, but that sounded really scary. “Does this mean I’m not smart?” she whispered. She’d always known she wasn’t as good at school as other kids.



“No!” Julie said. “A learning disability has nothing to do with being smart. It just means we have to think about how you learn a little bit differently.”

Evie stood up quickly. “I want to go home,” she said, fighting back tears. A learning disability? She didn’t want to have one of those!

Her anaana put her hand on Evie’s shoulder. “It’s okay, panik. Let’s listen to what Julie has to say.”

“There is a simple test we can do,” Julie said. “And once we know for sure, we can all work together to help you, Evie.”

Feeling angry and afraid, Evie sat back down. Then Julie asked Evie to listen to her say a few sentences. “I want you to remember the last word I say in every sentence. Then I want you to tell me what time of year you think I’m talking about, okay?”

Evie nodded and wiped away her tears. What kind of test was this?

Julie said, “I went out on the land. I collected Arctic cotton. There were many mosquitoes. I saw a ptarmigan. It had brown feathers.”

Julie paused and smiled encouragingly at Evie. Evie had been listening hard. But now she wasn’t sure what to say. “I was paying attention, I really was,” she said helplessly. “But when I started thinking about what time of year you were talking about, I’m not sure what happened. It was like the words you asked me to remember disappeared.”

“That’s your working memory, Evie. We’re asking your working memory to do too many things at once.”

“What does this mean?” her anaana asked.

“There are different ways that different people learn,” Julie said.

“We’re going to figure out some ways that Evie learns best. She’s great at art and she enjoys drawing. I’d like Evie to draw pictures when she’s writing notes or doing assignments, and I’m going to give her pictures of what we’re learning during lessons. How does that sound, Evie?”

More art? “That doesn’t sound too bad,” Evie said. And it really didn’t.

Chapter 6: A Good Day at School



All that week, every time Julie taught them a new lesson, Evie noticed that she had an easier time paying attention. During science, Julie showed pictures of each step in the experiment. Evie drew a picture of each step too, and she found that she understood what she was supposed to do.

Then, in math, Julie sat with Evie after the main lesson and broke down what she was supposed to learn into smaller steps. It was still hard, but instead of feeling like her mind had gone blank, Evie realized that she could hold the facts in her head more easily.



Finally, during choir, the music teacher repeated the words they were supposed to sing a few more times than usual. With the repetition, Evie realized she had an easier time remembering them, and she joined in.

During language arts, Julie handed out worksheets. “Today I want you to use your research and make an outline for your presentations,” she said.

Noah leaned over and looked at Evie's worksheet, frowning. "Why does Evie's look different?" he asked.

He was right. Evie's worksheet had wide divider lines in between parts. And it had more space to draw than Noah's.

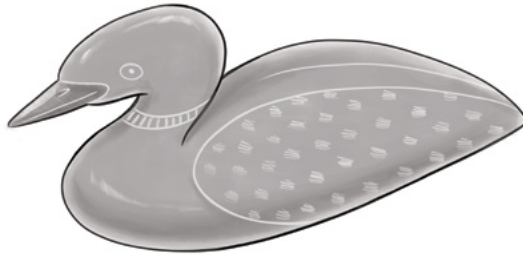
Evie felt worried all over again. The reason her worksheet was different was because she had a learning disability and Noah didn't. But she couldn't admit it. She thought about making a joke, but what would she say?

"Keep your eyes on your own paper," Julie said to Noah.

Evie began to do the assignment. She worked on each part one after the other and it made sense to her. She filled out the first part and drew a picture for the second part. This wasn't hard at all! She looked up at Julie and smiled at her. Julie smiled back.

But she was still worried about Friday. The day of the presentation. She was scared of speaking in front of the class. What if she forgot everything she was going to say?

Chapter 7: Evie's Presentation



Thursday night, Evie sat at the kitchen table, staring down at a blank piece of paper. She watched as her ataatsiaq worked away on a carving. She thought about how Julie let her draw on her assignments now, and she began to sketch her ataatsiaq's face.

“What are you up to, panik?”
Ataatsiaq asked.

“Something for school,” she said.
“What are you carving?”

“This is a loon,” her ataatsiaq said. “Have I ever told you the story of the raven and the loon?”

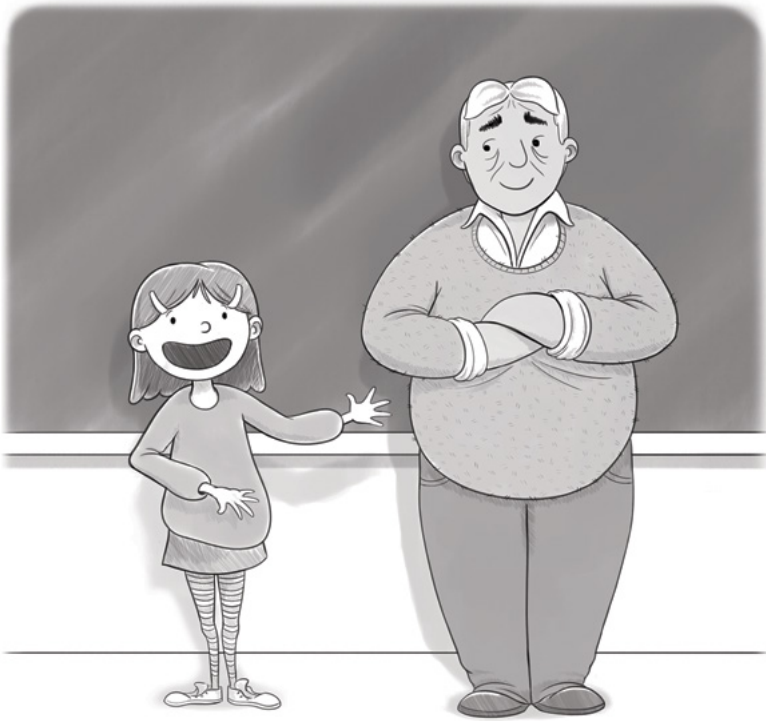
He had, but she said, “Please tell me.”

As her ataatsiaq told her the story, Evie drew pictures of the raven and the loon around her picture of his face. She drew more pictures of his hands as he worked, and of his carvings. When his story was finished, he began to talk about his childhood, so she drew pictures of those stories, too.

The next morning, Evie wasn’t worried about her presentation anymore. “Ataatsiaq, will you come to class with me?” she asked.

Julie welcomed Evie’s ataatsiaq to class and invited Evie to do her presentation first. She went to the front of the class, holding her notebook tightly.

“My presentation is about my ataatsiaq,” she said. “That’s him, right there.” Everyone laughed and her ataatsiaq waved. “This is him, too,” she said, and she held up her picture of his face.



“My ataatsiaq lived in the High Arctic,” she said. She held up her picture of an iglu. Outside of it, she had drawn four boys in parkas. “My ataatsiaq and his three older brothers used to play in the snow. They helped their ataata hunt. They told each other stories. Now my ataatsiaq tells me stories.”

She flipped to her next picture. She said, “My ataatsiaq likes to carve. He carves dancing bears and narwhals and walruses. Yesterday he carved a loon

and he told me a story.” Evie told her class the story about the raven and the loon, all from memory.

Then she said, “I wanted to tell you about my ataatatsiaq because he’s an artist, and because he’s a storyteller. And those two things are important to me because...”

She looked up at Julie, who gave her a big smile. “Because I learn a bit differently than other people do. Art and stories help me to learn better. Thanks for listening.”

Everyone clapped. When Evie sat back down, Noah leaned over and said, “Your art is great! No wonder you like to draw all the time!”

Evie was amazed. She’d never felt so comfortable at school before. It wasn’t bad to have a learning disability, especially with people like Noah, Julie, her anaana, and her ataatatsiaq to help her!

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