

# What a Dilemma!

Poetry Activities by Laura Candler

## Emma Dilemma Discussion Cards

What is a dilemma?  
Why does Jessica think  
of Emma as a dilemma?

What details in the  
poem tell you that  
Jessica loves Emma?

What details in the  
poem show Jessica's  
frustration with Emma?

Do you have a younger  
sibling or cousin? In what  
way is he or she a  
dilemma for you?

Which poem in the book  
was most meaningful to  
you? Explain.

Who do you think  
was mostly at fault in  
Emma's accident?

**Free!**

How do you think Emma  
feels about Jessica?  
Can you tell?

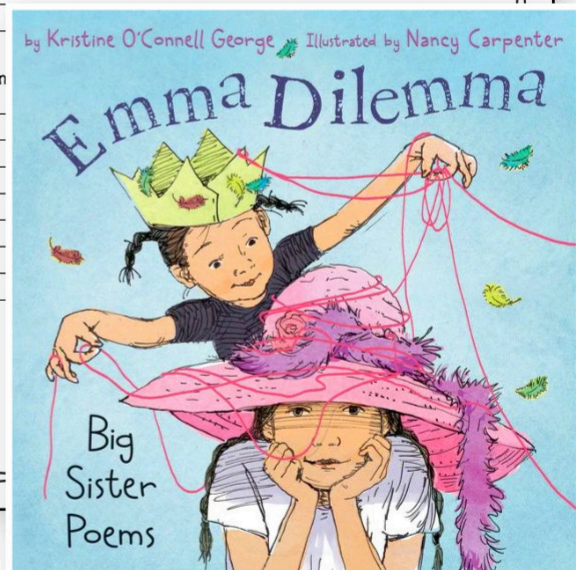
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## What a Dilemma!

One good thing about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



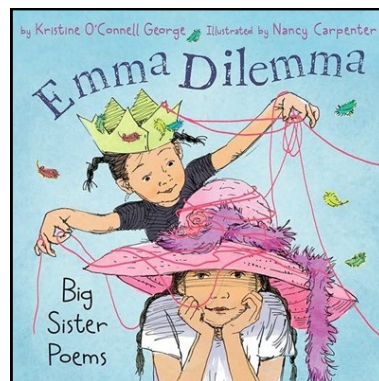
## Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems

Written by Kristine O'Connell George  
Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter

# What a Dilemma!

## Activities for **Emma Dilemma:** **Big Sister Poems**

Teacher Guide Created by Laura Candler



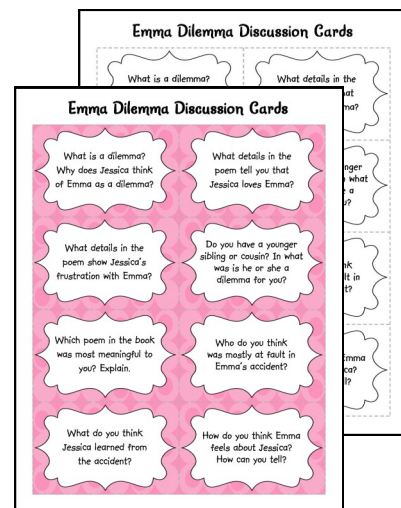
**What a Dilemma!** is a collection of reading and writing activities based on the poetry book *Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems* by Kristine O'Connell George. Each poem can stand alone, but together they tell the story of Jessica, the big sister, and the dilemma posed by her little sister, Emma. Children of all ages can relate to Jessica's story, whether they have a younger sibling, a younger cousin, or a friend who poses a dilemma. I developed this teaching guide to share ideas for helping students understand that we all face dilemmas in our relationships with others. Before I created this resource, I obtained permission from Kristine O'Connell George to do so. She also graciously allowed me to share one of the poems in *Emma Dilemma* as a part of this freebie.

### Reading and Discussing *Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems*

1. **Think-Pair-Share** - Before reading the story, ask students to think if they know what a dilemma is. Then ask them to turn and discuss their ideas with a partner. Finally, call on several students to share their thoughts with the class. Don't confirm any responses, but simply tell them you are going to share a story about Jessica and her dilemma.

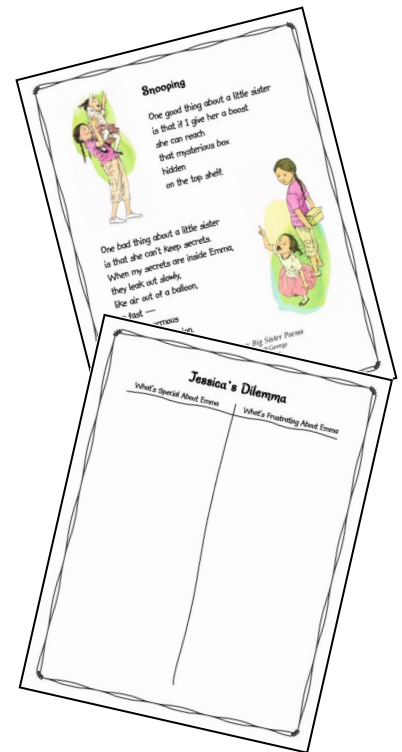
**Dilemma:**  
**Any difficult or**  
**perplexing situation**  
**or problem**

2. **Read for Enjoyment and Understanding** - Begin reading Emma's Dilemma and be sure to show the pictures when you read each poem. The pictures tell part of the story, so it's helpful if you can display the pages with a document camera so everyone can see them clearly. Stop on page 10 when Jessica's Dad says that Emma is a dilemma and discuss his explanation. As you continue reading, ask your students to think about why Emma is an "interesting problem."
3. **Discuss *Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems*** - Use the discussion cards on page 5 or 6 to discuss the entire story. (One set is in color and the other is in black and white.) Point out that although each poem stands alone, together they form a narrative or story about Jessica's experiences. You can cut apart the cards and present them to the class one at a time or allow them to discuss the questions in small groups. The Talking Sticks strategy works well for this. You can read more about how to use Talking Sticks [here on my blog](#).





4. **Discuss Poem: “Snooping”** - The poem “Snooping” on pages 24 and 25 of the book or on page 4 of this packet is a perfect illustration of why Emma is such a dilemma. Reread the poem with your students and discuss how involving Emma in any scheme can present a dilemma for Jessica.
5. **Jessica’s Dilemma** - Next, take a look at the whole story again to identify other examples of Jessica’s dilemma with Emma. On the one hand, she shares special moments with Emma. However, she’s also frustrated by many of Emma’s habits. Draw a T-chart like the one shown on page 7 or project the chart on a whiteboard, and begin to list details from the story where they fit on the chart. To actively engage your students, give them post-it notes on which to record details from the story that show both aspects of Emma’s dilemma. Have them write one detail that shows Jessica cares for Emma and one that shows she’s frustrated by Emma, and allow them to add their details to the chart.



## Writing Personal Dilemma Poems

In this activity, students will compose a poem similar to “Snooping” in which they write about the special times and the frustrations they face in one of their own relationships. This topic needs to be handled carefully and the resulting poems should not be displayed publicly due to the personal nature of the content. When you begin discussing these ideas with the class, be sensitive to the types of things that students are sharing. Ask them not to share specific names and personal family details in their discussions with others. As a result of this writing activity, some students may even reveal disturbing aspects of a relationship that troubles them. If that happens, you’ll want to follow up with a private conversation with the student or refer them to a counselor to help them work through the situation.

1. **Identify a Relationship and Brainstorm Details** - Ask students to think of a dilemma they face with a sibling, a cousin, or a friend. Print out the chart on page 8 or have each student draw a t-chart in his or her journal. Ask them NOT to write the person’s name at the top, but to write, “My Sister,” “My Cousin,” or the appropriate relationship. Next have them write a bulleted list of supporting details for the special times and the frustrations.
2. **Write a Personal Dilemma Poem** - Show students the poem template on page 9 or 10 and explain that they are going to write a personal dilemma poem in the format of “Snooping.” In first stanza, they’ll include details that describe the special moments or experiences that they treasure with the person. In the second stanza, they’ll describe the frustrating aspects of their relationship. Students should use details from the chart on page 8, but they may include other details as they compose their poems. Display the poem, “Snooping,” again as you reread it. Ask students to find examples of strong images in the poem that are examples of “showing” instead of “telling.” Encourage students to revise their own poems to include strong imagery and precise language. Be sure to review their final poems before allowing them to be shared with others.

The image shows a T-chart template titled "My Dilemma with". The T-chart has two columns: "What's Special" and "What's Frustrating". The template is designed for students to record details about a relationship.



## Snooping

One good thing about a little sister  
is that if I give her a boost  
she can reach  
that mysterious box  
hidden  
on the top shelf.

One bad thing about a little sister  
is that she can't keep secrets.  
When my secrets are inside Emma,  
they leak out slowly,  
like air out of a balloon,  
or fast —  
in one enormous  
Tattletale Explosion.



~ From *Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems*

Written by Kristine O'Connell George

Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter

[www.kristineoconnellgeorge.com](http://www.kristineoconnellgeorge.com)

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Why does Jessica think  
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poem show Jessica's  
frustration with Emma?

Do you have a younger  
sibling or cousin? In what  
way is he or she a  
dilemma for you?

Which poem in the book  
was most meaningful to  
you? Explain.

Who do you think  
was mostly at fault in  
Emma's accident?

What do you think  
Jessica learned from  
the accident?

How do you think Emma  
feels about Jessica?  
How can you tell?



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# Jessica's Dilemma

What's Special About Emma

What's Frustrating About Emma

# My Dilemma with \_\_\_\_\_

What's Special

What's Frustrating



# What a Dilemma!

One good thing about \_\_\_\_\_

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One bad thing about \_\_\_\_\_

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By \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

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The image displays a collection of 10 educational resource covers by Laura Candler, arranged in a 2x5 grid. Each cover is vibrant and includes illustrations of children using the resources. The covers are:

- Seek & Spell Challenge:** Word Work Kids Love! (Grades 2-5)
- Exploring Poetry:** Tools for Teaching Kids to Read and Understand Poetry (Grades 2-5)
- Classroom Book Clubs:** Getting Started With Literature Circles Made Easy (Grades 2-5)
- Simplify & Snap:** Simplifying Fractions Game (Includes QR Codes and Answer Keys)
- Sentence Go Round:** Teaching Kids How to Write Sensational Sentences! (Grades 3-5)
- Discussion Connections:** Lessons for Fostering Collaborative Discussions (Grades 3-6)
- Character Bio Reports:** Writing Biographies Based on Character Traits (Common Core Grade 3-6)
- Comparing Fractions Games:** 3 Cooperative Learning Games (Grades 3-6)
- Area & Perimeter Tic-Tac-Toss:** Partner Math Game (Grades 3-6)
- Mystery Vocabulary Detectives:** Vocabulary Game for All Subject Areas! (Grades 3-6)