

Zammit, Marisa, and Erica Dornbusch. *A Friend In Hope: a Story About Hope's Journey with a Brain Tumour*. Brain Tumor Foundation of Canada, 2008.

Zammit, Marisa, Erica Dornbusch, and Carole Baillargeon. *Mon amie Claire: L'histoire de Claire et de sa tumeur cérébrale*. Fondation canadienne des tumeurs cérébrales, 2009.

Zammit, Marisa, Erica Dornbusch, and Rocco Speranza. *La mia amica Speranza : Speranza e il suo tumore cerebrale*. Fondazione canadese del tumore cerebrale, 2008

In an interview with Daytime television, available on [YouTube](#), author Marisa Zammit explains how the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada contacted her as an established freelance copy writer to come up with a positive story of hope for and about children with brain tumours. According to Susan Marshall, executive director of the Foundation, no other storybook existed for elementary school aged children in Canada before 2008, when the book was published. It is the personal connection, having a child diagnosed with a brain tumour at the age of 4, that motivated Sharon to commission the publication of *A Friend in Hope*. Marisa had worked previously with illustrator Erica Dornbusch, who had published other storybooks (e.g. [Finding Kate's shoes](#) , [Mrs. Goodstory](#)) in the past. Marisa is now a school teacher librarian at [Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School](#) in Strathroy, Ontario and she has read the book to her students.

A Friend in Hope has definitely accomplished its main objective of giving children, parents, and friends a positive and hopeful outlook on the brain tumour journey. Amy Mathias, the Online Community Engagement Coordinator of the Foundation, indicated that 15,000 copies of the book had been distributed in time for the organization's 30th Anniversary in 2012. It is thanks to the Ronald McDonald House Charities that printing and distribution of the book were possible. The book addresses a very real need not only in alleviating young patients' fears, but also in explaining brain tumours and their medical implications to children's teachers and classmates. In turn, adults diagnosed with brain tumours may also use the storybook to approach the subject with their children.

As for the translated versions of the book, Pia di Bacco helped translate from English into French by enlisting the support of youth and staff at her school in Montreal. Similarly, her godson Rocco Speranza commissioned grades 4, 5, and 6 youth and staff at the [École East Hill School](#)'s Italian program to translate the storybook from English and French into Italian. The motivation in both translation cases was a result of a family member or a student being diagnosed with a brain tumour and the belief in educating youth about brain tumours. Schools across the English Montreal School Board and beyond in Italy, Australia, Argentina, and the USA have also benefited from the storybook.

The story is written from the perspective of a young brain tumour patient's best friend, Danny, Daniel, or Daniele in English, French, and Italian respectively. Danny is trying to understand and, most of all, support his "best buddy," Hope, who begins her brain tumour journey. As the author Marisa Zammit expressed in the Daytime interview, Hope, or in Italian Speranza, received that name because "it is hope [speranza] that buoys the character through the hardships of the story." In French, the character's name is Claire, whose Latin origin "clarus" means "clear, bright, celebrated" and by extension the word "clear". The French name too, therefore, is representative of her personality and journey.

Part of the story involves references to some of the medical treatments that Hope undergoes: MRI, pharmaceutical drugs, radiation therapy, a special helmet and mouthguard, a hospital's child life centre, and the effects of various treatments on Hope. In every instance, the story uses the narrator's voice and point of view to express Hope's various experiences, Danny's reactions to them, and his own fears. It is a child's imagination which makes this topic bearable and allows the illustrations to become particularly powerful, when, for example, Danny sees Hope take some medication, which she says will help her "feel well enough to play with [him]." The illustration, in this case, represents a mountain scape and the children's game of climbing pillows and cushions as if they were mountain climbers, because as Hope says the medication she takes is the "same medicine mountain climbers use," (ie. dexamethasone). Another exceptional illustration is the one representing an oceanic world with an octopus and fish, which is how Hope faces the MRI machine and transforms it into a submarine. The illustrations are identical across the translations and the English source text, except for one image representing a hockey player in what appears to be Toronto Maple Leafs colours; however, in the French and Italian translations, which originated in Montreal, the team colours were changed to those of the Montreal Canadiens. Habs fans will no doubt appreciate the sensitivity of the illustrator.

All in all the story is very well written and the language is suitable for children from grades 2 to 4; however the concepts that are addressed also make this book relevant to higher grade levels. That said, some grammatical inaccuracies exist within the French translation. Public and school libraries would benefit from access to this book, as would hospital library patrons and those who use Faculty of Education libraries. The health education elements of the story are presented in a very appropriate yet realistic manner for the target audience, who will appreciate having access to such a unique resource.

Highly Recommended: 4 out of 4 stars

Reviewer: Denis Lacroix

Denis Lacroix has worked at the University of Alberta Libraries since 2003. He is the romance languages and classics librarian and enjoys reading in French, Spanish, and Italian.