



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Dad and Daddy's Big Big Family Interview With the Author



Families come in all shapes and sizes. When Harper goes to her first family reunion with her Dad and Daddy, she meets so many new, different people. Seamus Kirst's new book, *Dad and Daddy's Big Big Family* explores Harper's experience and what family is all about. Seamus's first book *Papa, Daddy, and Riley* earned a starred review, was on several best books lists, and was banned in some places.

You can purchase the full book with 20% off and free domestic shipping [here](#). Enter code MPKIDS20 at checkout.

APA Books for Children and Teens interviewed Seamus about creating the book. Here's what he had to say.

APA: What inspired you to write *Dad and Daddy's Big Big Family*? Do you come from a large family?

Seamus Kirst: I was specifically excited to write this book because I remembered how exciting and confusing the idea of an "extended family" can be to a kid!

My mom has seven siblings, and my dad has four siblings, so I grew up with a massive family and so many cousins.

On a macro-level, I am very excited to write as many books that feature same-sex parents as possible.

APA: Did you spend time with cousins as a child? If you did, what did you do together?

SK: I did! None of my cousins lived in the same city that I did, so it was always an exciting treat to get to see them.

Almost every summer we went to an amusement park, which was a consistent highlight of the year.

Throughout the year, we had big birthday parties. I share a birthday with one of my cousins, so it was fun to have a combined party.

APA: Did your family have big reunions like the one in the story? Did you go to them? What were they like? Do you go to reunions now?

SK: We did not have big reunions. I think because we had so many parties throughout the year where everyone was invited and most people came, we never felt the need to have a reunion.

But I remember many of my friends had family reunions like the one featured in the book, and they always sounded like they were a blast!

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APA: You include several different family structures in your story—a single mom with a son and a foster child, a blended family with stepchildren, a mom a dad and their three kids, a grandmother raising two of her grandchildren, a grown-up living on her own, and of course, Harper’s two dads. Why did you purposefully include the variety of structures?

SK: There is this cliché of a family as a mom, a dad, a son, a daughter, and a dog, posing in front of a picturesque house with a white picket fence.

Families are so much more complicated and diverse than that! I wanted to write this book to highlight all of the different ways families can look, because it’s important for people to feel like they are being represented.

APA: Harper meets Noah, who is her second cousin, and Rita, who is her first cousin twice removed. Can you explain how firsts, seconds, and “removed” work?

SK: Yes! One of the reasons I wanted to write this book is because myself, and so many other adults I know, are still confused by this.

Your first cousins are the children of your parent’s siblings. Your second cousins are the children of your parents’ cousins. So, you share grandparents with your first cousins, and you only share great grandparents with your second cousins. A great grandparent is the parent of your grandparent.

Once removed just means that you are of a different generation in the family tree. So, your parents first, second, and third cousins are all your first, second, and third cousins once removed.

See a diagram of Harper’s cousins below on the next page.

APA: Harper and Noah think of family as the people you live with. Daddy explains that extended families often live in different places. He also explains that family is the people who are related to you, but also people you choose. How do you define family?

SK: To me, a family is a group of people who you love and are loved by in return. What sets family apart from friends, in my mind, is a shared commitment to bettering each other’s lives, even when that means making personal sacrifices. In that sense, certain friends can become family quite easily.

APA: Why did you decide to use a web to describe how families are related instead of the traditional “family tree” idea?

SK: I felt like webs better illustrate how everyone in a family is interconnected whereas trees, while very family, kind of cluster nuclear families together.

APA: Tell me about the illustrations by Karen Bunting. Did you have any input or interaction with Karen about the illustrations? Did you have an idea of how Harper, Dad, and Daddy would look? What did you think when you saw the illustrations?

SK: I LOVE Karen’s illustrations. I put some minimal art notes in the initial manuscript, but the illustrations were a product of Karen’s brilliant and creative mind. I am a words person, and am not super artistically inclined, so it is always such a magical feeling to see my words brought to life by a talented illustrator like Karen.

I did have an idea of how the family would look, and that was one of my notes in the beginning, but the description was pretty general, and I was so thrilled to see what Karen created.

APA: Is there a part of the story that you especially enjoyed or that you struggled with when you were writing the book?

SK: I love the part of the story where Noah and Harper think that “family is the people you live with” and therefore all the relatives at the reunion will now have to cram into one of their houses. This is a miscommunication that could 100% happen between kids and their parents.

APA: The reunion happens at a picnic. Do you have a favorite picnic food?

SK: I will never say “no” to a delicious potato salad!

Harper's Cousins Family Tree

