**I Wanna New Room**

- **Bibliographic information:**
  - Author: Karen Kaufman Orloff
  - Illustrator: David Catrow
  - Publisher: Putnam Juvenile
  - Publication date: 2010

- **Summary:**
  Alex is a young child who now shares a room with his younger brother because they just got a new baby sister. He writes letters to his father asking for his own room because he does not like rooming with his brother, and finds him annoying. However, his dad keeps writing back to say no. His dad finally says he can have his own space for just himself, so they build a tree house. He happily plays in it by himself, but soon becomes lonely and asks his brother to join him.

- **Awards:** none

- **Reviews:** (from School Library Journal) K-Gr 3–In this companion to I Wanna Iguana (Putnam, 2004), irrepressible Alex is back with a new entreaty—his own room, puh-leez—played out in another series of letter exchanges. Now sharing a room with his younger brother in the wake of his sister's birth, Alex delivers his first written plea to Mom, who, in the depths of postpartum exhaustion, refers him to his father. Thus do Alex and his good-natured dad begin their own guy-to-guy letter exchange, with Alex detailing Ethan's various transgressions (“He sticks crayons up his nose and barks like a walrus!”) and his reasonable father reminding him that he was no different at the age of four. Back and forth go Alex's complaints and his father's practical rejoinders until Dad suggests that they build a tree house together, where surely Alex can find some peace and quiet. Indeed, it's too quiet—and Alex's final letter is to Ethan, inviting him to play in his new retreat. The last page shows the brothers happily ascending the tree-house ladder together. As spun out in the exchanges, the child vs. parent points of view and the sibling rivalry all ring hilariously true. Catrow's zany pencil and watercolor illustrations capture perfectly the madcap daydreams in Alex's head as well as the familiar detritus of a young boy's room. (The iguana still lives there!) A surefire kid-pleaser with a subtle, sweet lesson in peaceful coexistence.—Kathleen Finn, St. Francis Xavier School, Winooski, VT.
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- **Author Information, Karen Kaufman Orloff:**

- **Illustrator Information, David Catrow:** [http://www.catrow.com/](http://www.catrow.com/)

- **Discussion Questions:**
  Pre-reading questions
- Why do you think the boy looks sad on the cover?
- Why do you think the boy wants a new room?
- Do you or have you ever had to share a room with a brother or sister?

Questions during reading
- Do you ever get annoyed with your brothers or sisters?
- Have you ever asked your parents for something they wouldn’t give you?
- What do you think Alex’s “special place of his own” will be?

Post-reading questions
- How would you feel in Alex’s position?
- How would you handle this situation?
- Why do you think Alex invited his brother to play in the end?
- What did you learn from this story?

Curricular Activities

- **Reading/Oral Language:** Put students in groups of 3 to read the book together. One student will read one page, and then pass it to the next student, who will read the next page. They will keep rotating until they have read the whole book. This way they will practice reading, and reading out loud, and practice listening and comprehending when someone else is reading.

- **Writing:** Alex and his father wrote letters back and forth. Students can write persuasive letters to their parents about something they have always wanted, just like Alex wanted his own room. They will have to write what they want, why they want it, and why they should get it. Another option is to assign each student a pen pal that they can write back and forth with.

- **Math/Technology:** Alex and his father build a tree house so that Alex can have his own area all to himself. Students can “build” their own tree house too. They will need to measure the different pieces of wood needed to build a tree house. The teacher can provide a worksheet that has pictures of the different pieces of wood needed, and the amount of each needed. The students will then measure the pieces with a ruler. They will then have to figure out the perimeter of the tree house. This activity deals with using a ruler, addition and figuring out perimeters.

- **Science:** Alex has a pet iguana in this book. This can be connected to science by teaching about the different types of reptiles. The teacher can teach about the different types of reptiles including iguanas, turtles, snakes, lizards, alligators and others, what they look like and their characteristics. The students can then play a matching game with different pieces that have pictures of the reptiles, pieces with the names, and pieces with a characteristic of each reptile. The students will have to match up a piece from each category. They can play over and over again until they understand each reptile.

- **Art:** After reading the book, go through it again, focusing on the illustrations. Then have students create an illustration of one scene.

- **Drama:** This book can be turned into a play. Each student can have a different role. They can stay the same character or switch around depending on size of class and what the students want to do. There can be an Alex and father narrator, who will read their letters and also an Alex and father actor who will act out the parts. There will
also be an Ethan, Annie, Stinky and other characters. The students will need to be
creative to think of different props or use other students as props. They will be able to
use whatever they have in the classroom that the teacher allows, and the teacher can
bring other items in. This will work with students’ creativity to bring this play to life
by each having a different part and using props, and will also challenge their
cooperation and teamwork by all working together and learn what it is like to work
with others.

- Related Books:
  - *Gilbert Goldfish Wants a Pet* by Kelly DiPucchio, and illustrated by Bob
    Shea: Gilbert has almost everything he wants, except for a pet, so he goes
    searching for the perfect pet. Alex and Gilbert are both persistent to get what
    they want.
  - *I Will Not Read This Book* by Cece Meng and illustrated by Joy Ang: A little
    boy refuses to read a book and does everything he can not to read it. He
    eventually reads it and loves it. Alex and this little boy do everything they can
to get what they want, but in the end what they want is actually the opposite of
what was expected.

- Other Titles by Karen Kaufman Orloff:
  - *I Wanna Iguana*
  - *If Mom Had Three Arms*
  - *If Mom Had Three Minutes*
  - *Talk, Oscar, Please*

- Other Books Illustrated by David Catrow:
  - *I Wanna Iguana*
  - *Funny Lunch*
  - *Smelly Locker*
  - *I Ain’t Gonna Paint No More*
  - *My School’s A Zoo*

- Websites for Further Enrichment:
  - Teachingbooks.net. This is an interview of David Catrow, a way to better know
    the illustrator of *I Wanna New Room*. [http://www.catrow.com/videos/]
  - *I Wanna New Room* by Karen Orloff Book Trailer. This is a video of the book
    trailer for *I Wanna New Room*. This is a good way to introduce the book to the
    students before reading it. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImpYQdWL-2s]
  - Ms. Allys Class. This website provides a persuasive activity to do after reading