

## Teaching Ideas for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Award Shortlist 2019

**Title:** Julian is a Mermaid

**Author & Illustrator:** Jessica Love

**Publisher:** Walker (2018)

*These notes have been written by the teachers at CLPE to provide schools with sessions which focus on the importance of illustration in building a narrative and supporting children's response. They build on our work supporting teachers to use picture books to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. The teaching notes show how picture books can be used in schools to enhance children's reading comprehension and composition of their own creative writing. We hope you find them useful.*

### Before beginning this sequence:

Collect together a range of art materials that will allow the children to engage in the activities exploring illustration, for example: cartridge paper, sketching pencils 2B-4B, watercolour paints, and a variety of brushes.

In order to engage fully with the layers of meaning and the details within the illustrations, it is advisable to ensure that you have access to a visualiser or similar device to enable you to share images from the text with the pupils on a large scale.

### Session 1

Share the blank pale blue inside endpaper. Encourage the children to share what thoughts, words and connections come to mind when looking at this colour. Note their contributions on a sheet of paper of the same colour.

Make an enlarged colour copy of the illustration that precedes the first double page spread of the main character standing in front of a mirror looking away from the mirror. Place the copy in the centre of a piece of flipchart paper and invite the children to discuss what they notice. What can we infer about the person standing in front of the mirror? What does their facial expression, body language suggest about how they might feeling or what they might be thinking? You might choose to note their thoughts in thought bubbles around the character's head. Invite them to discuss what they note about the reflection in the mirror. Discuss the similarities and differences between the person standing in front of the mirror and the reflection. What can we infer from the differences, why might the illustrator have chosen to make the distinctions that she has? Note their comments and reflections on the flipchart paper.

Make an enlarged colour copy of the opening endpaper and place this in the centre of the flipchart paper. Invite the children to comment on what they notice. Discuss what the body language and position of each character might suggest about how they might be feeling in this moment and what they might be thinking. In what ways is the child's body language, gaze and positioning different from that of the women in the

illustration? What might this suggest? Is the child connected to any of the women in the illustration? Why do you think this? Note their thoughts and contributions around the copy of the illustration.

Share the title endpaper featuring the character walking alongside his grandmother with three women walking behind. (Ensure that the book title and dedication are covered.) Invite the children to share what they notice. Discuss the colour palette and in particular why they think shades of greens and blues might feature so predominantly. What do they notice painted on the wall and featured in the windows of the door? Why might the illustrator have chosen to incorporate these details and what might be their significance? What do they notice about the shape and style of the dresses worn by the three women? What might this symbolise?

Write the word mermaid on a piece of flipchart paper. Invite the children to work individually, in pairs or small groups to draw what they picture when they hear the word mermaid. Referencing their pictures, encourage the children to discuss what the word means to them and what associations they have with the word. Note their comments, thoughts and ideas on the flipchart paper.

Share the title of the book and discuss what this might mean within the context of their observations and reflections so far.

Read aloud the opening double page spread. Invite the children to consider the associations they have with mermaids and how these qualities correspond to the women in the illustration.

Share short video clip of an underwater scene featuring an array of plant life and a wide range of underwater animals of different shapes, colours and sizes. Allow the children the opportunity to discuss the different details they observe.

Using, watercolour paper, allow all the children to draw a fishtail, using a template if necessary, and use watercolours to decorate their tail drawing inspiration from the underworld scenes they observed in the video. Take time to explore the effects they can create by mixing colours or letting colours bleed into one another.

## Session 2

Revisit the opening of the book, reading the opening page. Share the next three double page spreads, pausing at each spread to discuss what the children notice about the ways in which Julian's movement, posture, facial expression and body language changes within and across each spread. What do they notice at the growing presence of fish with each spread and how this presence varies and what this might mean in terms of what Julian might be thinking and how Julian might be feeling at each point?

Read the page that follows and discuss how the illustrator uses shapes and colour to contrast the confines of the everyday as illustrated by the beige, angular windows that frame the windows and doors of the train carriage, with the uplifting blues of the sky and dresses and the light, floaty quality of the white of the clouds and Nana's hair and the freedom of the soaring birds and dancing white shapes on Nana's trousers.

What might these contrasts suggest about how Julian might be feeling? Read on to the next page. Invite the children to consider what they notice and why the illustrator might have chosen to draw a fire hydrant gushing with water in this moment. Note their thoughts around a copy of the illustration.

Set up trays of water and provide children with a selection of different coloured marbling ink and pipettes. Invite the children to select their preferred colours, drawing on their experimentations with the watercolour activity and drop these into the water. Allow them to place sheets of papers carefully onto the surface of the water to create their own marble print. Once dry, use these pieces to form backing paper for a display.

### Session 3

Read on to the next page which states 'I am also a mermaid', along with Nana's response. Reflect on the contrast in Julian's facial expression and body language in each moment. What do they suggest about how Julian might feeling and thinking in each moment? How does the illustrator use colour and inanimate objects to suggest the contrast of tension and ease in each moment of these scenes? What might the presence of plants in various forms suggest? In what ways does the use of the closed domineering doorframe contrast with the flowing net curtain and how does each reinforce how Julian might be feeling in each moment?

Share the next three double page spreads pausing at each spread to discuss what the children notice about the ways in which Julian's movement, posture, facial expression and body language changes within and across each spread. Discuss with the children how Julian's interaction with Nana alters his body language. Why might this be? Where do we think Nana has gone?

Share the next double page spread, invite the children to consider how Julian might be feeling while he waits for Nana to return and reflect on how the illustrator conveys doubt, vulnerability and concern. Note the children's responses. Read Nana's invitation to Julian to come to her and ask the children what they think is about to happen. Are there any clues from earlier in the text that might lead them to guessing? The print of Nana's blue dress resembles one of the fishes in an earlier scene. Compare the two moments with the children and consider why the illustrator may have chosen to do this.

Read the next page and consider with the children why Nana might have given Julian the necklace as a gift and where they might be going. What words or phrases might we use to convey the thoughts and feelings Julian might be having in this moment? Revisit the Role on the Wall outline and note their responses.

Watch the ocean clip again, this time encouraging the children to reflect on the different shapes, sizes and movement of the different species featured. Provide the children with a range of different coloured play dough to fashion the body of their chosen underwater 3D creature. Provide the children with different coloured, patterned and textured materials, wrapping paper, foil, cellophane, bubble wrap etc. to allow them to decorate their underwater creations.

#### Session 4

Read the next three double page spreads, from, 'Where are we going?' to 'Let's join them.' Invite the children to consider the contrast in Julian's body language and facial expression at each point within each spread. Discuss his position and varying size within each spread. Discuss how these choices alter our impression of him at each point. Why might he be feeling tentative about joining the 'mermaids?' Note what the details might suggest about how he is thinking and what he might be feeling at each point on the Role on the Wall outline or in thought bubbles around the illustration.

Read the last page and invite the children to reflect on Julian's final stance, and what this indicates about how he is feeling in this moment. Note their reflections on how he might be thinking and feeling in this moment on the role on the wall.

Share the last spread of Julian swimming as a mermaid amongst the other mermaids. Revisit the opening endpapers that feature Julian swimming among the women. How do the two sets of illustration compare and contrast, and what do the distinctions suggest about his growth and evolution as a character? Add any key words and phrases to the Role on the Wall.

#### Session 5

Review the Role on the Wall notes, discuss with the children which words or phrases stand out most in terms of capturing Julian's emotional journey. Circle the words identified. Through shared writing, draw on the key words/ phrases identified and work with the children to co-construct the opening of a free verse stanza. Give the children the opportunity to draw on this to write their own poems. Cut out fish shaped templates of varying sizes. Give children the opportunity to draft, refine and edit their poems and write up their final pieces onto the foil fishes using Sharpies.

Re-read and discuss the text as a whole with the children, opening up discussion so that the children can share their likes and dislikes, any questions they are left with and share connections with other stories they have read or seen.

#### Beyond Session 5

Use all of the artwork and poetry produced by the children to create a display that captures the vibrancy of the book and the journey of its central character against the backdrop of the marbled paper.

---

©The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education.

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.



The CILIP Carnegie  
& Kate Greenaway  
Children's Book  
Awards



This sequence of activities was designed by CLPE for the Greenaway shortlist. To access more free resources from CLPE, visit: [www.clpe.org.uk/freeresources](http://www.clpe.org.uk/freeresources)

In depth teaching sequences for over 200 other high quality texts can be found at:  
[www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading](http://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading)

Further resources to support children's understanding of picturebooks for all ages and research on the importance of using picturebooks across the primary years can be found at:  
<https://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures>

---

**©The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education.**

You may use this teaching resource freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE.