

Teaching Ideas for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Award Shortlist 2018

Title: King of the Sky

Author: Nicola Davies

Illustrator: Laura Carlin

Publisher: Walker Books (2017, Hardback Edition)

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:

This is a sequence of sessions aimed at children in Key Stage 2. It might be useful to have a visualiser or some kind of camera projection device to be able to share the images from the text with the pupils on a large scale, to allow for close reading of the images.

The book supports teachers to develop higher level reading and writing skills through a challenging, emotive text. The evocative illustrations are the perfect stimulus for developing reader response by inviting reflections of complex themes. The text offers a wealth of opportunities to explore challenging issues in a framework that also inspires creative and authentic responses.

The activities detailed below stretch over four sessions and focus primarily on using the illustrations to stimulate reflection, discussion and creative responses. The sessions introduce readers to the setting, the main characters and the context in which the story is to develop. If you wish to explore the plot further and in more depth, a five week teaching sequence with extended writing opportunities is available on CLPE's Power of Reading website. www.clpe.org.uk

Session 1

- Read aloud the opening paragraph:

*It rained and rained and rained.
Little houses huddled on the humpbacked hills.
Chimneys smoked and metal towers clanked.
The streets smelled of mutton soup and coal dust
and no one spoke my language.*

- Ask the children what they like about this opening; what don't they like? Are there any memorable words or phrases? What makes them memorable?
- Read the paragraph again and ask children to close their eyes and try to visualise the scene. What do they picture? Provide them with a range of drawing materials and cartridge paper and ask them to



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draw what they visualised, annotating it with any descriptive phrases (these might be a phrase that they heard being read aloud, or a phrase that has come to mind while they've been drawing).

- After drawing, give children the opportunity to discuss with a partner or small group what they've drawn and why.
- Read aloud the opening paragraph for a third time and then display it so the children can revisit it and read it for themselves. Ask them to discuss it in small groups. You may wish to give them some prompts for their discussion, in addition to those already briefly discussed at the start of the session (for example: *Is there anything that you don't understand? Are there any questions that you'd like to ask?*).
- Display Laura Carlin's double page spread illustration of the landscape which follows this quote.
 - *What can they see? (also what can they not see – do children note the lack of motor vehicles, TV antennae, etc.?)*
 - *What sort of town might this be? Who might live there? Where might it be?*
 - *What aspects of the illustration do they like and are drawn to and why?*
 - *Is there anything about the illustration that they dislike and why?*
 - *What puzzles them? What questions does the illustration prompt?*
 - *What connections can they make, what does the illustration remind them of? They might reference previous experiences, other books, film, animation or art as part of their reflections.*
 - *How does the illustrator use colour and what impact does this have on the reader?*
 - *What effect does the layout and size of the composition have?*
 - *How does the illustration make them feel? Why do they think that is?*
 - *Why might the author and illustrator have chosen to set the opening scene here? What might the story be about?*
- If possible, provide groups of children with a copy of the landscape illustration discussed during the previous session. Ask children to work in pairs to annotate it with phrases describing some of the things they can see – *what can they see? what are they/is it doing? how are they doing it?* – and anything they discussed yesterday.
- Ask pupils to share some of their phrases and support them in honing and developing their phrases, including the use of figurative language where appropriate, particularly in relation to the impact they want to have on the reader. *How did the illustration make them feel when they looked at it? How might they form a sentence that evokes the same emotional response from a reader?*
- Following their collaborative work, devising and developing language and ideas, the children can then work independently to use their phrases and any additional ideas to structure a short paragraph designed to accompany Laura Carlin's illustration.
- They might record their descriptive paragraphs, using a simple editing program like MovieMaker or iMovie to add their narration to a photograph of Laura Carlin's painting or to footage of 1920s Welsh mining towns and villages. Performing their writing will support the children in purposefully honing and refining the text.

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Session 2

- Share with the class the front cover of the text for them to discuss: who do they think the two characters are? What could their relationship be? How might they know one another? What does their body language tell you? Do you notice anything unusual or surprising? Do you have any questions that you want to ask? What might the title refer to? Do they have any thoughts or theories about what the story might be about, based on the title and the cover illustration? How might this relate to the illustration and text that we have already explored?
- Read aloud and share the first three double page spreads (up to “*All of it told me this is not where you belong.*”) Provide children with a chance to share any thoughts or questions that have been stimulated by the book so far.
- What do the combination of text and images tell us about the town where the boy has ended up living? What does it mean not to belong somewhere? Have any of us felt like this before?
- In small groups, ask children to begin a ‘role on the wall’ poster for the boy, using the text and illustrations shared so far to guide any suppositions about his character. If children have not used ‘role on the wall’ before, it would be beneficial to model using ideas from the whole class prior to any collaborative small group work. Role on the wall is a technique that uses a displayed outline of the character to record feelings and thoughts (inside the outline) and outward appearances and behaviours (outside the outline) at various stopping points across the story. Using a different colour at each of the stopping points allows you to track changes in the character’s emotional journey. You can include known facts such as physical appearance, age, gender, location and occupation, as well as subjective ideas such as likes/dislikes, friends/enemies, attitudes, motivations, secrets and dreams.
- Finish the session by handing out A5 pieces of card. Ask children to fold them in half and write a small note or card welcoming the boy into their community. What might they write to make him feel more as if he belonged?
- Ask children to put the cards inside envelopes when they are finished and post them (perhaps by simply handing them in to the teacher, or possibly by making use of a class post box). Hand the cards back out to different children and ask them to open the envelope in role as the boy. They can then read the card from the point of view of the boy, developing empathy and reacting in the manner in which they feel he might respond. *What do they now know about the boy? What would they still like to find out?*

Session 3

- Display the illustration of St Peter’s Square from the next double page spread. What do children notice? How has the illustrative style changed? How does the illustration make them feel? Why do they think that is?
- Reread from the start of the text and on to this double page spread (“*...as if they strutted in St Peter’s Square in Rome*”). Children may wish to discuss what else they have learned about the boy and briefly return to their role on the wall to make further annotations. Having read the text, they may also want to return to their discussion around the illustration and consider how what they have learned impacts

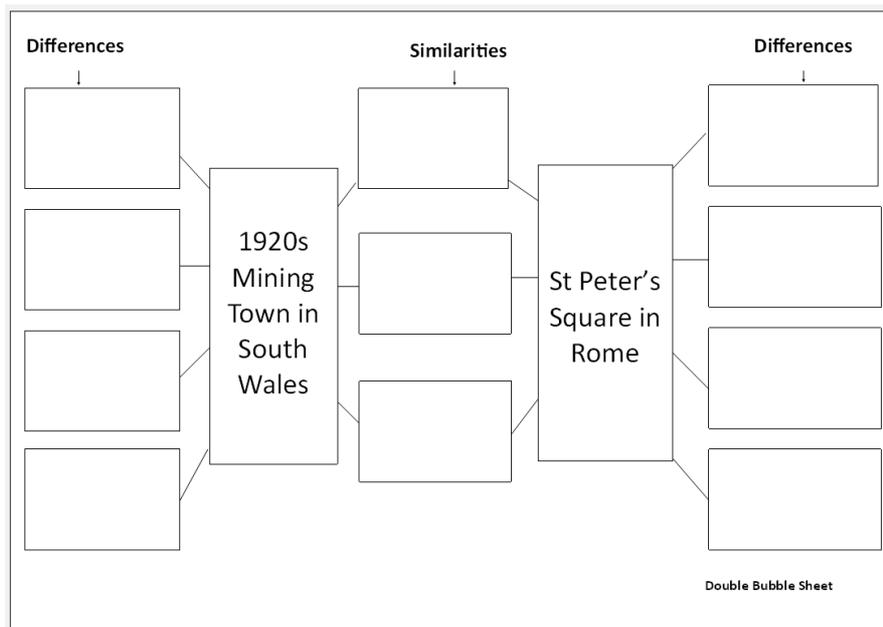
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on their reading of the illustrative choices (for example, the use of colour in the memory of Rome and the boy's clothing, the ghostly yellow and gold outlines versus the solid grey pavement of reality, the two different lampposts – one on either page of the double page spread, the expression on the boy's face, the positioning of the birds in the foreground and background of the illustration, etc.)

- *What do the children already know about Rome?* This could be an opportunity for some extended cross-curricular learning about the Italian city. Alternatively, hand out a selection of photographs of Rome in the 1920s and provide groups with an opportunity to compare these with photographs of South Wales mining towns from the same period.
- Return to Laura Carlin's illustrations, contrasting side by side the two spreads of the mining town explored in Session 1 and this image of St Peter's Square. Use a double bubble diagram or similar resource to guide children's discussion and capture their ideas.
- Consider: How has the mood shifted and how do the text and illustration work together to achieve this change?



- Use Teacher in Role to allow children to interact with the boy and ask him any questions they might have about his journey from Italy as well as his feelings about, and early experiences of, arriving in this Welsh town. It is helpful to use 'teacher in role' rather than pupil at this point for a hot seating activity, as the children are unlikely to have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the situation to explore the situation as sensitively and deeply as you might like them to. Give children a chance to prepare questions in advance, working together to hone their questions to create those that are going to provide them with the most relevant information. You might also discuss the manner in which they



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might speak to the boy – *how is he likely to be feeling? How does that effect our own speech and language choices?*

- Reflect on what children have discovered from the 'teacher in role' activity. They may wish to add further to the 'role on the wall' posters in response to this. Now that children have a better understanding of the boy's situation, ask them to reflect on this by writing a short diary entry in role as that character, either echoing or expanding upon the information they have discovered from both the book and the role play about the transition from Italy to Wales, any fears and hopes that he has for the future, anything specific that he is missing from his past life and anything he has noticed about his new home.
- You may wish to create simple origami books for children to keep as the boy's diary for any further writing in role opportunities. Instructions for making these books can be found on various websites or in Paul Johnson's *Making Books* (A & C Black).

Session 4

- Read from the beginning of the book until the end of the next spread (up to "...where the sky stretched all the way to Italy."). Allow the children to respond to the story so far. *How are their understandings of the characters informed by what they've read and seen? How are Mr Evans and the boy altered by the flight of the birds? Why might this be? What does it mean to them?*
- Share the illustration on the next double page spread (a blue/grey sky full of pigeons in flight). How does this contrast to the initial images of the landscape? What do they notice in the illustration? Is there anything that surprises them?
- Hand out copies of this double page spread illustration for the children to annotate. How does the illustration make them feel? How do they think Mr Evans and the boy feel in the moment that the birds take flight? What about the pigeons – how might they feel as their cage doors are opened and they take to the sky? Children should also add any words and phrases inspired by the look, feel and movement of the birds.
- Support the children in working collaboratively to further develop their language in relation to describing the mass flight of these birds. You might share videos or photos found online, or even the sound made by hundreds or thousands of pigeons taking flight at once.
- Once children have had a chance to note and develop their ideas, provide each pupil with a strip of paper upon which they can write a phrase that they think best describes the moment of the pigeons taking flight (including, if they wish, the emotional response of those watching).
- Working in small groups, have the children read aloud their line and work collaboratively to organise them to create a free verse. Children may choose to edit slightly their individual lines to support the flow of the verse, but should try to retain the integrity of their original thought.
- Have children prepare a performance reading of their poem, lifting the meaning from the page for their audience with appropriate intonation, actions or sound effects – vocal or instrumental.
- Through shared composition, support groups to refine and edit their compositions throughout to create their intended impact on their audience, drawing on what they have learned from Nicola Davies'

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language structures and grammar choices (e.g. alliteration, lists, figurative language: personification, onomatopoeia).

- Children may subsequently go on to compose their own poetry in whatever form they choose that best expresses the mood and emotion of Laura Carlin's illustration.
- Provide children with opportunities to share the published poems with a wider audience, in a class anthology, on the working wall, in school newsletters or as part of a performance.

Session 5

- Read the next two double page spreads (from "A lifetime down the mine..." to "'Re del cielo!' I replied. 'King of the Sky!'").
- *How has the boy changed through his relationship with Mr Evans? Why do you think this is? Compare and contrast how Laura Carlin has illustrated the boy throughout the text so far – how has his character developed? Why do you think this is?* Children may benefit from revisiting their role on the wall posters and adding any additional traits or characteristics that they have noticed.
- Revisit the text on the final double page spread that you read to the class:

*He put a pigeon in my hands.
I felt its small heart racing underneath my finger,
and the push and power of its wings.
Its head was whiter than a splash of milk, its eye blazed fire.
"Name him and he's yours," the old man said.*

- *How do we think he felt holding the pigeon? How might he feel about 'owning' the bird? Is it different from owning a pet? What responsibilities might come with it?*
- In pairs, ask children to freeze frame the moment when Mr Evans hands the pigeon to the boy. Before sharing their freeze frame images, hand children a strip of paper and ask them to create a title for the image; they might choose an extract from the text that we have explored together or else create their own caption.
- After sharing, ask children to extend their freeze frame backwards in time, showing the moments prior to the boy being given Re del cielo. First, the boy alone having arrived in the town; second, the boy first encountering Mr Evans and his pigeons and finally finishing with the frozen image that they have just shared with the class. After they've devised each still image, ask them to consider how they might transition smoothly from one scene to the next.
- Ask children to recreate selected freeze frames and use thought tracking to allow them to share the inner thoughts of the characters at each of those moments, particularly the final image of the boy being given Re del cielo.
- Invite children to return to their diaries to write in role as the boy reflecting on how he feels about owning his own pigeon – *has it begun to alter his feelings about the town and about being away from his home?*



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Beyond Session 5

Continue to share the remainder of the book pausing intermittently to discuss the hopes and fears of the characters and build towards the eventual triumph for both pigeon and boy.

What does the final line of the book suggest? What allows a place to become a home? Nicola Davies dedicates the book to 'all children who have to find home in a new place' - children might explore the impact of human migration, both voluntary and involuntary, from the early 20th century, when this story takes place, to the current day.

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

In depth teaching sequences for over 200 other high quality texts can be found at:
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>

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