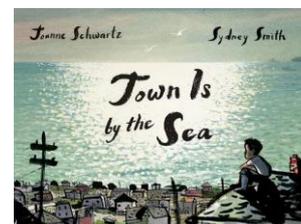


Take 5: Ideas for Independent/Home Learning

Town is by the Sea by Joanne Schwartz and Sydney Smith (Walker)



1. Explore it

Look at the spread from the book below, searching like a detective in the illustration to see what clues it gives you to the story:



Where do you think this is? What do you think is happening here? Think about how this illustration makes you feel and what you like or dislike about it. Does it remind you of anything you know in stories or real life? How? What stands out for you in the scene? How do you respond to the different things you can see?

Think about the two figures standing at the door. Who do you think they might be? What do you think you know about them and what they might be doing? What do you think their body language tells you? What might they be saying?

Whose eyes do you think we see the room through? Who do you think is saying the words, 'From my house, I can see the sea'? Might it be one of the people at the door, or someone else? What do you think it might be like to be in the room? What do you think you can tell about the life of the people who live here from what you see? What clues do you get to the time and place the story might be set? What do you think it might be about?

2. Illustrate it

The narrator says, 'From my house I can see the sea', but in fact it is shown only vaguely; let's take a closer look. Take a pen or pencil and a bit of scrap paper. You can use the back of an old envelope or cereal packet; whatever is to hand. Use your imagination to capture the view of the sea from the house: is there a port, jetty, beach or cliffs; sand, pebbles or rocks; man-made or natural; wildness or calm? Can you see anything out at sea? If you have internet access you could look for videos of the sea to inspire you (e.g., <https://www.storyblocks.com/video/search/ocean>, <https://www.storyblocks.com/video/search/sea+cliffs>

<https://www.storyblocks.com/video/search/pebble+beach> or <https://www.storyblocks.com/video/search/beach+waves> then use shapes or shading to capture the scene.

Share your drawing with family or friends. What do you and they like about your drawings? Do you agree?

3. Talk about it

- If you didn't do this as part of 'Explore It', look forensically at every detail of the illustration for anything that you can infer about what life might be like for the narrator. What is the cooker like and what might they be eating? What time of day is it? How are the people dressed? What can you see on the table? What is on the windowsill and on the counter?
- Who do you think is speaking, is it one of the people at the door, or someone else? If so, how do you think they relate to the people in the doorway? What do you think is happening between them, even the cat and the person in the portrait seem to be looking at them? Does the scene remind you of anywhere, either real or imagined?
- Sydney Smith tells us a great deal about the characters of the story through the everyday objects in their kitchen. What do you think the objects in your home might tell you about who lives there? For example, can someone's favourite mug/hat/fridge magnet give you an insight into their personality? Can you think of other examples?
- What do you think it might be like to live here, what mood does the spread create? Do you think we are affected by our surroundings? Can you think of a time when your surroundings have affected you and your behaviour, maybe on a holiday or trip? This could be a feeling of family, safety and security as some people might feel here, or a negative example, where the place oppressed you and made you feel uncomfortable.

4. Imagine it

What can you see from your house? Maybe you have a choice of views from a front or back window: do you look over town or country — maybe even the sea? A garden, a road, other flats, houses or buildings?

Describe what you can see from your window, considering the details of the near and far distance, but feel free to make up from your own imagination stories about anything or anyone you may be able to see. It's your view!

If the view from your own window doesn't inspire you, imagine living somewhere else, and capture what you can see when you look outside. What would your dream view be? What landscape features would you like to see? What might you least like to see? The choice is yours.

5. Create it

Taking inspiration from the 'Imagine It' activity, compose a piece of writing called 'From my window I can see...' This could be a poem or a piece of narrative, or maybe what you see from your window inspires you to a different type of writing altogether; maybe the start of a longer piece of writing, a story or a recollection.

Share your description with someone else and see what they think of what you have described, and whether they can suggest any improvements. You may even want to add an illustration to accompany your writing. Will you show the actual view, or like Sydney Smith has done here, will you show the place you are looking out from?