

Teacher Notes

Staircase to the Moon
written and illustrated by Bronwyn Houston

Magabala Books

Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler (Teacher Librarian)

SYNOPSIS

Staircase to the Moon is a picture book that shares a little girl's imagination as she dreams about journeying to the moon. Inspired by the reflection of the moon as it reflects off the mudflats, she wonders what it would be like to climb those stairs all the way to the moon. In what seems to be a dream, she and her grandfather embark on a wonderful adventure that leads them from their home to the amazing, weightless world of the moon.

Through the use of textless page openings and poetic language, the author takes the reader on a delightful voyage that might not be as dreamlike as at first believed.

THEMES

Adventure and Imagination

Rosie and her grandfather embark on a wonderful adventure together. This adventure includes elements of the local neighbourhood and surrounding environment such as giant boob trees, bat infested mangrove swamps, swarms of mosquitoes and the mudflats.

Adventure requires imagination and courage. Both Rosie and her grandfather have these attributes.

The Moon

The moon and outer space have long been the subject of people's imagination. The journey to the moon is only part of the adventure. Getting there is as important as the end destination.

Relationships

Rosie and her grandfather have a special relationship. He believes in her adventure and in her wish to climb the staircase to the moon. The bond between grandparent/grandchild can often encompass a unique sense of fun, adventure and imagination.

Poetic devices

Imagery, similes and repetition are used in the written text.

Visual Literacy

The textless page openings offer visual literacy opportunities.

The illustrations add another layer of story to the text.

Local environment/habitat

Aspects of the local habitat of Broome such as the mangroves, boab trees and mudflats are included in the story.

WRITING STYLE

Written in first person, present tense, *Staircase to the Moon* is a combination of textless page openings with lyrical prose that poses the question, 'what if?' The reader is able to interpret the wordless components of the story through the visual storytelling present in the illustrations. Simple and uncluttered, *Staircase to the Moon* offers the reader the opportunity to engage their imagination and ponder the wonders of the moon and of the mind.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Before reading, consider the title of the text. What might a 'Staircase to the Moon' be? Can you imagine what a staircase to the moon might look like or be made from?

Show the photograph from the back of the text of the full moon rising at the same time as a low tide. Discuss the idea that this creates a 'staircase to the moon.' This might be best projected onto a whiteboard.

Search the internet (using Google Images for example) for other images of nature that would inspire one's imagination such as a solar eclipse. Brainstorm similes and imagery that could be used with this image. Use these words and images as inspiration for your own story of adventure and imagination.

Consider the way in which much of *Staircase to the Moon* is told through textless page openings. Discuss that readers need to 'read' pictures as carefully as they read words.

Choose one or more of the textless page openings. Write the text for these page/s in keeping with the rest of the narration.

Reread the first sentence of the book, taking time to discuss the imagery in the phrase 'fiery orange moon'. Do you often associate the colour orange with the moon? Why is this such a successful way of describing the moon as it rises?

Investigate the various phases of the moon. Keep a diary of the moon over a month. Draw what the moon looks like during its various phases, especially when it's a full moon. Be sure to take time one evening to observe the moon at intervals to see how it changes position and colour as it rises.

View time lapsed footage of the moon rising at the site below

http://www.footage.com/stock-footage/20268/Time-lapse_Of_Full_Moon_Rising

View short Youtube clips about the phases of the moon

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aFGNGEcDOK>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXseTWTZlks>

Watch some images of Neil Armstrong landing on the moon

What would you do if you could visit the moon? Imagine you have walked the staircase to the moon with a grandparent. Write a narrative or journal piece about your journey.

Have you and your grandparent ever gone on an adventure together? Write a recount of this experience.

Examine the similes in the text, discussing the contribution they make to the text:

He floats and soars like a bird

I am as light as a feather

I bounce and twirl like an acrobat

Imagine you are embarking on an adventure near your own house. What elements of your local area could you embellish and include in a story about your adventure? Are there big trees? Native animals? Creeks? Draw a map from your house to your imaginary destination.

Do you think this story is a dream or that it really happened? What visual clues are we given? Give reasons to support your opinion.

Using digital cameras, take a series of photos of your local area to use as stimulus for a piece of writing.

The first page opening uses cross hatching to illustrate the silhouettes of Rosie and her family. Teach students this technique and draw a series of simple objects using cross hatching.

Look carefully at the page opening of Rosie in her bedroom before the adventure takes place. What clues is the reader being given that Rosie has a keen interest in outer space?

Many of the objects of nature in the illustrations such as the boab trees and the mosquitoes assume human qualities. Discuss the poetic technique of personification and how this contributes to the text. Try adding some human qualities to other objects of nature, especially objects around the school. Digital photos could be useful here.