

How To Use: THE CAN CARAVAN

Discussion Prompts

Here are some ideas for things to talk about while sharing the book - you could ask a few different questions each time you read it.

Look at the cans on the endpapers. Which can is your favourite? Invent a drink to fill it; what would you call it and what would it taste like?

You could match identical cans by tapping them with your fingers.

Some of the cans are crumpled - do you think they're empty?

What would you do with an empty can?

Have you recycled anything lately? (Parents and guardians could involve children in the process of sorting packaging for recycling. Teachers may use the classroom's paper recycling bin as an example.)

Janie and Mrs Tolen are on the title page - what do you think they're talking about?

On the opposite page, there is a glossary of Romani terms - you can model looking up definitions by returning to this word list during or after the story.

Do you like designing things? Talk about the ways a design blueprint is different to a regular drawing. They may include labels like measurements, angles and other notes and they are usually drawn from different points of view. They're drawn in a way that would help someone to build a 3D version of the project.

Mrs Tolen shows Janie a photo of her old lathe. Do you know what a lathe is?

It's a tool that spins a piece of wood, metal or almost any material at a high speed (just don't try it with jelly). The person using the lathe can then press carving tools into the material to reshape it. You could watch videos of lathe tutorials online together.

Look at the classroom display on page 8. Can you name all of the things that have been sorted into groups? Do you agree with how they have been grouped?

Janie tells her friends about recycling efforts during World War II – you could find out more about this to practise your research skills!

Look at the opposite page together – can you guess what jobs Janie's mother and grandfather have?

Can you find the 'Get Well Soon' card on the hospital spread? Who do you think it's from?

Janie's class visits a recycling factory. You could talk about their helmets, ear defenders and protective eyewear; why do you think they're wearing them? Do they just want to look cool, or does each one protect a body part from something?

The machines that recycle cans are impressive, aren't they? If you'd like to find out more, you could watch videos about recycling factories online together. There's a diagram of the recycling process at the end of the book, too.

Can you imagine one and a half million cans? How many classrooms in your school would those cans fill up? How many cans can you carry?

After watching the video, Janie is struck with inspiration! Can you think of a time when an idea excited you and you had to draw, write or tell someone about it straight away? You could talk about how Janie is inspired by the shape of the cans; inspiration for projects can be found anywhere, so it's important to visit lots of places and try new things. Listening to rain on a window could inspire a song or watching a bee visit a flower could give you an idea for a picture book!

Janie and her friends talk about the project and make a list of the skills and materials they'll need – this is a great technique when you're feeling overwhelmed, as smaller tasks are easier to handle (and share!)

You could go through the list together and discuss what materials and tools carpenters and welders work with. Can you guess what each person will do to help out with the project?

The next spread shows some of the different ways to spread awareness of a cause and how to gather help and donations.

The caravan looks different now, doesn't it?

The text says 'The caravan had been gutted'; have you come across this verb before?

If not, can you work out what it means by looking at the picture?

A social worker visits Mrs Tolen in the care home. As explained in the text, social workers make sure that people can live somewhere safe and comfortable! The one in the story will be back soon to inspect the caravan and provide some advice.

Mrs Tolen's new caravan has solar panels – these generate energy for her new home using the sun!

The caravan is ready! Do you think Mrs Tolen will like her new home? What words would you use to describe her reaction? Turn the page and see if you were right!

Activities

Design A Home!

In the book, Janie designs a unique new home for Mrs Tolen! The shape was inspired by a metal can. Look for interesting objects around the room you're in – could you draw a home based on one of them? Where would you put the door? Will you add windows? How would you describe the home?

Sounds Like A Plan!

Make a list of the things that Janie did to reach her goal, paying attention to the order. This could be used as a learning opportunity; project planning and problem-solving are useful skills and you can help children practise them by creating plans for imaginary or real projects, like planning a disco or developing a school garden. You could even pretend Janie has asked you to plan a party for Mrs Tolen and everyone who worked on the caravan. Who could help you to prepare the food? What music would you play? Can you design the invitations?

Role Play Area

Here are some ideas of a role play area for younger readers - you may be able to adapt some of them to create a wall display for older readers:

- Provide squared paper, rulers, pencils and protractors for children to use.
 - Display some examples of blueprints that you've found online.
 - You could include a can collection point for the classroom/home.
- The space could also have construction materials, like blocks or cardboard boxes.
 - A toy toolbox would let children imitate hammering and sawing.
- If you have any old car manuals with cross sections and diagrams, you could display those, too.