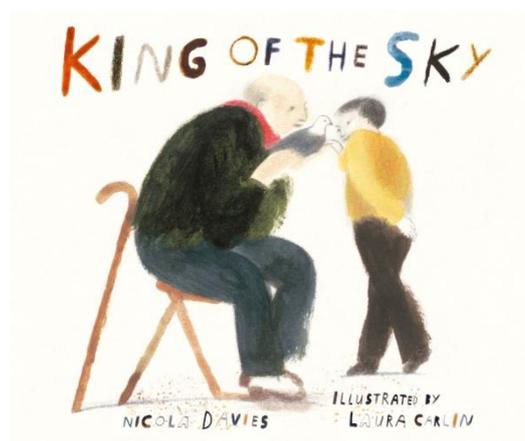


2018 Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist VISUAL LITERACY NOTES

Title: **King of the Sky**
Illustrator: **Laura Carlin**
Author: **Nicola Davies**
Publisher: Walker Books

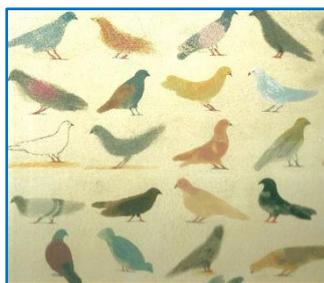


First look

*Share *King of the Sky* with the shadowing group without asking for comment. Share the book again, this time chatting about the story and illustrations as you do. Are the first responses to the book positive, negative or undecided?

* Talk about all the visual aspects of the book i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. How do these 'extras' to the story contribute to the overall impact of the book? For example, discuss:

- the style of writing the title and the story
- all the different sorts of pigeons on the end papers.



*Chat in pairs or as a group about whether they enjoyed the initial sharing of *King of the Sky*. What did they like or dislike and why? Is there anything that they don't understand about the story?

Look again

Remember that the Kate Greenaway Medal is for outstanding artistic quality so shadowers should chiefly consider the illustrations. Do the images add deeper meaning to the words? Do they tell you more than the words? Is there a partnership between the written and the graphic texts?

The themes in the narrative touch on loneliness and feeling out of place in the world. A boy has moved away from his familiar surroundings in Rome, where the sun usually shines, splendid buildings glow like gold in the sunlight, and where pigeons strut in St Peter's Square.

The boy is now in a mining town, bleak, wet and dull; covered in coal dust and smelling of mutton. Only one thing reminds him of his previous home – the pigeons kept by his neighbour, Mr Evans.



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How do the illustrations enhance the meaning of the words?
 Right from the start, the boy is grumpy and looks miserable.
 How does Mr Evans help him to cheer up?
 Why do you think Mr Evans likes to see the pigeons fly?
 As their relationship develops, how do the boy and his old neighbour change?

Looking closely

Look closely at the art work. How would you describe it? This artist uses space on a page as carefully as she uses a pencil and colours. There is lots of movement in the pictures – birds walking and flying, people going about their daily lives, the boy and old man sharing their thoughts. Did you notice how the boy's attitude changes once he is given *Re del Cielo* – King of the sky? His hands come out of his pockets, he helps Mr Evans. Can you see anything else? Does the boy start slouching again at any point in the story? How does he react when his pigeon gets back?

Continue to look closely and discuss the design and images with the rest of the group.

Interpreting the texts

Writing

Perhaps you have personal experience of feeling lonely in a strange, new place or maybe you can imagine how the boy felt. Write briefly about feeling uncomfortable where you are. Use any form of writing - poetry, short descriptions, a brief episode in a story, a letter – whatever you wish.



Research

Mr Evans says that the King of the Sky was a hero 'like the pigeons in the war'. Use the library and internet to discover what pigeons did during the war.



Artwork

The story is set in a Welsh mining village. Find the double page spread that is a picture of the village. Can you see similar features in these paintings by Elwyn Thomas and Louise Collis?



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Have a go at creating the soft, fuzzy style of picture that you see in the book. Use watercolour washes to make the main shapes then use crayons to add texture and shading.

A lifetime underground

Mr Evans had been a miner. Look on [BBC Bitesize](#) to see and hear how Mr Evans had to work. No wonder he found it hard to walk with a straight back having to bend over and shovel heavy coal all day. He also found it hard to breathe – many miners developed a disease called emphysema from breathing in coal dust.

No wonder Mr Evans whispered: "I like to see them fly, after a lifetime underground."



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