

2018 Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist VISUAL LITERACY NOTES

Title: **The Song from Somewhere Else**

Illustrator: **Levi Pinfold**

Author: **A. F. Harrold**

Publisher: **Bloomsbury**



First look

The Song from Somewhere Else is a magical, musical mystery that will engage and intrigue readers. Levi Pinfold's evocative visual text add to the book's air of weirdness. The first pieces of artwork to be noticed will be the cover (front & back) and end papers. The only pictures in this book that have any colour are on the covers. What colours have been used there? Move the book to see the translucent sparkly marks. Can you think why any of these colours were chosen?

If the group have had time to read the whole book, ask them to chat in pairs, or as a whole group, about whether they enjoyed the story. What did they like or dislike and why? Did they want to ask questions about or discuss any particular part? Was the artwork influential on their understanding?

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?

Look again

Look at all the illustrations from page 3 to page 37 in the section called MONDAY.

- *Page 3:* Which of the following adjectives could be used to describe the cat?
...startled, calm, afraid, cowering, alert, terrified, comfortable, aggressive, sad, challenging...
- *Pages 4 & 5:* Look at the design of these two pages. There is more space given to the illustration than the printed word. Why do you think this is?
- Readers are introduced to the setting of this story with the images not words. How would you describe the place that you see in this illustration?
- *Pages 6 & 7:* On these two pages readers can see four characters. The three boys are bullies. Do they look unpleasant or cruel? Frank is the girl who is being bullied. Does she look scared? Is her face difficult to see?
- *Pages 11-15:* Readers first meet Nick in written descriptions: **'He smelt weird. He was big, not fat, just big, broad, tall.'** **'He had a funny flat face like it was painted on the front of a stone.'**



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And then in an image given a whole page. Is the picture of Nick how you imagined him from the description?

- *Pages 20 & 21:* A double page spread showing another view of the place where Frank and Nick live. How would you describe this place?



Illuminating the written text through creative or critical thinking

When studying a book, it is always beneficial, to use tasks which require imaginative or creative response. The use of creative activities (e.g. art, drama, researching, invention, music etc.) encourages students to engage fully with the text. The following suggestions may help get the group thinking about different aspects of this the book.

Representing abstract feelings

This is a mysterious story which involves some disturbing and abstract themes, such as; loneliness, bullying, love and fear. Look through the book together at all the images. What is it about the illustrations that help a reader get a sense of those themes? Think about the use of: colour, shape, line and white space.

Representing the intangible

How can music be shown in an illustration? Read the following passage:

*It was music of a sort she'd never heard before.
She was suddenly filled with shoals of fish, darting and moving like one great whole, darting and flowing this way and that, darting and flashing, hundreds and hundreds of silver fish all moving as if they shared one brain*

Do the pictures on the front cover and on page 29 help readers to visualise the description? Turn to pages 102 & 103 to see another depiction of the Troll music.



Draw your own visual response to a favourite piece of music.

Research into the world of TROLLS

We may first have heard about trolls during childhood, probably when listening to the tale of the **Three Billy Goats Gruff**. Is it a coincidence that Nick's surname is Underbridge? You may also have read books about the **Moomintrolls** by Tove Jansson. As well as referring to the creatures of Scandinavian legends, today the word TROLL is used in other ways (particularly relating to social media). There is also a recently developed animated film series entitled **Trolls**.

Use the library and the internet (Wikipedia has an interesting section) to find out about the original mythological creatures called trolls. Make an A4 sized, illustrated poster showing what you find out.



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Be creative

You can use any way you wish to create:

Music for a troll

A menu for a troll

A re-telling of *The Billy Goats Gruff*

A picture of a troll.



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