

The logo for 'Children's Books Daily' is centered on a blue background. The words 'Children's books' are written in a large, white, cursive font, and 'DAILY' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it. The background is filled with faint, white line drawings of various books and book-related items.

# Children's books DAILY

## ‘THE GIFT’ – TEACHERS’ NOTES

Prepared by teacher Melissa Kroeger for Children’s Books Daily in context with the Australian Curriculum.

*‘If you look long and hard enough, you’ll see the beauty in everything.’*

**Title:** ‘The Gift’

**Author:** Michael Speechley

**Publisher:** Penguin Books Australia

**Age Range:** early childhood/lower primary/middle primary

**Themes:** kindness, friendship, giving, death, grieving, memories

**Championing simple acts of kindness, this exquisite picture book explores the importance of friendship and the joy of giving.**

Stories of grief are difficult to tackle especially for a younger audience and in a picture book. But my oh my, Michael Speechley has so delicately entwined grief with kindness and friendship to succour broken hearts. All ages will be able to take away from the book what they will. It is just not about grief but the themes of selflessly thinking of others and the spirit of gift are strong throughout. Such a beautiful read and the illustrations are typically Michael Speechley, as done in his first book ‘**The All New Must Have Orange 430**’ which leaves the reader returning time and time again to the pages to study for more detail that has been hidden.

**About the Author:** Michael Speechley has been a graphic designer and high school art teacher in Western Australia. His first picture book, ‘**The All New Must Have Orange 430**’ received an Honours award by the CBCA awards 2019 and the Environmental Award for Children’s Literature by the Wilderness Society 2019.

## DISCUSSION / STIMULUS

- What do you notice about the illustrations on the front cover? Does it tell you anything about the book?
- Read the blurb on the back cover. What do you think Rosie will give her mystery neighbour? Are there any clues on the front and back covers?
- What is something you could give to a mysterious neighbour that is different, unusual and surprising?
- On the first double page illustrations, what tells you that the house is unloved and possibly abandoned? How has Michael Speechley made the house stand out? What do you think tells Rosie that someone lives there?
- Page 5 shows Rosie looking through the window. What else do you notice in the picture? Turn over to page 6. How are the two pages linked? What has Michael Speechley done?
- Rosie’s mum used to say ‘*If you look long and hard enough, you’ll see the beauty in everything*’. What does this mean to you? Give an example.

- Why do you think Rosie gives the mystery neighbour a great big, prickly weed? How would you feel if someone gave you one?
- Analyse page 21 – inside the neighbour's house. What do you notice?
- What could Rosie and Mrs Green share between them?
- Where had all of the weeds gone? How did the beautiful flowers get there?
- The last page shows three birds – two large and one small. What do you think it means?
- Now go back and check out the amazing illustrations that Speechley has hidden a whole wonder of things in...
- Compare and contrast Pages 10 and 18. They are drawn with the same outlook through the courtyard.
- The front cover shows the 'f' designed differently. What is it? Where else in the book can you find it? Does it represent or mean anything?
- There are flowers drawn all throughout the book. Go back and find them hiding!

## CURRICULUM-LINKED ACTIVITIES

### YEAR 1 ENGLISH

#### Language – Language for interaction

**ACELA1444** *Understand that language is used in combination with other means of communication, for example facial expressions and gestures to interact with others*

**ACELA1787** *Explore different ways of expressing emotions, including verbal, visual, body language and facial expressions*

#### Activity:

Go through the pages of the book. Observe the body language and facial features of the characters.

- Discuss and name the expression or body language eg: sad, unhappy, hands on hips- could mean strength or bullying.
- Write the expression and body language on card.
- Print out or draw emojis to correlate with the expression or body language.
- Have students duplicate the expression.
- One at a time ask students to show an expression in front of the class and have the class guess what it is.
- Students can write a short story about an expression or body language feature eg: 'Sally the Sad', 'Marvin the Mad', 'Barry the Bully', 'Hannah the Happy', 'Suzie the Shy', 'Eleanor the Elated'. Within the story they are to state what makes their character mad/sad/elated. Then illustrate it showing the traits of the character through illustration.

## YEAR 2 ENGLISH

### Language – Expressing and developing ideas

**ACELA1468** *Understand that nouns represent people, places, concrete objects and abstract concepts; that there are three types of nouns: common, proper and pronouns; and that noun groups/phrases can be expanded using articles and adjectives*

#### Activity:

- Explore the text and identify the nouns that refer to characters, elements of the setting and ideas.
- Explore the illustrations and noun groups/phrases in the book to identify how the characters have been represented by Speechley
- Identify which characters in the book are proper nouns.
- Build on extended noun groups/phrases to give a clear description from the book such as:
  - the old house,
  - she spotted a shadow
  - attic window
  - or is she just lonely
  - crept up the wonky steps
  - unloved garden

## YEAR 3 ENGLISH

### Language – Language for interaction

**ACELA1478** *Understand how different types of texts vary in use of language choices, depending on their purpose and context (for example, tense and types of sentences)*

**ACELA1479** *Understand that paragraphs are a key organisational feature of written texts*

#### Activity:

Compare 'The Gift' to a non-fiction book.

- What differences do they have?
- What similarities do they have?
- Read parts of both books. How is it written differently? Why?
- What language features do they have?
- What type of text is 'The Gift'? And what is its purpose?
- What type of text is the non-fiction book? And what is its purpose?
- In 'The Gift' the tense changes when describing some characters? Why is this? What language is used to show the shift in tense?
- Compare the use of paragraphs in both 'The Gift' and the non-fiction book. Note that the longer text (non-fiction) paragraph's start with a topic sentence or a paragraph opener. Compare this to a novel and how the paragraphs elaborate on an idea.
- Write a paragraph on the board copied straight from a novel and circle the introduction, the supporting information (first, second, third detail) and the conclusion/ closing sentence.
- Have students write a paragraph about Rosie from 'The Gift' and what happens in the story. Or what could happen to Rosie's life if there was a 'Gift 2'.

## YEAR 1 ENGLISH

### Literature – Responding to Literature

**ACELT1582** Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences

## YEAR 2 ENGLISH

### Literature – Responding to Literature

**ACELT1589** Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts

## YEAR 3 ENGLISH

### Literature – Responding to Literature

**ACELT1596** Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others

#### Activity:

Read both of Michael Speechley's books to students, 'The Gift' and 'The All New Must Have Orange 430'.

Discuss and record:

- Compare the main characters – Harvey and Rosie
  - How are they different?
  - How are they similar?
  - Who do you prefer? Why?
  - Which character can you relate to the most? Why?
- Compare the events of the books
  - How are they different?
  - How are they similar?
- Compare the setting of the books
  - How are they different?
  - How are they similar?

## YEARS 3 & 4 – THE ARTS

### Visual Arts

**ACAVAM111** Use materials, techniques and processes to explore visual conventions when making artworks

**ACAVAM112** Present artworks and describe how they have used visual conventions to represent their ideas

#### Activity:

- Look at the illustrations in both of the books by Michael Speechley, 'The Gift' and 'The All New Must Have Orange 430'. Michael Speechley used a technique in his drawings called 'hatching' and 'cross hatching'. For more information on this check it out [here](#).

- Hatching and cross hatching are used to create depth, texture and give the illusion of light by the use of lines. Follow a tutorial on YouTube like these:
  - **Tutorial 1**
  - **Tutorial 2**
  - **Tutorial 3**
- Experiment with hatching and cross hatching using simple shapes like cubes and triangles. Then change those shapes into a house. Keep increasing until you create a whole picture.
- Try recreating a page from one of Michael Speechley's books.
- Display your artwork and describe how you used the technique of hatching and crosshatching to create depth, shading and texture.