



Teaching Ideas for the Klaus Flugge Prize Shortlist 2020

Set up to honour Klaus Flugge, founder of Andersen Press, this award is for the most promising & exciting newcomer to children's picture book illustration.

Title: The Star in the Forest

Author Illustrator: Helen Kellock

Publisher: Thames & Hudson

These notes have been written by the teachers at the [CLPE](#) to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use picture books to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.

Reading aloud and key talking points:

- Begin by appreciating the book as an artefact: pass it round to the children, so that they can see the colours and textures of the artwork and of the cover finish, holding it at an angle to see how the foil lettering contrasts with the matt illustration. *Do you like the look of this book, do you want to read it? Why or why not?*
- Look closely at the illustration. *At what time of day do you think this is happening? What does the bright light in the centre suggest? What do you think has happened here? How are the two people on the front cover reacting to this? How do you think this relates to the title, 'The Star in the Forest'? What do you think the girls might be thinking, feeling or saying? What makes you think that?*
- Encourage the children to think about the forest mentioned in the title. *What do you think the forest is like, from what you can see on the cover? Have you ever visited a forest? Have you ever been in a forest at night? What was it like — what could you see, hear, smell? What did it feel like to be there?* Their understanding of forests may come from real life experiences or from stories like *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler (Macmillan), *Billy and the Beast* by Nadia Shireen (Jonathan Cape), *Into the Forest* by Anthony Browne (Walker) or the many traditional tales set in forests, like *Red Riding Hood*, *Hansel and Gretel* or *Snow White*.
- Now, turn to the title page and look at the small illustration of the forest on this page. *What colours have been used to depict the trees and the sky? What are the trees like? What does this make you think about the forest?*
- Turn the page and look closely at the illustration on this spread, taking time to take in all the details in the picture. Discuss the illustration together. *What do you think is happening here? Who do you think the people are? Do you like it? Why? Why not? How does it make you feel? What is it about the illustration that makes you feel this way?* The children might talk about the warm colours used, the homely feel of the scene and the sense of family. Think about the perspective used for this shot. *Where are we seeing the scene from? What does this make us think or feel?* The children may note that as the reader, we are positioned to be looking in on this scene from afar, from the edge of the wood. Consider the absence of text on this page. *Why do you think the author-illustrator decided not to add any words to this spread? What is the story we are seeing here without needing*



- any words? Think about how this spread sets the scene for the story you are about to read. Who and what do you think the story is about? What do you think we will see on the next spread?*
- Turn the page, read the text aloud and allow time and space for the children to reflect on what they see and hear. *Were any of your predictions about the story correct? What do you notice about the colours used in the spread?* The children may connect these with those used in the illustration of the forest on the title page. Spend some time focussing on the two girls. *How do you think they feel about being at their grandparents' house? What is it like? Do you think they come here often? What tells you this?* As well as linking to the word 'snug', used in the text, the children might talk about the warmth and comfort of the house, suggested by the colours used, the steaming mugs they have, the sleeping cat and the fact that they have lots of toys there to play with. Spend some time looking more closely at these objects. *What can you see? What might these things tell us about the girls' interests?* You could provide a viewfinder to focus attention on one area at a time: the books, rockets, globe and robots; the sleeping cat and its toy; the rucksack and torch. Consider the two sisters: *how do you think they are the same, and how different? How is this conveyed by the illustration?* Children might comment on Pip's and Maisie's body language and facial expressions, Pip gazing out of the window, Maisie frowning impatiently. *Why might she be feeling this way? What do you think they are both waiting for? What do you think they will do when the stars appear?*
 - Now, read on over the page, looking closely at the next double-page spread. Draw the children's attention to the dual perspective you can see here. *From where are we looking now? What does this spread show us?* The children will note that they are now outside the house, looking in on the girls through the window, but are also invited to see what they girls can see from the reflection in the glass. *Why might this setting be so exciting for the children? What spectacular adventure do you think Maisie might dream of having here?* Think about the way both girls are portrayed in the text and the illustrations. Encourage the children to look carefully at their facial expressions and body positions, as well as what they can infer from the text, particularly through the author's choice of verbs, such as '**dreamed**', '**stared**' and '**willed**'. *How would you describe them both from what you see and hear? What makes you think this?* Think about how the story might continue from here. *Do you think Maisie will embark on the adventure she dreams of? What do you think this will be?*
 - Share the next page which allows us to witness what happens next over the girls' shoulders. *What do you think has happened? How are you feeling about this as you watch with the sisters? What makes you feel this way? How do you think they might have felt about this? Think about the verb chosen to describe Maisie's reaction: '**squealing**' – what does this mean, and how do you think it tells us she is feeling?* Here, we can't see the girls' faces – *what do you imagine that they look like as they watch this moment occur? How might Pip's reaction differ from Maisie's?* Invite the children to respond to this moment, either as Pip or Maisie, by pulling a facial expression to describe their reaction. Give each child a small safety mirror to try out different expressions linked to how they think each girl will react. Support the children in modelling how to draw the girls and their expression, following the simple style seen in the previous spread, and then allow time for the children to draw their own ideas, supported by the expressions they made in the mirror. Encourage them to keep looking at their own expressions to support them as they draw. You could take the same perspective of looking at them through the other side of the window frame and show how



their expressions look when we see this view from the other side. Use a soft pencil, 4B-6B to allow the children to make comfortable marks on the page as they draw.

- Display the children's drawings prominently and allow them to see the different expressions they have made and to talk together about how they think each girl is feeling at this moment.
- Read the next, right-hand page, and discuss what the children have read and seen. *Who leads the way here? Why do you think this is? What do the small vignettes allow you to see, and how do these make you feel about what is happening now? What do the colours show? What do we see Maisie doing, and how; how does this contrast with Pip? How does it reinforce or extend what we thought about the personalities of the girls?* Consider the accompanying text: *which words and phrases do you find especially effective, and what do they capture? What insights into Maisie's personality do we get when she **'springs into action at once'**, imagines a **'rocketship'** or **'creature from outer space'**, and says, **'there's no time to wait'**?* Consider the implications of Maisie rushing out. *Do you think that Maisie is doing the right thing here? Why? Why not? What do you think Pip should do?* Consider where the story might lead next. *What do you think the next page will show?*
- Turn the page to share the next spread. *How do you feel about the setting you see here? Do you think the girls are sensible to keep going? Why or why not?* Think again about the perspective we see this scene from. *What are we able to see that the girls cannot? How does looking down on them from this height make us see and feel about them?* Discuss the forest creatures you can see in the darkness. *What animals do you think these are? How do the colours and perspective used make them appear?* Consider the text, and how it works with the illustration: *what do the words add to what we see? How does the **'gloomy dusk'** make things look different? What do you think it tells you that Pip is the one **'whispering nervously'**, but also noticing the sounds of the forest? Does this support your understanding of the girls' personalities? Why do you think Maisie is in front, holding the torch, with Pip following behind, half-turned back?* Allow the children time to think about what might happen next. *Do they think the girls will find themselves in danger, or will something more hopeful happen?* The children might refer to the beam of light being hopeful and lighting the way to the place where we turn the page, suggesting that a brighter journey may lie ahead.
- Turn to share the next page, of the fox caught in the beam of light. *How does this one fox, caught in the torch's beam, compare with those shown on the previous page? Does it appear as sinister as the previous foxes? Why or why not? What do you think its body language or facial expressions convey? What might it be thinking? Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to focus in on a small vignette of the fox in this way? Whose eyes are we seeing it through?*
- Share the right-hand page. *What do you notice about what the picture is showing and what the words are saying? What words in particular tells us about the girls' personalities? What does Maisie's language and enthusiastic attitude tell us about her personality? How does it compare to Pip, what do we see her doing? What do you notice about the fox in this spread? What does this make us think about the fox and the girls?*
- Turn to share the next double-page spread, allowing children to turn back for comparison to the foxes spread two pages earlier. *What do you think is happening here? What does it tell us about the two girls that Maisie is shining and looking forward while Pip is looking up? How are the two girls framed in this illustration, and what is the effect of placing them on the page in this way? Do the owls here remind you of the foxes in the earlier spread? How? How do you think Pip feels as she*



wonders whether **'she and Maisie were not alone'**? How do you think the punctuation with ellipsis (...) conveys Pip's **'wondering'**? What do you think might be up above them?

- Share the next double-page spread. *Is this what you expected to see? What do you notice most about the owls? How do you think they are feeling at this moment? What makes you think this? Can you imitate their pose and facial expression?* Re-read the words that you can see here. *What does Maisie's response to Pip convey about her character, which words tell you most about her?*
- Share the next page. *What do the words and pictures between them convey? Is the message from the illustration the same as that from the text? What do you notice?* Children might observe that Maisie is always to the fore, shining her torch, with Pip letting her go first while she observes and makes relationships with the other creatures of the forest. *How do the illustrations share with us the sisters' different experience of the forest?*
- Focus on the large image on the right hand side. *What do you think is happening here? What do you see each sister doing, how do you think each one feels?* What is Pip noticing that Maisie is not? What do you think it is about Pip's personality that allows her to notice the little things around her? Children might note that Pip is still and blends with the forest so that she can watch the lapping deer, while Maisie is active and imposing herself and her torch on the forest, oblivious to the beautiful flowers and delicate ferns. *What do you think **'determined'** Maisie might do to find the **'something'** that **'lit up the sky'**?*
- Turn to share the next double-page spread, looking in detail at the illustration and text. *What is the impact of turning the page? Where is your eye drawn to first? Are you drawn to the colour and light like Maisie or are you looking at the small details in the darkness like Pip? Look at the composition on the page. For the first time in the text, the sisters are separated, literally by the page gutter. They are looking in different directions, at different things. What does this make you think about each of them, at this point? Who do you think has been changed the most by the adventure so far? Why do you think this? What do you think each sister is seeing, what might be their thoughts and feelings? How might Maisie respond to her discovery; what might the next spread show?*
- Share the next spread. *How is the action captured on this page, by both the text and the illustration?* Children might identify the blur of speed and the strong diagonal towards the bottom right-hand corner, inviting the page-turn beyond Maisie's torch and they might pick out figurative phrases from the text like **'ran like thunder'** or **'wondered wildly'**. Consider with the children what they can't see in this spread. *Where do you think Pip is? What is she doing while this is happening? What do you think Maisie will find?*
- Turn the page to share the next double-page spread. *Is this what you expected to see? Do you think this is what Maisie expected to see? How do you think she might feel? How do you know? How do the illustration and the text work together to convey Maisie's emotions? What is the impact of the colours and the light and shadow used here? What do the words used to describe what Maisie finds suggest?* Children might observe the use of **'But'** to start the sentence; the contrast between the previous pages' list of amazing possibilities — **'space jewels, a UFO, an ALIEN!'** and this page's anti-climactic **'none of these'**. Consider Maisie's reaction: *why do you think Maisie's first reaction is to call for her sister? What does the ellipsis in **'Pip...?'** convey to you? How do you think she might have said this? How does this page emphasise that Maisie is now all alone? How do you think she is feeling now? Is this in character with what we have seen in the rest of the book?*



- Read on to consider the next double-page spread. Consider the contrast in this spread to the rest of the book. *Who brought the light in previous spreads? Who brings the light here? What might this suggest about the characters of the two sisters and how they have changed after embarking on the adventure in the forest? What do the sisters' facial expressions and body language convey about their emotions? What do the words in the spread add to the illustration? How do you think they might be said?* Children could role-play this scene so they can experience Pip's comforting hand on Maisie's shoulder, Maisie's hunched and scowling disappointment, torch cast aside.
- Think about what Pip has been doing and learning whilst Maisie was so focussed on finding the object. *What else has she brought with her to the scene? What do you think 'a Pip-like pace' might be; and how do you think going at this pace has benefitted her on her own adventure? What do you think 'the magic of the forest' means? What magic has Pip experienced that Maisie has not? Do you think Maisie would see the same magic in these things as Pip does? What do Pip's words tell you about her personality and the sisters' relationship?* Children might observe that instead of being cross at being left behind or mocking what Maisie has found, she celebrates and is curious. Look at the contrast with how Maisie is feeling now. *What do you think she was expecting to find? What does her 'grumbling' answer — 'just a lump of cold nothing' — tell you about her feelings? Do you think they should just go home as she proposes? Why or why not?*
- Turn to share the next spread. Look at the brightness of this spread compared with the rest of the book, and how the sisters share equally in the light from the torch. *How does Pip rescue the situation, and what does it tell us about her? What is Maisie's reaction, and what does it tell us about her? Which words and phrases especially convey this?* Children might note the pause of 'Wait a minute'; the tentative ellipsis of 'I think...'; the cautious modal verb of 'it might be'; the exclamation marks and the 'Wow'; the capitals of a 'STAR' and 'OUTER SPACE' and the alliteration of 'magical meteorite'. *How has our viewpoint changed from when we first arrived at the clearing? What is the effect of placing the meteorite 'centre stage' with the sisters facing each other across it, both bathed in the light from the torch?*
- Read the next spread and allow time and space to reflect on the details of the illustration and text. *What do you see happening here? Who is leading the way now? How does this compare with the rest of the story? How do you think Pip feels about leading the way and what may have supported this? How do you think Maisie is feeling here? Do you think she has learned something from the adventure of the meteorite? What do you think 'the forest, like their star, sparkled all around' means? How does the illustration reinforce this idea?*
- Share the final illustration of Pip and Maisie enjoying hot chocolate around their meteorite. *How does this closing image make you feel? How do you think Pip and Maisie have changed from the start of the story to the end? Do you think Maisie got the adventure she dreamed of?*
- Re-read the entire book from the beginning to the end. Allow the group to begin to explore their responses to it through booktalk with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls 'the four basic questions'. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:
 - Tell me...was there anything you liked about this story...?
 - Was there anything that you particularly disliked...?
 - Was there anything that puzzled you...?



- *Were there any patterns... any connections that you noticed...? Did it remind you of anything else you've read or seen...?*
- The openness of these questions unlike the more interrogative 'Why?' encourages every child to feel that they have something to say, and allows everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the 'wrong' answer.
- As children reply it can be useful to write down what they say under the headings 'likes', 'dislikes', 'puzzles' and 'patterns'. This written record helps to map out the group's view of the text and the important themes and ideas around the story from the children's perspective and is a way of holding on to ideas for later. Asking these questions will lead children inevitably into a fuller discussion than using more general questions. You may, for example, ask the children if they had favourite parts or spreads in the story, and why this was.
- Extend the children's thinking through more evaluative questions, such as: *Who do you think would like this book? Why? What do you think might have inspired Helen Kellock to write this book?*
- Leave copies of the book in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or socially in a group.

To continue work around the book:

- Helen Kellock has used watercolour, gouache, watercolour pastels and pencils in this book. Collect together a range of art materials that will allow the children to engage in exploring illustration, for example: cartridge paper, sketching pencils 2B-4B and coloured pencils, oil pastels and wax crayons. Children could experiment with her technique of layering and contrasting light and dark. You may also like to visit her website at <http://www.helenkellock.com/> to see her other work and gain insights into her artistic process and other activity.
- You can see author/illustrator Helen Kellock talk about her creative process in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmGFympH-84&t=11s>, where she also talks about some of her influences in writing the book.
- Children could also research meteorites like those in Edinburgh's National Museum of Scotland (<https://www.nms.ac.uk/>, search 'meteorite') that inspired this story, and be supported in their exploration of space and stars with titles like *Professor Astro Cat's Solar System* by Dominic Walliman, illustrated by Ben Newman (Flying Eye) and *The Skies Above My Eyes (Look Closer)* by Charlotte Guillain, illustrated by Yuval Zommer (words and pictures).
- They might also like to find out more about the fauna Pip and Maisie encounter, in titles such as *First Book of Nature* by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Mark Hearld (Walker Books) and *Wild Animals of the North* by Dieter Braun (Flying Eye).

This sequence of activities was designed in partnership with CLPE. CLPE is a UK based children's literacy charity working with primary schools to raise the achievement of children's reading and writing by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively, putting quality children's books at the heart of all learning. Find out more about their work, and access further resources and training at: www.clpe.org.uk