

Teaching Ideas for the Klaus Flugge Prize Shortlist 2022

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: *Alley Cat Rally*

Author Illustrator: Ricky Trickartt

Publisher: Flying Eye Books

These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools and settings with ideas to develop comprehension and extended provision around Klaus Flugge Prize-shortlisted texts for children of all ages. They build on our work supporting teachers to use picture books to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. We hope you find them useful.

This book is particularly suitable for children aged 5–8.

Reading the book and close reading of illustration:

- Begin by looking at the front cover illustration. *What do you think is happening here? Who are these animals? What do you think they might be thinking or feeling? What makes you think this?*
- Now read the title, **Alley Cat Rally**. *What is special about an alley cat? What kind of event is a rally? Look at the front endpapers of different cats in different places: what do you see in these images? What do they make you think about, or feel? What do you think might happen in this story? Now consider the title page with a ginger cat leaning against the large white object you saw on the cover. What do you think this might be? What might be special about this character?*
- Read up to, ...**a sign caught her eye**. *What do you think is happening in these opening spreads, who or what might be making the noise that Asta hears? What do you think it sounds like? What can you see in the words or illustrations that makes you think this? What do you understand by **slowpoke**? Who do you think is saying this, and how do you think Asta feels to be called one?*
- Continue reading, pausing after ... **Asta could hardly sleep** to discuss this part of the story. *What more do you know about Asta's response to being called a slowpoke by the alley cats? What do you learn about her from the way she goes about making then test driving her machine? Why do you think she could hardly sleep? Support the children in looking back through the illustrations and considering what is happening in reality and in Asta's imagination. How do the illustrations convey her engineering work, her testing, the sense of speed her new machine gives her?*
- Without revealing the illustration on the final page read on, up to the text **It was a photo finish at the line**. *How does the description of the race make you feel? What do you learn about the different competitors, the way the race unfolds? How do you read the wordless spread showing the overview of the race's course? What words do you think could go with it? What do you think will be the impact of **Asta's secret weapon... WARP SPEED?***
- Now, read on to the end of the book. *Is this the result you expected, with Asta winning **by a whisker**? Why do you think the author chooses this idiom to describe the win? How do you think she feels when the alley cats admire her speed and apologise? How do you understand the final line **Then Asta woke up** facing the illustration of Asta yawning in the drum of the washing machine? What does it make you think about the story you have read?*

- After reading, encourage the children to tell you what they liked about the book. Was there anything they disliked? What did it make them think about? Do they have any questions about the book? How did it make them feel? They may also like to look for the 42 mice and use the opportunity to reread the whole book!

Engaging in illustration:

- Ricky Trickartt is both author and illustrator, so look at how he tells some of the story through words and some through pictures. Revisit the spread that starts, *Marvin fidgeted*, discussing how he shows the personalities of the different cats through their vehicles: consider how he uses words or other aspects of the illustration as cats don't have human facial expressions.
- Look back through the book, focussing on particular spreads, such as:
 - ***It took a lot of testing...***
 - ***Marvin as catching up...***
 - ***WARP SPEED!***
 - ***The alley cats apologised.***
- Explore together how the words (and how they are formatted) and pictures in these spreads convey movement, speed, drama and celebration, often through tiny dots, squiggles and swooshes that suggest motion. Consider also the distinctive colour palette and the witty fish or cat related details in Asta's world. Encourage the children to look closely at the illustrations and talk about these and other spreads in more depth, looking at what is happening here and how the action is conveyed.
- Asta converts a washing machine into a racing car. Invite the children to consider other household items that could be repurposed for other unexpected uses by an imaginative cat: they will need to look with fresh eyes, to be creative and open-minded, changing their viewpoint by looking at things from a cat's eye level. Invite the children to share their possible new uses for everyday items and pool ideas so the class has a repurposing repository to draw on.
- Model how to use soft drawing pencils (2B-4B are ideal) to draw Asta interacting with the items in their new use, borrowing the illustrator's taste for bold and striking colours, and adding puns, wordplay and other cat-related visual humour if they like.
- Allow the children to draw Asta for themselves, showing her with different items and imagining stories that might arise from her repurposing of everyday household objects. Draw alongside the children as they work. When their drawings are complete, allow the children to use oil pastels or crayons to add colour and bring their drawings to life, concentrating on the shades and tones seen in the setting.
- Give space for the children to pin up and share their drawings, allowing them to look at the similarities and differences in their work and to talk about what is effective in their own work and that of others.
- Allow access to art materials to draw and make up their own scenarios or stories featuring Asta and the alley cats or to create characters, scenarios and stories of their own.

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