

Teaching Ideas for the Klaus Flugge Prize Shortlist 2023

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: *Saving the Butterfly*

Illustrator: Gill Smith **Author:** Helen Cooper

Publisher: Walker 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 7–11. It explores themes of bereavement, loss and refugee experience. Teachers will need to read through this book and the notes carefully and decide if it is suitable to share with their own children in the ways suggested.

Reading the book and close reading of illustration:

- Begin by looking at the front cover illustration. *What do you think is happening here? Who do you think these two children might be? Where might their story be set? Look carefully at their body language and facial expressions: What might they be thinking or feeling? What makes you think this?*
- Now read the title, **Saving the Butterfly**. *Why do you think a butterfly might need saving, and why might the image of one be placed at such size and scale on the cover? Look at the front endpapers: what do you see in this image? What does this make you think about, or feel? What might the flower, the fence and the threatening sky indicate? What do you think might happen in this story? Now consider the title page with two figures on the deck of a boat adrift on a stormy moonlit sea. What do you think might be happening here, how might it relate to what you have seen so far?*
- Read the two opening spreads up to **A broken house**, supporting the children to consider every word of the text and every aspect of the illustrations. *What do you think is happening in these opening spreads? What do you learn about the pair, named only as **a little one and a bigger one**, and that they alone were **left in the boat**? What stands out for you in these pages? What do you notice about their facial expressions and body language, the foreground and background activity in the place they have landed? Encourage children to consider the use of colour: the potential significance of the blanket, the soft toy and the flower entangled in barbed wire at the bottom-right page-turn of the second spread. How does the illustrator lead your eye with colour and specific objects, and why might she do this?*
- Continue reading the next four spreads, pausing after ... **Give it time...** to discuss this part of the story. *What do you learn about how the siblings adapt to their new home? How do you think each one feels? Support the children in looking back through the illustrations and considering what is happening for the children as a pair and individually, and how this is conveyed by the words and the text: the emptiness and arrangement of their room, the sister clinging to the soft toy and blanket in the gloom inside while the boy plays outside in the light, the yellow flowers and rainbow. How do the illustrations support your understanding of how each child feels? Compare the illustration of the butterfly inside to that on the cover, which it recalls: what is the same, and how have things changed?*

- Now read on to the next spread with the butterfly foregrounded in minute detail, then the sister counting its colours to calm herself: *what does this episode reveal about the brother and sister, and their feelings at this point? What do you think **she ought to do**? What do you think she will do?*
- Now, read on to the end of the book, including the endpapers. *Is this the outcome you expected? How does the illustrator use the motifs of the soft toy, the blanket, the rainbow and yellow flowers to support the resolution of the story? What do you think is happening in the wordless spread where the siblings embrace in a field of yellow flowers, the butterfly looking on, and how do you understand the final line **But that day she did**? How do the final endpapers make you feel, and how do you think they relate to the book's title? 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?*

Engaging in illustration:

- Look at the different things the illustrations do — clarifying, complementing, reinforcing, extending. Revisit the final spread of the siblings on the tyre swing, discussing how she goes beyond the words to show the resolution of the story in the world they and their peers now inhabit, with a wealth of different activities shown and personalities hinted at.
- Look back through the book, focussing on particular spreads, such as the sibling's room, the sister cradling the soft toy at the window while her brother plays outside, her tentative steps outside the broken house, exploring together how the illustrations go beyond the words. Look at the distinctive colour palette with dark heavy strokes and vivid colour for the blanket, butterfly and flowers. 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 emotional journey is conveyed.
- Everyday objects like the blanket, soft toy and yellow flowers take on special significance in the story: invite the children to track every time they see one of these to see the role it plays in the unfolding narrative and emotional journey, then invite them to create some artwork in the style of Gill Smith, with strong dark lines inspired by a special object of their own. Model how to use soft drawing pencils (2B-4B are ideal) to draw the object, drawing 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: these could be inspired by the stories of other children they see in the final spread of the “playground”, where we see a variety of different characters with potentially interesting backstories.

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