

A Boat of Stars

New Poems to Inspire and Enchant

Edited by Margaret Connolly &

Natalie Jane Prior

Book Summary

A beautiful anthology of new Australian poetry for preschool and primary-aged children, from some of our country's finest writers and illustrators.

*A boat of stars came down tonight
and sailed around my bed —
it sprinkled stardust on my eyes,
put dreams inside my head*

Open worlds of imagination and explore the magic of everyday life with this enchanting new collection of poetry from some of Australia's most-loved writers and illustrators.

Perfect for the classroom and the home, *A Boat of Stars* will bring a love of language, rhythm and rhyme to every child.

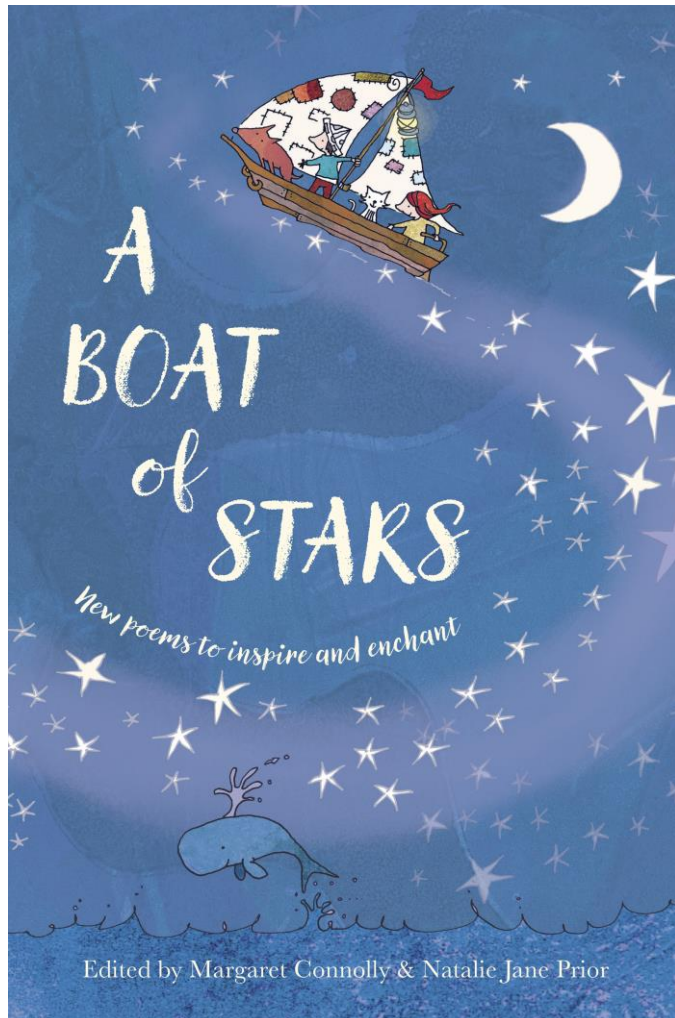
Key Learning Outcomes

ACELT 1585, ACELT 1592, ACELT 1600, ACELT 1606,
ACELT 1611, ACELT 1617, ACELT 1791, ACELT 1800

Themes

Family, Emotions, Indigenous stories, Animals, Australia, Food, Identity, Imagination, Mythical Creatures, Nature, School, Transport

Recommended ages: 3–10



ISBN: 9780733337932 RRP 29.99

Teacher Notes by Lesley Gibbes

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Poetry in the Classroom

Nothing ignites a love of literature like poetry. It's an essential part of every classroom English program. Poetry brings a joy and excitement to the learning of language that no other form of writing can. It is a unique kinaesthetic experience that children just love. As the beat and rhythm of a poem surges through their bodies, children can't help but join in. Poems are infectious, rousing, evocative, thought-provoking and fun. A classroom filled with the rhythm and rhyme of poetry will create life-long readers who are confident, creative and curious.

Teaching Activities

Lesson 1

Readers' Theatre

Readers' theatre is a form of performance where participants read aloud from a script adapted from literature. It's a performance style that focuses on fluent, expressive oral reading to entertain an audience and requires no sets, costumes or movement. Participants simply divide the text into reading parts and perform, with their script in hand, facing the audience.

Through Readers' Theatre children will —

- Practise their oral reading fluency and public-speaking skills.
- Improve their control of dramatic voice to show character or mood to enrich meaning.
- Enhance their comprehension of a text.
- Interact and cooperate in a group setting.

Australian Curriculum Strands

English Literature: *Examining Literature*

- Literacy: *Interacting with Others*

The Arts: *Drama*

Lesson Plan

Introduction

Introduce the poetry anthology *A Boat of Stars*. Read a selection of poems over the next week, modelling oral fluency and dramatic voice. Throughout the week, discuss the importance of fluency when reading out loud and highlight how dramatic voice changes from poem to poem to depict character and mood.

Compare and contrast poems in the anthology. How might dramatic voice change to convey the calm, wondrous feel of the poem *The Jacaranda Carpet* by Alexa Moses and Tamsin Ainslie compared to the staccato, fast-paced rhythm of *Race Cars* by Lesley Gibbes and Christopher Nielsen?

Lesson body

1. Let the students know they're going to prepare a poem for a Readers' Theatre performance.
2. Explain the basics of Readers' Theatre and share an example of a Readers' Theatre script on the Smartboard. You might like to use the poem *A Note from Hannah's Dad* (see below) to demonstrate how a poem might be divided into reading parts for two readers.
3. Challenge the class to read the example script. Divide the class in half. Ask one half to read the part for Reader 1 and the other half to read for Reader 2.
4. Discuss the effectiveness of the reading in terms of fluency and dramatic voice. Ask students how the reading could be improved. Perform the poem again. What made it more interesting this time?

Readers' Theatre Example Script

A Note from Hannah's Dad
Written by Mark Svendsen
Illustrated by Tamsin Ainslie

Two Readers

Reader 1
Reader 2
All Readers

Dear Ms Teacher Dear,

Hannah is crook
The poor little chook,
Got a croak in her froat like a frog.

Her cough's made her voiceless,
Which means she's quite noiseless,
Except when she barks like a dog.

We'll send back our chappy,
When she's feeling more happy,
In the hope that you can succeed

To teach the girl reading,
Mathematics and writing,
And all the school stuff
what she needs.

Signed
Hannah's Dad

5. Divide the class into small groups of three or four students. Challenge each group to make their own Readers' Theatre script using one of the poems from the anthology.
6. Photocopy and enlarge each group's selected poem and provide a copy for each student.
7. Challenge each group to read their poem and identify the meaning, mood, imagery, rhythm and rhyme of their text.

8. Ask students to discuss how they might divide their poem into reading parts. They may consider including parts read by one, two or all of the readers for effect. Provide students with coloured highlighters to divide their poem into reading parts.
9. Students practise their Readers' Theatre script focusing on oral reading and dramatic voice.
10. Visit each group and discuss with students how they might make their reading more effective. Are there parts of the poem that could be loud, soft, quick or slow? Are there places for character voices or whole group reading? Is there a rhythm to follow? Could the poem be divided into reading parts more effectively?
11. Allow students time to make changes and practise their performances.
12. Challenge students to perform their Readers' Theatre item in front of the class. Encourage audience members to comment on each performance sharing both positive comments and constructive criticisms.

Lesson 2

Visual Arts—Illustration

The writers and illustrators of *A Boat of Stars* have collaborated to produce an anthology full of rich literary and visual imagery. In this activity, the students will investigate the illustrations in the anthology to produce an artwork inspired by poetry.

Through investigation of the illustrations children will —

- Discuss similarities and differences between illustrations.
- Discuss how artists organise the elements and processes in their illustrations.
- Plan and create illustrations inspired by others.

Australian Curriculum Strands

The Arts: *Visual Arts*

Lesson Plan

Introduction

Ask the students to close their eyes and let their imaginations soar as you read the poem *A Boat of Stars* by Natalie Jane Prior. Encourage your students to share what they imagined. Now show Stephen Michael King's illustration for the same poem. Was it what they imagined? Discuss.

Inform the students they will be investigating how illustrators create mood in their artworks followed by an art activity where they will be challenged to create their own illustration for a poem from the anthology.

Lesson Body

1. Select a variety of poetry illustrations from *A Boat of Stars* to view with the class. You might like to scan/photograph the illustrations to upload onto your Smartboard. Be sure to include the collage illustration by Lisa Stewart for *The Magic Circus*, the retro-style illustration by Christopher Nielsen for *The Zucchini Song*, the soft, watercolour illustration by Tamsin Ainslie for *The Share Garden* and the indigenous, earthy illustration by Isaiah Nagurrurrba for *In the Stone Country*.

2. Ask the children to look closely at the detail of each illustration as you read the poems.

Ask the following questions —

- How does the illustration make you feel?
- What has the artist done to make you feel this way?
- Does the illustration suit the mood of the poem? Why/Why not?
- What could be done differently?
- What type of media do you think the artist has used to achieve their illustration? (collage, ink, watercolour, pencil, computer, ochre etc.)

3. Discuss similarities and differences between the illustrations in terms of colour, shape, space, texture and composition.

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4. To find out what it's like to be an illustrator, challenge your students to illustrate a poem from *A Boat of Stars*. You might like to have the class do the same poem or allow your students to choose their own.
5. Ask students to read their poem and think about how the words make them feel. Ask them to think about what media, colours, shape, space, texture and composition would best suit the mood of their poem.
6. Give students time to brainstorm and sketch their initial ideas.
7. Allow students access to a variety of media — watercolour, acrylic paint, pencil, pastels, collage, sharpie pens, computer, art paper etc. to create their illustrations.
8. When the illustrations are complete, encourage students to show their work and explain their choices to the class. What might they do differently next time?
9. Students' illustrations might be bound into a book, photographed for a slideshow or hung in the classroom for display.

Suggested activities

1. Focus on a poem each week.
2. Create a wall display with poetry terms or use this poetry book for students to refer to throughout the school year.
3. Invite students to copy down their favourite verse or write a new poem of their own and keep it their pockets to share with friends.
4. Students imagine they have a special box. Using the language of emerging poets, have students describe the favourite things they would put into such a box.

More activities can be found at: www.teachershub.com.au

Author of the Notes

Lesley Gibbes is an internationally published children's author and primary school teacher. She is the author of CBCA Early Childhood Book of The Year Honour Book, *Scary Night*, CBCA Notable Book, *Little Bear's First Sleep*, *Bring a Duck*, *Quick as a Wink*, *Fairy Pink*, *Fluke*, *Bouncing*, *Bouncing Little Joeys* and the hilarious CBCA Notable Book series *Fizz*, illustrated by Stephen Michael King.

List of contributors and links to their website

- Sara Acton - <https://www.saraacton.org/>
- Tamsin Ainslie - <http://www.tamsinainslie.com.au/>
- Kerry Argent - <https://www.penguin.com.au/authors/kerry-argent>
- Margaret Connolly - <http://www.harpercollins.com.au/cr-148087/margaret-connolly/>
- Gregg Dreise - <http://www.greggdreise.com/>
- Angela May George -
- Lesley Gibbes - <http://www.lesleygibbes.com/>
- Carlie Gibson - <https://www.allenandunwin.com/authors/g/carlie-gibson>
- Emily Grant -
- Phillip Gwynne - <https://www.penguin.com.au/authors/phillip-gwynne>
- Stephen Michael King - <https://www.stephenmichaelking.com/>
- Stephen McInerney - <http://www.hardiegrant.com/au/publishing/bookfinder/author/stephen-mcinerney#>
- Sophie Masson - <http://www.sophiemasson.org/index.html>
- Kate Mayes - Sydney, NSW <http://www.harpercollins.com.au/cr-138016/kate-mayes/>
- Alexa Moses - <http://www.alexamoses.com.au/>
- Isaiah Nagurrurrba - <http://www.taligallery.com/artists/Isa724/Isaiah-Nagurrurrba.asp>
- Christopher Nielsen - <http://www.chrisillo.com/>
- Elizabeth Nussey - <http://elizabethnussey.com/aboutelizabeth>
- Pauline O'Carolan -
- Cheryl Orsini - <https://www.cherylorcini.com/>
- Natalie Jane Prior - <http://nataliejaneprior.com/>
- Matt Shanks - <http://www.mattshanks.com.au/>
- Lisa Stewart - <http://www.lisastewart.com.au/>
- Mark Svendsen - <https://www.marksvendsen.com/>
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- Felicity Wright -

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