

Pancakes
for
Plum



RAE TAN

TEACHERS RESOURCES

Pancakes for Plum

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Teachers Resources by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

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INTRODUCTION

‘Don’t worry,’ her brothers say. ‘You’ll find something that’s for you.’

Plum worries she’s not good at anything. Big Brother is good at climbing trees and Second Brother is good at painting, but climbing and painting aren’t really for Plum. Then Plum hears something that makes her heart flip over like a pancake on a hot pan. Could this be the thing that’s truly meant for her? This is a gentle, whimsical celebration of self-discovery and the value of trying, illustrated in gloriously emotive pastels and watercolour.

THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes are covered in this book which might be related to the Australian Curriculum, including:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/humanities-and-social-sciences/hass/>

TALENTS AND HOBBIES

Discussion Point: Discuss with students what they are good at. What do they most enjoy as either a pastime or a focused area of study?

Discussion Point: ‘Making music is the hardest thing Plum has ever tried.’ Being good at something is not just a matter of talent; it also takes discipline. What skills have you worked hard at acquiring?

Discussion Point: Plum refers to pancakes when she hears the beautiful music played by Old Panda, and later she says: ‘Playing the piano makes me as happy as eating pancakes.’ Invite students to describe something they enjoy using a simile like this.

PANDAS

Activity: Research and discover some facts about pandas.

Discussion Point: Read some picture books and some non-fiction about pandas and discuss. [See **Bibliography.**]

MUSIC

Discussion Point: This book celebrates the emotional power of music. Play some orchestral or piano music to your students. Invite them to comment on how this piece of music makes them feel in comparison to other feelings they've experienced.

Discussion Point: Invite students to discuss the instruments they've learned to play and what that experience of learning was like for them.

FAMILY

Discussion Point: The warmth between Plum and her family is another theme in this book; for example, Plum's comfort in her Mama's arms, or her Big Brother and Second Brother's games with her. Theirs is a house full of love. What else did you notice about this family?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/english/>>

The text of this book might be studied in relation to the following aspects:

Activity: Cumulative tales are based on a traditional structure in which a character embarks on a journey, or encounters a series of animals, people or problems, leading to a resolution. Repetition is also important in cumulative tales. The same sequence of words is repeated until the resolution or climax of the tale, when the order is upset or reversed, and the story is resolved. In this story, Plum encounters her mother and her two brothers in present tense. The story reaches a resolution when she encounters Old Panda. Invite students to write a cumulative tale, featuring a panda and modelled on this structure.

Discussion Point: The text is based on a series of similes in which Plum compares music to pancakes and the feelings this yummy food engenders in her. What food would you think of when feeling warm and comforted?

Activity: Test your students' **comprehension** by asking them questions about the written and visual text. [See also **Author/Illustrator's Notes** below.]

Visual Literacy

<<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/the-arts/visual-arts/>>

Using various parts of the book's design and illustrations, the visual text of a book combines with the written text to tell the story, as explored below:

Activity: The **cover** of a book offers a summary of its contents or message. This front cover depicts Plum smiling directly at the reader; the back cover has her being held tightly and comforted by her mother sitting in a rocking chair, with her teddy bear beside her. What do these two images suggest about the book's contents?

Activity: The **endpapers** depict pancakes. Invite students to design alternative endpapers for this book.

Discussion Point: The **title page** repeats the cover image. The first page, though, has her looking sad. How is the change in emotion achieved in these two images? Invite students to draw Plum looking happy and then to draw her looking sad.

Activity: Illustrators create characters using **facial expressions and 'body language'**. Examine the picture of Plum climbing the tree and the techniques Rae Tan uses to convey feelings here, and in other spreads in this book.

Activity: The **medium or style** employed is pastel, watercolour and collage. Examine Plum's skirt, which is made of red and navy blue woollen pompoms. Several spreads include pancakes made from crumpled gold paper. [See **Author/ Illustrator's notes**.] The fur of the pandas is conveyed by detailed brushstrokes. The **colours** used in this book are warm pastel colours. What other details in the artwork did you discover?

Discussion Point: Illustrators often include visual **'sub-text'** in their images – something that is not mentioned in the written text, but that enhances the narrative. For example, a teddy bear appears in several frames in this book and is obviously Plum's favourite toy. What other details did you discover in the images?

Activity: Invite students to draw, paint or collage another scene featuring a panda to accompany the story they wrote above. Create a classroom mural using all the images. [See also **Worksheet 1** below.]

Activity: Create a graphic novel/comic version of a scene in this book. [See **Bibliography**.] [See also **Worksheet 3**.]

CREATIVE ARTS

There are many creative activities suggested by this text. You could have a 'panda party':

- 1. Decorate the classroom with panda bunting.** [See **Worksheet 4**.]
- 2. Bake and decorate panda cupcakes.** [See: 'Easy Little Pandas – Bakerella' *Pinterest* <https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/easy-little-pandas-bakerella--634866878742019123/>]
- 3. Create a panda mask.** [See: 'Panda Mask' *first palette* <https://www.firstpalette.com/printable/panda-mask.html>]
- 4. Create panda posters to hang in the classroom.**
- 5. Create a book trailer** to promote the book and show it during the party. [See **Bibliography**.]

6. Create a classroom display of books about pandas.

LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

Activity: Research the topics above online.

MATHEMATICS

Activity: Have fun counting things in this text.

Activity: See **Worksheet 2** below for mathematics activities.

FURTHER TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

- Research the work of Rae Tan.
- Students might read this book in comparison to other cumulative picture books, such as those listed in the **Bibliography**.

CONCLUSION

This charming book explores the common doubts children feel about their own abilities. It warmly encourages children to seek out their special interests, discover their talents and work hard to nurture them.

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTES

Pancakes for Plum is a culmination of my love for stories, pictures and music. It celebrates the things that are close to my heart – family, self-discovery, perseverance and hard work. It is my hope that this deliciously cosy story will comfort little readers who are anxious and worried, and inspire them to cultivate a lifelong love for music (and pancakes).

I used watercolours and soft pastels for the pandas' fuzzy fur. For Plum's skirt, I used soft pastels in shades of purple, blue, red and light pink to create the pompom layers, and then gently blended the colours to give them that slightly smooshed and textured effect. For the collaged pancakes, I painted metallic gold acrylic paint onto large sheets of handmade textured Japanese paper. I then cut out circles of different sizes and grouped them together on the page to represent the 'pancake music'. **Rae Tan**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Rae Tan

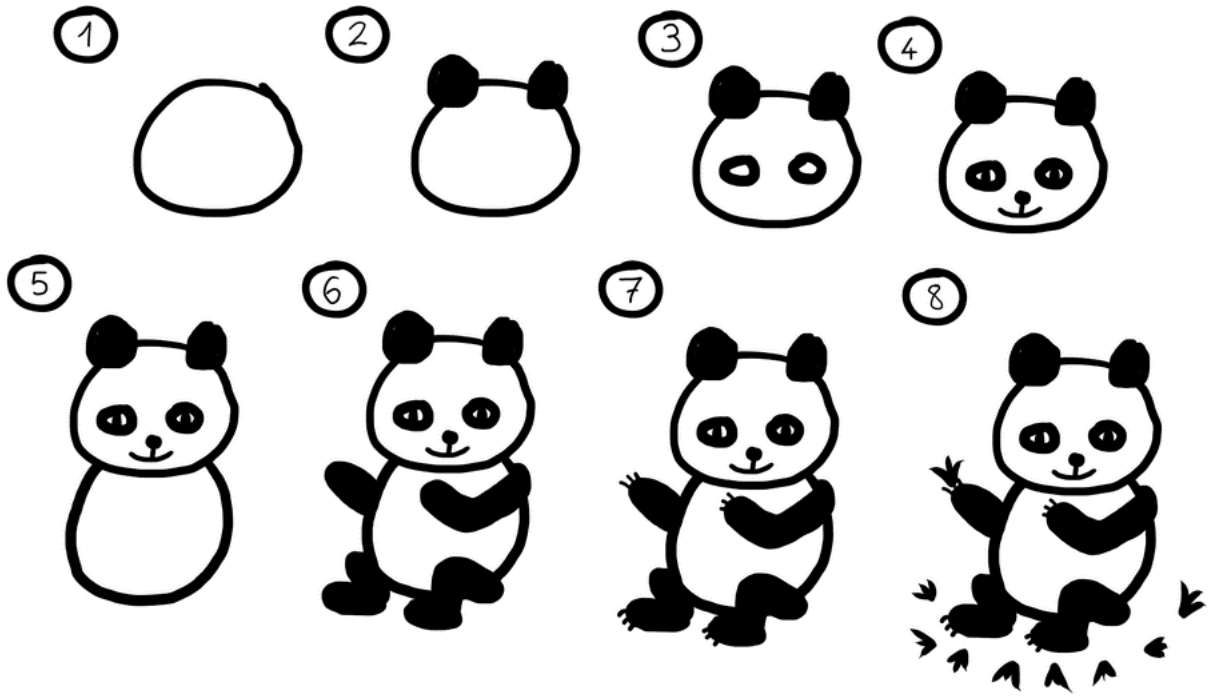
Yan Tong Rae Tan was born in Singapore and now lives in Perth with her husband. She holds a BA in international politics from King's College London, and performance diplomas for both the piano and violin from Trinity College London. Currently, she is a music teacher working with young children. She is passionate about creating beloved characters and imaginative stories. Working mainly in pastels and watercolour, Rae's illustrative style is bold and loose, yet meticulous when it comes to expressing moods and emotions.



WORKSHEETS

WORKSHEET 1. PANDA DRAWING

Invite students to use the exercise below to draw their own pandas.



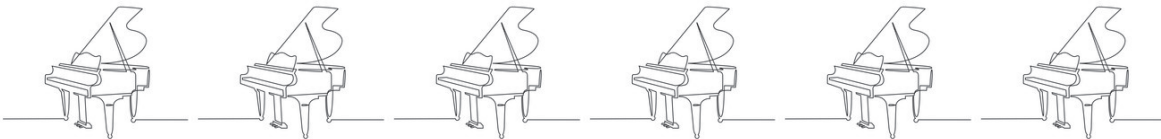
WORKSHEET 2. PANDA MATHS



1. How many stacks of pancakes can you see above?
2. In total, how many pancakes are in the stacks?



3. How many pandas would you have if you added three to those above?
4. How many pandas would you have if you multiplied those above by four?



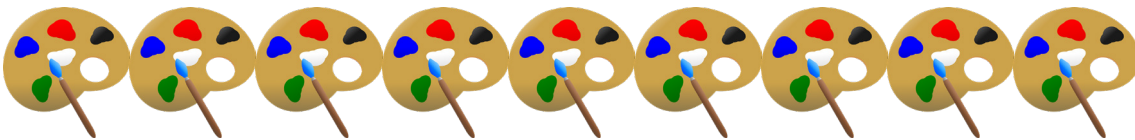
5. If you divided the number of pianos above by two, how many would you have?



6. How many teddy bears would you have if you added ten to those above?



7. If you subtracted five bows from those above, how many would you have?

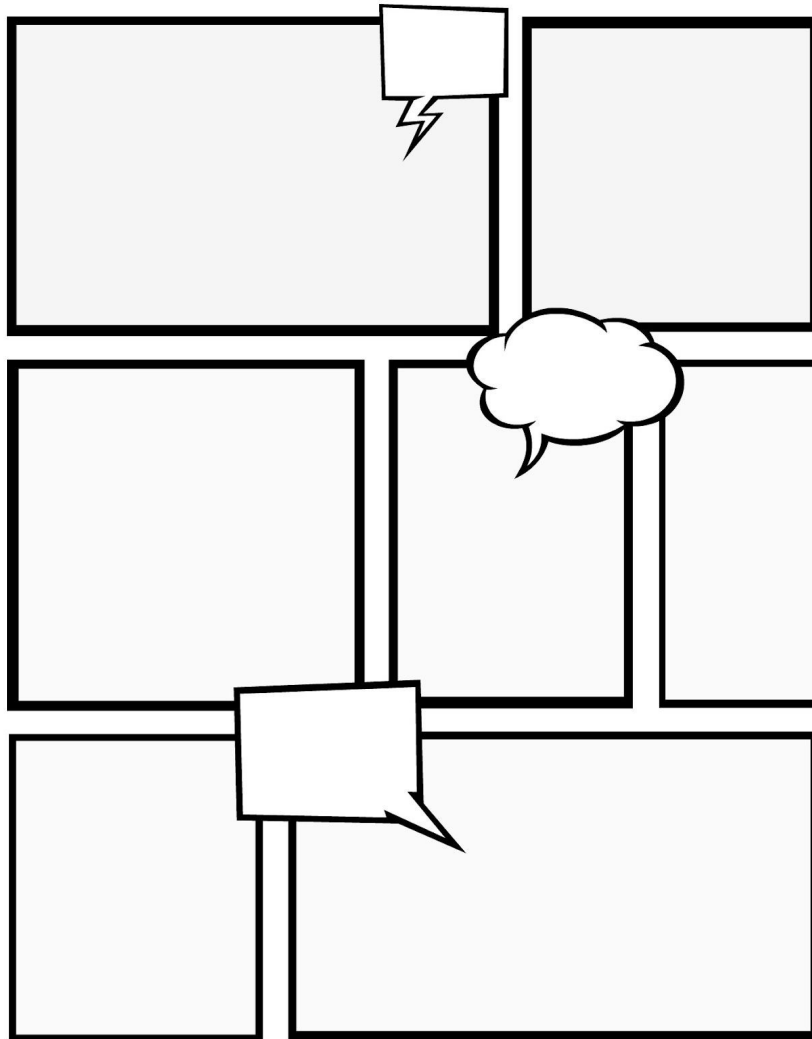


8. How many art palettes can you see above?
9. How many art palettes would you have if you multiplied those above by two?
10. How many art palettes would you have if you divided those above by three?

ANSWERS: 1. Four. 2. Twelve. 3. Nine. 4. Twenty-four. 5. Three. 6. Twenty-six. 7. Five. 8. Nine. 9. Eighteen. 10. Three.

WORKSHEET 3. PANDA GRAPHIC STORYTELLING

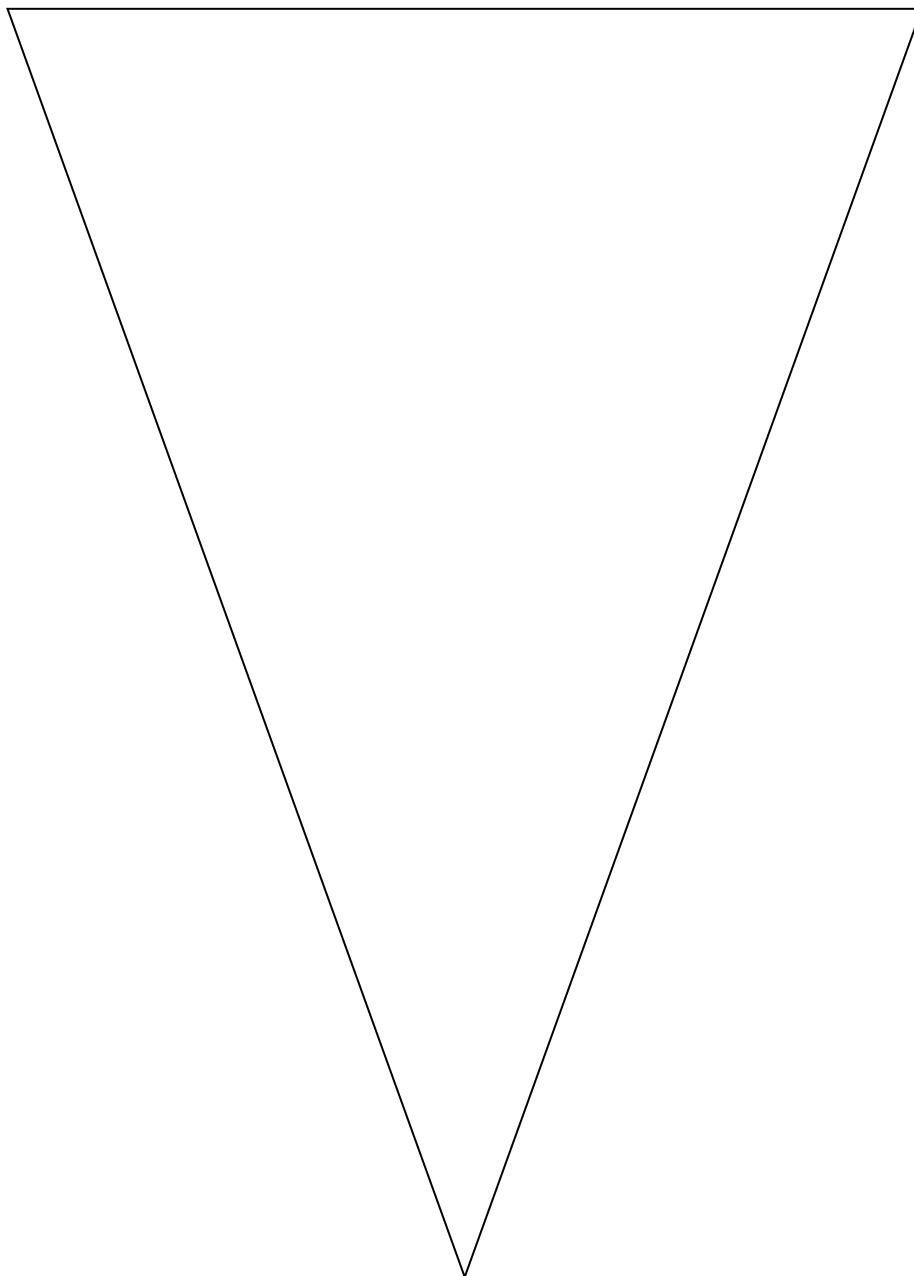
Create a graphic novel/comic interpretation of one of the scenes in this book. Use the layout below as the storyboard for your comic. Enlarge on a photocopier to give you more space.



Comic Book Template viewed at: <http://www.pinterest.com/pin/365706432212821426/>

WORKSHEET 4. PANDA BUNTING

Cut out a series of the shapes below. Then cut out the panda and glue it to the triangle. Fold the top of each triangle over thick string or ribbon and glue it down. Then hang your bunting in the classroom.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011, she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland; in 2012, the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia; and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021, she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

