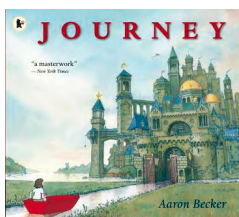


Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Journey

Aaron Becker

HB ISBN: 9780763660536

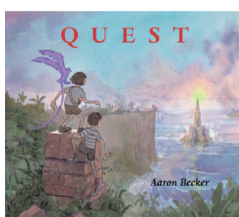
ARRP: \$27.95/NZRRP: \$29.99

October 2013

PB ISBN: 9781406355345

ARRP: \$16.95/NZRRP: \$18.99

August 2014



Quest

Aaron Becker

HB ISBN: 9780763665951

ARRP: \$27.95/NZRRP: \$29.99

September 2014

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

A lonely girl draws a magic door on her bedroom wall and through it escapes into a world where wonder, adventure and danger abound. Red marker pen in hand, she creates a boat, a balloon and a flying carpet which carry her on a spectacular journey ... who knows where? When she is captured by a sinister emperor, only an act of tremendous courage and kindness can set her free. Can it also guide her home and to happiness? In this exquisitely illustrated, wordless book, an ordinary child is launched on an extraordinary, magical journey towards her greatest and most rewarding adventure of all.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Aaron Becker has worked as an artist for film studios such as Lucasfilm, Disney and Pixar to help define the look and feel of characters, stories and the films they become a part of. With *Journey* and *Quest* he has created characters and worlds of his very own, using traditional materials and techniques. Aaron Becker lives in the USA in Amherst, Massachusetts, with his wife, daughter and cat. Visit Aaron online at www.storybreathing.com

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.



EDUCATION

Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Q&A with Author-Illustrator Aaron Becker



How has your life changed after the success of your debut picture book, Journey?

The biggest transition has been going from someone who always hoped to make picture books full time to someone who actually *does*. In the past, even when I started working on *Journey*, I was taking on all sorts of illustration work to

make a living. Although it was all interesting work, there is nothing like waking up in the morning and realizing that all of my creative energy is going toward imagining my very own stories and worlds. At first it was actually unsettling to realize there was no one in charge but me, but I'm getting used to it!

Both Journey and Quest have a definite cinematic appeal. What, if any, skills have carried over from your time working in the film industry?

It's interesting, because when I started work in film, I had never actually done a complete full-color illustration before, just lots of life drawing during two semesters of art school. But my art director took a chance on me, and over the course of the next eight years, I learned the craft. There's no substitute for being surrounded by talent, and I'm eternally grateful for the company of my coworkers. Just sitting across the desk from amazing draftsmen, painters, and storytellers did the trick. This was my real education in the technical requirements of storytelling. How do you convey a story on a strictly visual level? How do you direct the reader's attention? What makes good design work well? How do you paint with dynamic colors and values? What sort of compositions can inform, entertain, and tell a story? This is what I practiced every day at the film studio for many years.

I've also enjoyed putting together the book trailers for my books. It's a nice outlet for the film side of me. At some point, I'd love to work on an adaptation of these books into shorts or animated films. But for now, I'm content with the relative simplicity of telling a story in a physical book.

Tell us about one of the most memorable experiences you've had sharing Journey with a group of young readers.

One of the things I do when I share *Journey* is ask the audience what they think the title means. For me, I just imagined something simple like, "It's an adventure." But the kids come up with far better answers. One of my favorites is: "It's when you go on a trip but you don't know where you're going to end up." That's just so amazingly insightful. And it continues as I open the book. The children are always seeing things or noticing things that I hadn't thought of before — and I made the book!

What is it about creating wordless picture books that appeals to you as an artist?

I just received a note from a parent who wrote about how *Journey* had really helped her six-year-old son get into reading. He had been intimidated by the pressure to learn to read, but the wordless format gave him an in. This was me as a kid. I didn't get reading. I found making the connections between the written word and an internal, mental construction to be difficult and abstract. But I could gaze at the images in picture books for hours on end. Don't get me wrong — I've since come to appreciate the unique power of well-constructed language. But I have to say, it's not a comprehension that comes from my natural state of being. Pictures are where I've always felt most at home, so it comes as no surprise to me that I choose to tell stories with them, and them alone.



Your Guide to Reading a Wordless Book by Aaron Becker, author-illustrator of *Journey* and *Quest*

It's a question I've often heard from parents and teachers: how can they "read" a wordless book to a group of children? Fear not! It's actually more intuitive than you might think. Whether you're a parent reading to your child, a bookstore owner or librarian presenting at story time, or a teacher using a wordless book in the classroom, this guide should help you take the plunge.

1. Sit down with your audience at their eye level. The wordless book asks young readers to come *toward* the book rather than have the story come to them, so let them feel right away that they're going to be involved.
2. Before you begin, keep this one thing in mind: you're not about to tell your audience a story. You're about to discover one — *together*. And if all goes well, they'll be telling one to *you*!
3. Ask your audience about the title. What do they think it means? What do they think the story might be about based on the cover alone? Ask for evidence.
4. If, as in the case of *Journey* or *Quest*, there's something hidden under the jacket, ask if they think it may be a hint of what's yet to come. Then take a look at the endpapers and ask the same question. You haven't even started to read the book and already the children are starting to engage in the story. Treat this as a warm-up to get the kids actively seeking out ideas in what they're about to see.
5. As the story begins, you can start with this basic question: what do you see? Get the obvious out of the way. Then ask: what *else* do you see? Get these kids hunting for clues. At this point, I always ask the kids to just shout their ideas out instead of raising their hands. You're asking kids to step out of their roles as passive listeners and, instead, to become active participants, so they've got to feel like they really have permission to speak out.
6. As the story progresses, you can start asking other types of questions, such as:
"How do you think (a character) is feeling?"
"How do you know?"
"Do *you* ever feel this way?"
7. At moments of tension or conflict, I like to ask, "What would *you* do?" I think this helps children identify with the characters' challenges. And it raises the stakes for what might happen on the page turn. Act surprised even if you know what's coming.
8. Sometimes I take the reins for a while and just narrate the story, especially if the kids seem antsy or unfocused. It's a balancing act. Remember, not only are the children engaging with the story, but you are too! This is the challenge of a wordless book. But it's also why, when a child offers up something unexpected or revelatory, it can be such a powerful experience for both the adult and child.
9. Lastly, and this is something to keep in mind throughout the reading, remember to take your time. It's easy to rush through the pages without a script to follow, but don't! You'll miss out on the most rewarding part of sharing a wordless book: allowing the child to discover a story of his or her very own.

