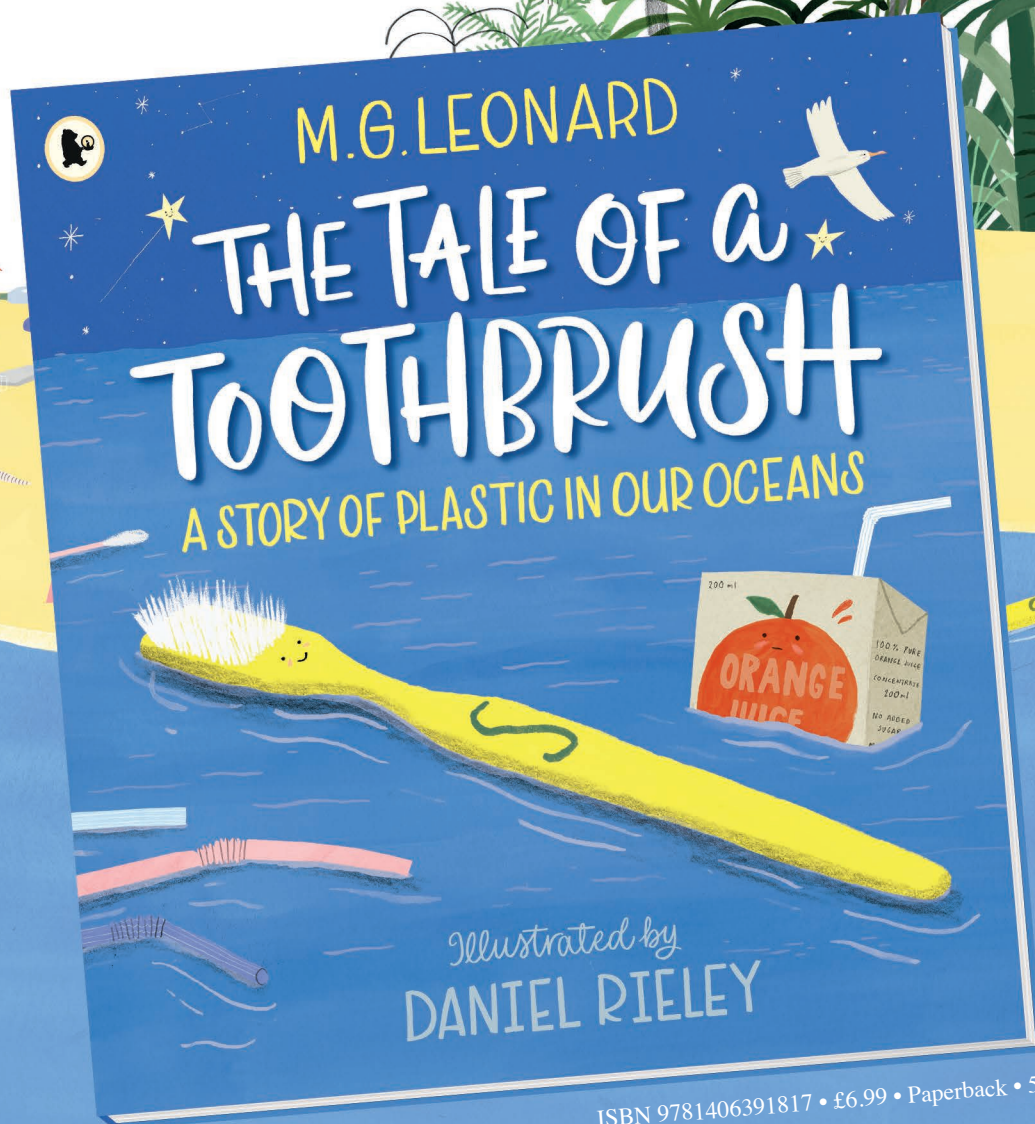


WALKER BOOKS TEACHERS' NOTES



ISBN 9781406391817 • £6.99 • Paperback • 5+

ABOUT THE BOOK:

A brilliantly topical and delightfully funny picture book from internationally bestselling author M. G. Leonard that shows children what happens to their used plastic toothbrushes.

Children use their toothbrush each morning and evening, and get new ones every few months. That's billions of toothbrushes! What happens to them all when they're no longer needed? And if toothbrushes take thousands of years to break down, what does that mean for our planet? With a fun cast of plastic characters, from pirate-ship bottles to dancing shampoos, and even an inquisitive albatross, *The Tale of a Toothbrush* is a positive and heart-warming story to help children explore the impact their choices have on our planet.



WALKER
BOOKS

www.walker.co.uk

The Tale of a Toothbrush © The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

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THE TALE OF A TOOTHBRUSH

A STORY OF PLASTIC IN OUR OCEANS

M.G. LEONARD *Illustrated by* DANIEL RIELEY

These notes have been written by the teachers at the CLPE to provide schools with ideas to develop comprehension and cross-curricular activities around this text. They build on our work supporting teachers to use quality texts throughout the reading curriculum. They encourage a deep reading of and reflection on the text, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, rather than in just one sitting. We hope you find them useful.

READING ALOUD AND KEY TALKING POINTS:

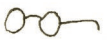


Bring in a plastic toothbrush and share this with the children. Encourage them to talk about it. What do they already know about toothbrushes? What does it make them think of? How do we use them? Do we keep them for ever? What happens to them once we have finished with them? Keep a note of the children's ideas to come back to after reading the book.



Without sharing the front cover or title of the text, share the opening end papers with the children and invite them to share their initial responses, using some of the following prompts to facilitate the discussion:

- What is your first impression of this illustration?
- What does it make you think of when you first see it?
- Does it remind you of anything?
- What do you notice?
- Do any of the toothbrushes stand out to you and if so, which one(s) and why?
- Why do you think the illustrator chose to draw so many and arrange them in this way?



Read the first double page spread aloud to the children and give them time to explore the illustration. Reflect on the way Sofia chose to name her toothbrush and write an S on its tummy. What does this tell us about what she thinks about the toothbrush? How do you think she feels about it? Why do you think she feels this way?



Now encourage the children to look at the scene from Sammy's perspective. Draw a large outline of a toothbrush on a sheet of flipchart paper and invite the children to volunteer words and phrases that describe how Sammy looks in the opening double page spread. Note these on the outside of the toothbrush you have drawn.



Support the children in considering what these external observations might indicate about how Sammy is feeling and what he might be thinking; for example *he's smiling because he is happy about being Sofia's toothbrush. He is proud about being used every morning and night.* Note any words or phrases that capture these reflections on the inside of the toothbrush you have drawn. Draw on these observations to reflect with the children on what it is about Sammy that makes Sofia happy.



Turn the page, but be careful to only show the children the first half of the spread – cover or fold back the second side. Read the text, up to, **And she threw Sammy away** and allow the children time to look at the illustration and think carefully about this key action. How do they feel about her mum's decision? What impact might this have? How might this affect Sofia when she finds out? How might she feel about this? What might she do next?



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Now think about the impact of the decision from Sammy's perspective. We can't clearly see his expression in the picture – what do the children think he might look like? Encourage the children to make an expression on their own faces, which might reflect how Sammy feels at this point. Now, revisit your toothbrush outline and invite the children to consider how Sammy might be feeling and what he might be thinking at this point. Use a different coloured pen to note their reflections.



Continue reading up to, ***But the dustmen had emptied the bins and taken Sammy away.*** Give time for the children to look at the illustration. How does Sofia feel here? How do we know this? Reflect on why Sofia might be feeling this way and consider what other choices her mother could have made rather than throwing Sammy away. Look again at the illustration and consider how Sofia feels about her new toothbrush. How do we know this? Why might she feel this way about the new toothbrush? How is the way it came into her life different from when she got Sammy? Invite the children to re-consider what they think she will do next – have their ideas stayed the same, or have these changed?



Now read the next page up to, ***I don't like it here.*** Invite the children to take a closer look at the illustration. Give some time to explore the illustration and reflect on what they notice, before coming back to think about this from Sammy's perspective. Why do you think he introduces himself as ***Sofia's toothbrush***, rather than Sammy? What does this tell us about him? He tells us that he doesn't like it in the bin; how do the children think he feels now? What might have made him feel this way? Is he the same as the other objects in the sack or is he different? Why do you think this? Note any key ideas captured in these reflections in and around the outline of the toothbrush drawn earlier using a different colour.



Continue reading the next two double page spreads up to, ***“Thank you, friend Rat,” Sammy called as he floated away.*** Reflect on the journey so far and work with the children to plot a map from Sofia's house up to this point in the story. Discuss with the children where he might be heading next, after he is dropped into the river. You can continue to map the journey as you come to share the rest of the story.



Come back to the spread and discuss the illustrations with the children, focussing on the rubbish by the river. Does it surprise them that the rubbish ended up here? What impact might dumping the rubbish in this way have? What do they think will happen to these objects? What do they think should happen? Whose responsibility do they think it is?



Read on to, ***“Twinkle, twinkle,” said the second.*** Support the children in reflecting on how particular words, moments and the details in the illustration help us to appreciate how important Sofia is to Sammy. How do the different parts of the journey illustrate Sammy's strength of character, persistence, loyalty and commitment?



Now, invite the children to consider what might happen to all the discarded objects he encounters on his travels and what dangers they pose Sammy and others. When the plastic bottle says ***“Our love will last as long as we do”***, what does this mean? How long do they think plastic lasts for?



Continue reading to ***“I'm a toothbrush,” Sammy told him, “trying to get home.”*** Invite the children to look at the accompanying illustration and reflect on what they notice. Discuss the different ways in which the discarded waste could affect the coastal wildlife. Outside of the reading, you may wish to further pursue the idea of the impact of plastic waste on the environment. You could watch David Attenborough talking about the impact of plastic on animals, including the albatross Sammy meets, to broaden children's perspectives: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05q49hq>



Come back to the text and think about Sammy's last sentence again: ***“I'm a toothbrush,” Sammy told him, “trying to get home.”*** Think about the choice of the word ***trying***. Do they think Sammy's efforts will be successful? Recap on how he got to the sea at the start of the story – do they think he can get back the same way? How do they think the story might continue from here? Note down the children's predictions before turning the page.





Continue reading on to, *If only Sofia could see me now*. Were any of their predictions correct? Discuss how Sammy appears to be feeling in this moment. Revisit the outline drawing of the toothbrush and note any reflections using a different colour.



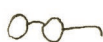
Turn the page, but be careful to only show the children the first half of the spread – cover or fold back the second side. Read the text, up to *Sammy's heart sank*. How does Sofia feel about being reunited with Sammy? How might she feel after her mother says *he's dirty*? Is there anything else Sammy could be useful for, apart from brushing teeth?



Invite the children to stand in a circle. Pass the toothbrush around the circle and encourage the children to think about the other ways in which Sammy might be useful to Sofia as they look at it. When the toothbrush comes back to you as the teacher, step into the circle and hold up the toothbrush so that all of the children can see it. Explain that you want the group to think of as many different ways to use the toothbrush and to settle on one. Model miming a use for the toothbrush and invite the children to guess what you are doing. Return to the circle and invite children to volunteer entering the circle and miming a different use for the rest of the group to guess if they have an idea. Allow the rest of the children to guess and see if they are correct.



Now read to the end of the story. Did the story end as the children thought it would? Come back to the final line; *“without a use and someone to love us, we are all rubbish.”* Can the children think of any other things that might be seen as rubbish that could become useful in different ways?



Reveal the front cover of the book to the children. What do they think of the title of the text? Do they think this is a good image to use on the front cover? Would the front cover have encouraged them to read the book if they had seen it before they read the book? Why or why not?



Now explore the informational text at the end of the book and encourage the children to summarize what they have learnt more widely about the problems with plastic waste and share ideas for how these might be overcome.



Come back to the book again and re-read the entire story as a whole. Allow the children to begin to explore their responses to it through booktalk with the help of what Aidan Chambers calls “the four basic questions”. These questions give children accessible starting points for discussion:

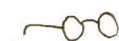
- Tell me... Was there anything you liked about this story?
- Was there anything that you particularly disliked?
- Was there anything that puzzled you?
- Were there any patterns ... any connections that you noticed? Did it remind you of anything else you've read or seen?



The openness of these questions unlike the more interrogative “Why?” question encourages every child to feel that they have something to say. It allows everyone to take part in arriving at a shared view without the fear of the “wrong” answer.



Asking these questions will lead children inevitably into a fuller discussion than using more general questions. You may, for example, ask the children if they had favourite parts of the story, and why this was.



Extend the children’s thinking through a more evaluative question, such as – Why do you think M. G. Leonard chose to write this book? Who do you think would like this book? Why?





Leave multiple copies of the book in the book corner for the children to revisit and re-read in independent reading time, by themselves or socially in a group.

AFTER READING, YOU COULD ALSO:



Encourage children to draft, rehearse and film their own public service announcement offering advice on how to repurpose or ethically dispose of household objects, including plastics.



Design posters to encourage people not to litter, detailing warnings about what happens to waste and how this is damaging to wildlife.



Find out more about how plastics can be recycled and consider different ways to share this information with others. This might include explanation diagrams, posters, leaflets or articles for the school website or newsletter.



Give children the choice to either write their own *Sammy's Adventures*, a book inspired by the places he went and the things he encountered or a further adventure he might go on.



Create their own booklets promoting the multipurpose potential of toothbrushes.

OTHER SUGGESTED TITLES TO SUPPORT THE EXPLORATION OF THEMES ARISING FROM THE TALE OF A TOOTHBRUSH FURTHER:

10 Things I Can Do to Help My World by Melanie Walsh (Walker Books)

Kids Fight Plastic by Martin Dorey, illustrated by Tim Wesson (Walker Books)

Sally and the Limpet by Simon James (Walker Books)

The First Book of the Sea by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Emily Sutton (Walker Books)

Sea Glass Summer by Michelle Houts, illustrated by Bagram Ibatoulline (Walker Books)

A Planet Full of Plastic: and how you can help by Neal Layton (Wren and Rook)

Somebody Swallowed Stanley by Sarah Roberts, illustrated by Hannah Peck (Scholastic)

What A Waste: Rubbish, Recycling, and Protecting our Planet by Jess French (DK Children)

If the World Were a Village by David J. Smith and Shelagh Armstrong (A & C Black)

How the World Works by Christiane Dorion and Beverley Young (Templar)



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