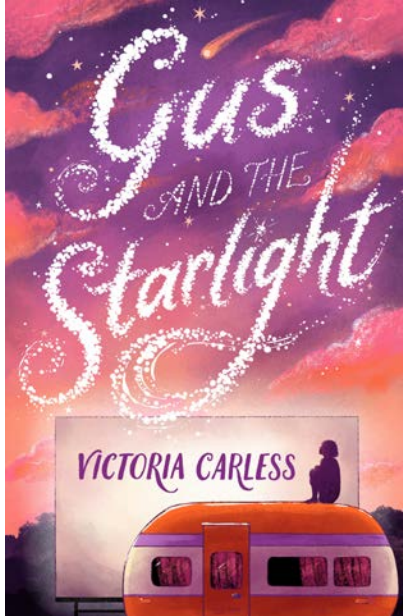


Classroom Resources



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Gus and the Starlight

Victoria Carless

BOOK SUMMARY

A spine-tingling and heart-warming story about friendship and finding your special place in the world.

Gus doesn't want to make friends. She also doesn't want to be intrigued by the cat-lady teacher at her new school, or the Riley's Comet project that she and her seaweed-eating science partner are working on together.

And she definitely doesn't want to fall in love with her job as the projectionist at the Starlight, a drive-in movie theatre that her family is reviving.

Because, knowing Gus's luck, she and her family could be moving on in a day, or a week, or a month. When the ghosts that haunt Mum catch up with them. Or if the Starlight doesn't succeed.

Then she'll have to say goodbye. Again.

And saying goodbye is too hard.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ACELT1627
- ACELA1772
- ACELT1605

THEMES

- Grief/ Loss
- Families
- Mental Health
- Identity
- Resilience
- Belonging
- Choices

Recommended Reading Ages: 9+

Resources Created For: Upper Primary

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During Reading

The Power of Symbolism

Metaphors communicate feelings and emotions and ideas, quickly and powerfully. They are colourful short cuts, and paint vivid, lasting pictures in the minds of audiences. They help writers and creators communicate and explain an emotion or feeling.

A metaphor is a direct comparison using 'is'.

For example, 'Mr Black is a dog'.

Other examples are:

Sun Warriors.

My heart is a ghost town.

Metaphors are more powerful than similes.

Simile

Hair like rats tails

Lips like a rosebud

Eyes like diamonds

A heart as big as the Outback

Metaphor

Rats tail hair

Rosebud lips

Sparkling diamond eyes

A heart the size of the Outback

Exercise

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616), one of the world's most persuasive and brilliant playwrights and poets, loved metaphors. When describing how much a character loved a woman, he doesn't just say, "She's a bit of all right". He uses many beautiful metaphors to paint very powerful images of love. Shakespeare knew that metaphors help us understand and explain something.

In Sonnet 18, he starts with a now famous line – a beautiful metaphor: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

'Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?'

by William Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date;

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;

Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:

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So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

1. Read through the sonnet. Write down what you see in your mind's eye, if someone told you that you are a beautiful summer's day.
 - a. How does the use of a metaphor influence the audience?
 - b. Why is the metaphor more effective than saying – “Gee, she’s gorgeous”?
2. Identify other metaphors you find in the sonnet and explain their meaning and affect.
3. Think about someone you love or despise – and think of three metaphors to describe them. Write a ten-line poem about that person, using these metaphors.

Throughout *Gus and the Starlight* metaphors are used to create atmosphere and help us more accurately understand events and characters in the novel. Stars, starlight, the cinema, the movies, stories, movie stars, constellations, ghosts, magic, families and comets, form a very powerful extended metaphor in this text.

1. Go to an online thesaurus such as Word Hippo and type in the following words and see all the different words and meanings that come up:
 - a. Star
 - b. Movies
 - c. Comet
 - d. Cinema
2. How do these metaphors add meaning to the text?
3. How do they influence the audience?
4. What lasting pictures and images are left in the mind of the reader?
5. List three images that have stayed with you after reading the book.
 - a. Why did they have an impact?
6. Select one word used throughout the novel, and other similar words/words with similar meanings, and write a poem about your family, using one of the words as an extended metaphor.

Reading for Meaning

1. Read the first two paragraphs of the novel.
 - a. What do you feel when you read this section?
 - b. What words generate that feeling in you and why?
 - c. What do you feel about Gus and her family?
2. Now turn to p. 21, and read the paragraph beginning, “When they reached the northern state...”
 - a. What do you feel about Gus and her family now? Why?
 - b. What has the author done to influence your feelings?
3. Throughout the first chapters, Victoria Carless, the author, also drops a few clues in the text about the family and how they feel about stories and the world of the imagination. Why does she do that?
 - a. How do their love of stories, the stars and make believe, make you feel about Gus and her family?

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4. As the story progresses, what does the Starlight Drive-In Movie Theatre (and drycleaners) become a metaphor for?
 - a. How does the metaphor of the movies and the cinema influence readers?
 - b. How does the shape of the story increase the power of the metaphor of the stars, the cinema, constellations and a sense of belonging and family?
 - c. What places and people have transformed you? Write a ten-line poem about a special person and place for you.

After Reading

Coming-of-age Texts – Gus' Journey

Characters change in stories and situations and other people help them change.

This text is a Coming-of-age text. Gus learns something about herself, her family and society as a consequence of her family taking over the management of the drive-in cinema.

Typical features in these kinds of texts are:

- The protagonist will lose their sense of innocence.
- The protagonist will be confronted with the adult world and face moral or ethical challenges.
- The protagonist will experience a choice between individual needs and desires vs. external pressures/expectations/norms.
- The protagonist will fail, be disappointed, accept limitations or become empowered and resist and fight.
- The protagonist will accept the complexities and “greyness” of the world.
- The protagonist will develop a greater awareness of self.

Think about how these ideas are present in the character of Gus:

1. How does Gus change and develop over the story?
2. What is the impact of the ending?
3. Who helps Gus change over the course of the story?
4. Why are there ghosts in the story?
5. What element do the ghosts or possible ghosts add to the story?

Exercise

Create a two-minute multimodal presentation about a key moment in your life, when you realised something about people or the world you did not know before.

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About the Author

Victoria writes works of fiction and for theatre. Her novel for young adults, *The Dream Walker*, was nominated for the Queensland Literary Awards and the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards.

Recently Victoria was commissioned by the Museum of Brisbane to write a work for *The Storytellers*, an interactive exhibition celebrating the layers of the city's history.

Victoria lives in Brisbane with her family and a blue heeler who is 98 in dog years. She often googles rescue cats, even though she is allergic. When not writing stories Victoria works as a communications nerd.

Gus and The Starlight is her first book for Middle Grade readers.

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