



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Piano Fingers

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

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Outline:

Isla and Bea are two sisters who share a love of music. Big sister Isla plays the violin and Bea is waiting for her music to start. With the help of Maestro Gus, the cat ghost of the piano, Bea will make her sparkling debut. *Piano Fingers* is the latest magical creation from an award-winning and internationally distinguished creator that hits all the right notes.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Caroline Magerl was born near Frankfurt in Germany and came to Australia when she was two. She lived on the yacht her family built until she was fourteen. In 2001 Caroline won the Children's Book Council of Australia Crichton Award for new talent in children's book illustration for her picture book *Grandma's Shoes* (written by Libby Hathorn). Since then she has been awarded a May Gibbs Fellowship and received an ASA children's picture book grant to work on her book *Hasel and Rose*. Nowadays she is a full-time artist, illustrator and printmaker. *Maya and Cat* was Caroline's first book with Walker, which went on to become a CBCA Notable and was shortlisted in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards. *Nop* was a CBCA Honour book and was shortlisted in the Queensland Literary Awards.

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.

These notes are for:

- Ages 5-8
- Years F-2

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Picture Book

Themes/Ideas:

- Music
- Learning new skills
- Family
- Expectation



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Before Reading

What do you think this book might be about just from hearing the title? How do your ideas change when you see the cover? After reading the book, compare your initial thoughts to what the book is actually about. Discuss the phrase “you can’t judge a book by its cover.”

Exploring the Book

Is *Piano Fingers* an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? How can you tell?

Who do you think the audience for this book is? Why?

Write a book review on *Piano Fingers*. Include what you liked about the book, who you think would enjoy it the most and mention any other books you think are similar.

On the whiteboard or on a large sheet of paper, place an image of the *Piano Fingers* cover and surround it with words that describe the book. Include words that describe what you liked about the book and how it made you feel.

Examine several of the spreads and have a class discussion about the following:

- What is the main colour or colours used? What mood/ feeling do these colours create?
- What objects are in the foreground (front), the midground and background of the picture? Why do you think the illustrator chose to do that?
- What are the characters on this page doing and where are they looking? Why are they doing this? What effect does this have?

A simile is a phrase that compares two things, usually with the words “as” or “like”. What similes can you find in *Piano Fingers*? Why do you think the author used similes in the story? Create a few similes of your own.

“*Bea came from a big musical family. They played big musical things.*”

Bea’s family have a common interest in music. What is something that you have in common with your family or friends? It could be music, like Bea, or a particular sport, cooking, movies, playing games, etc. Take turns standing up and telling the class about an interest you share with your family or a special person.

Onomatopoeia is a word that evokes the sound it is describing, e.g. “boom” to describe an explosion. Find examples of onomatopoeia in *Piano Fingers*. Think of other onomatopoeic words and make a poster illustrating each one.

Caroline Magerl uses made up words or combinations of words to describe sounds such as “bink” and “crashtinkle”. Gather some percussion instruments and other noisy objects and create some words to describe the sounds they make.

The opening spread of *Piano Fingers* features portraits of Bea’s big musical family each playing an instrument. Pick one of the family members and write a story about them. It could be about the first time they played an instrument, a special performance or a problem they faced when learning their instrument. Illustrate your story in your own style.

Caroline Magerl uses metaphor to describe musical instruments, e.g. “honey fog machine” for a violin and “a baby mountain” for the piano. Why do you think she uses these words to describe the instruments rather than calling them by their proper name? Choose some objects and create new names for them in a similar style, for example a tree could be a shady giant.



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Why do you think Bea kicks Maestro Gus out after her sparkling debut?

Does anyone in your class play a musical instrument? Ask them to describe how they started learning. Is playing music easy or hard? If you could play any instrument, which one would you choose?

Other Great Titles From Walker Books



Maya and Cat
Catherine Magerl
9781760651701 PB
Classroom ideas available



Nop
Catherine Magerl
9781760653941 PB
Classroom ideas available



Winston and the Indoor Cat
Leila Rudge
9781760652609 HB
Classroom ideas available



Maxine
Bob Graham
9781406387636 HB
Classroom ideas available