

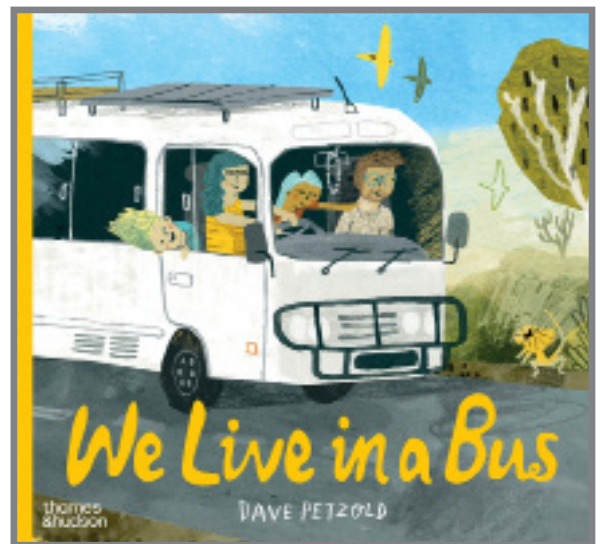
We Live in a Bus

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR
DAVE PETZOLD

SCIS: 5496204

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

When a young boy and his family embark on a year-long trip around Australia, they enjoy diversely beautiful landscapes and quirky nooks and crannies, meeting many new friends along the way. Oh—and their home is a bus!

With everyone pitching in to get on the road each day, their adventurous journey is filled with weird and wonderful sights, from lizards and budgies to musical fences, waterholes, and some rather noisy frogs, just to name a few.

Whether sleeping under the stars or basking in the sun, *We Live in a Bus* is a delightful story that explores the splendours of nature, the importance of family time and the knowledge that comes with listening.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Dave Petzold is an author and illustrator living on Bundjalung Country (Newrybar). He enjoys creating characters who are curious about their world and his stories embody a love of nature. He works initially with graphite pencil, ink and oil paint before adding colour and texture digitally. In 2021, his debut picture book, *Seven Seas of Fleas* was CBCA Shortlisted for the New Illustrator Award.

THEMES

- Adventure
- Family
- Holidays
- Nature
- Australia

STUDY NOTES

- Using the cover and blurb, predict what this book may be about. Why might the family be living in a bus? What clues do we get about the setting for this story?
- The family has given their bus a name—Gracie Joy Rufus Bean. What does this tell us about the place of the bus in their lives? Does your family name its vehicles? Share with a friend.
- As you read *We Live in a Bus*, take note of the figurative language used throughout. How does the use of onomatopoeia and alliteration help make the story more engaging?
- Why do you think the story starts and finishes with the bus door opening and closing —‘Tic-shhh!’?

- Compare the page openings below. How are they similar and different? How do the illustrations share the diversity of Australia’s landscape? What words would you use to describe each? Write these around the illustrations.



- When Gracie Joy Rufus Bean gets a flat tyre, Pete the truckie helps out. How does this show the importance of helping one another? How do you help others? Share in a journal.
- Take time to ‘read’ each page’s illustrations carefully. What is each family member doing? What can we tell about each of them from these images? What do they like? How do the illustrations tell us more than the words alone?
- In the page opening below, the family learns how to listen to Country from Ranger Jess. Why is listening such an important skill? Why is listening to Country central to First Nations cultures? What can we learn from this practice? What other ways do First Nations’ People listen to Country?

One morning we visit Ranger Jess who shows us how to listen to Country. ‘When you see the red-tailed black cockatoo, rain is coming,’ she says. Aaaaark! Aaaaark!



- In the page openings below, the family looks ‘at the small things’ from above and ‘the big things’ from below. The illustrations show these different perspectives. Why do they do this? How does this show the joy they are taking from their time away?



- Explore outside and find ‘a small thing’ to look at from above, and a ‘big thing’ to look at from below. Sketch these two perspectives. You may wish to take photos to help with your drawings.
- The sentence stem ‘We live in a bus and . . .’ is repeated throughout the text. Write and illustrate your own page opening that starts in this same way.
- In the role of Blob the bus spider, describe what it is like to live in the bus with this family.
- Make a list of the native flora and fauna that the family encounters. In addition, add significant landforms and landscapes.
- What everyday objects from the city are noticeably absent in this story? Why do you think the author has done this?
- Create a bird’s eye view of the bus, showing its floorplan. Add what’s not shown, use your imagination (such as the parents’ bed and the dining table). Use floorplans from caravans online to help with this task.
- Using the illustration below, discuss what the family might get from meeting others at the campground.



- Each family member helps with daily chores. Why is this important? What do you do in your family to help the household run smoothly?
- Which place, in this story, would you most like to visit? Why? Share in a reflection.
- What do you learn about the importance of family time from reading *We Live in a Bus*?
- Using a map of Australia, trace where the family travels. Add places members of the class have visited.
- In the role of Suzy, retell this story. What special treasures have you found? Use the illustrations to help see this story from her perspective.
- Which is your favourite page opening? Why? Share with a friend.
- In small groups, perform a part of *We Live in a Bus* in a dramatisation.
- What special mementos or souvenirs do you have from a family holiday? Choose one to share with your class in a one-minute oral presentation. Remember to explain why it is so special to you.
- Have you and your family ever gone camping or on a road trip? Share your experiences through a recount.
- What is your biggest take-away from reading *We Live in a Bus*?
- On the last page, Dad asks where they should go. The family replies, ‘Wherever the road will take us!’ Create one final page to add to the end of this story that shows their next day’s adventure.
- Write a postcard in the role of one of the children. You can write to a grandparent to share your experiences.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

CHRISTINA WHEELER