

These notes are for:

- Ages 7+
- Mid-Upper Primary
- Lower Secondary

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Visual Art
- Music
- History

Example of:

- Picture book/visual text
- Allegory/symbolic narrative

Values:

- Strength
- Courage
- Endurance
- Understanding, tolerance and inclusion*

*From Values for Australian Schooling document

Themes:

- Grief and bereavement
- Healing and renewal
- Isolation and loneliness
- Emotional/physical/symbolic journeys
- Awakenings
- Art
- Colour
- Change
- The sea

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

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Edge of the World

Edge of the World

Author: Ian Trevaskis
Illustrator: Wayne Harris
ISBN: 9781921150210
ARRP: \$29.95
NZRRP: \$31.99
February 2012



Synopsis

Nobody smiled in the village near the edge of the world. The wind blew cold, snow lay thick on the ground and each day the villagers went about their lives with heavy hearts. That was until the day Toby McPhee sailed out to the very edge of the world and found just what was needed to bring joy back to their lives.

Edge of the World is a healing narrative about the return of light and joy to lives that have been rendered dark and colourless by tragic events. Its extensive use of symbolism and strong allegorical dimension makes it ideal for studying in schools. The rich, evocative illustrations by award-winning illustrator, Wayne Harris, are also perfect for analysing visual literacy techniques.

Author/Illustrator Information

Ian Trevaskis was born in Geelong, Victoria. In addition to primary teaching, he studied fine arts and has worked as a teacher of Arts and Crafts. He has written several children's books including *Quincy* which was a Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book in 1992 and *The Postman's Race* which was a Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book in 1993. Ian now writes full time with two titles in the Hopscotch series, *Medusa Stone* and *Golden Scarab* published by Walker Books.

Wayne Harris has illustrated over thirty books, including *DragonQuest* by Allan Baillie, which was short-listed for Picture Book of the Year, Children's Book Council of Australia. Many of his other illustrated books have also received Notable Book status from the Children's Book Council of Australia. Wayne is also a book designer, winning the APA Best Designed Picture Book of the Year Award for *A Bit of Company* by Margaret Wild, *Gordon's Got a Snookie* by Lisa Shanahan and *Two Bullies* by Junko Morimoto. He was short-listed in the 1995 NSW Premier's Award for writing *Judy and the Volcano*, the same year *Going Home* was named an American Library Association Notable Children's Book. He enjoys teaching design and illustration and also working as a designer for Walker Books Australia.

How to use these notes:

These notes provide a variety of discussion questions and activities that can be used with *Edge of the World*. Please select according to the level, learning style and targeted outcomes of your students.

Ian Trevaskis on *Edge of the World*

“This story was born out of an overheard comment by someone – ‘let’s paint the town red’ – which led me to wonder: what if someone, somewhere, actually did paint a town red? And if so, why?”

The thought wouldn’t go away and over the next few days I began to make up stories in my mind about someone painting a town. The critical question became why – why would someone want to paint a town red?

I had an image of a remote little village somewhere near the edge of the world where a tragedy had occurred that was so terrible the inhabitants were filled with an unbearable sadness and the village itself had become drab and dreary. The only way to relieve it of its misery and desperation was to brighten up the town ... by painting it.

The atmosphere, the magic and the mystery that I sought to convey in my story have all been captured beautifully by Wayne’s evocative illustrations and he has recreated the images that were so vivid in my mind’s eye as I wrote the story.”

In the Classroom

Before reading:

Analysing the front cover

- From the cover of the book only, what do you think the story will be about? Who do you think the protagonist (main character) might be? Where might the story be set? In Australia? Another country? A fantasy land? Do you think the story takes place today or in the past? What sort of mood or atmosphere might it have? Explain your answers with reference to the cover.
- Introduce students to the visual literacy techniques below by pointing out the appropriate feature in the cover image then using the prompt questions to discuss why the illustrator may have used each technique. Possible answers to the questions are provided in brackets.

Reading path: This refers to the way your eye travels about a picture, or the order you look at things in. What do you look at first on the cover? Then where does your eye go? Then where? Does it follow any particular lines or vectors (see below) as it moves around parts of the picture? Roughly copy the cover into your workbook and then sketch your reading path on it. Compare your reading path with a classmate and discuss the reasons for the similarities and differences. (Answers will vary.)

Medium: This refers to what material an artist has used to create their illustrations. eg. watercolours, oil paints, collage, sculpture, photography. What medium do you think Wayne Harris has used? (Digital art.) Does this surprise you? Why?

Positioning: The foreground refers to the front of an image, or what is closest to the viewer; the midground, to what is the middle, and the background, to what is at the back of the image, or furthest away. What is in the foreground, midground and background of this image? (Foreground: seagulls, midground: the boat and sailors, background: the empty ocean behind the boat.)

How would the scene have felt different if the boat were in the foreground? (The viewer would have felt more connected to the people on board; they would learn more about the characters and what they were doing but get less information about the setting; the mood of the picture would be more confined and intimate and less free, wild and expansive.)

Look at how the book title and the author’s and illustrator’s names have been positioned at the very top and bottom of the cover, respectively. Why do you think this is? (To reinforce the idea of edges, to create a sense of openness and freedom.)

Angle: Objects can be presented from a variety of perspectives:

- eye-level: as if the viewer were looking at the object straight on
- undershot: as if the object were seen from directly below
- low angle: as if the viewer were lower than the object
- high angle: as if the viewer were higher than the object
- overhead/bird’s eye: as if the viewer were looking down on it from directly above.

What perspective is the boat on the cover shown from? (Eye level or slight low angle, depending on opinion.) What effect does this create? (Eye level: lets the viewer take in the scene without being distracted by an unusual angle, makes the viewer feel connected to the people on the boat; low angle: reinforces the movement of the boat as it crashes down.)

Line: Most of the lines in this picture are diagonal, or sharply slanted. For instance, the masts and rigging. What other examples can you find? (The line of the seagulls’ bodies in the foreground of the picture, the horizon in the background.) Why might the illustrator have done this? (To suggest motion by making the viewer feel like they were on a boat pitching about in the waves; to create a sense of unease.)

Vectors: Vectors are lines which draw your eye in a particular direction. Look at the sharp line of the prow, the masts, the lines of rigging (rope) and the curve on the outer edge of the sail. Where do these lead your eye? (Diagonally upwards to the title and the top of the page.) Why do you think the illustrator has decided to cut these vectors off at the top of the page? (To focus attention on the title; to emphasise the height of the boat; to create a sense of immediacy which makes the reader feel as if they were in the middle of the scene.)

Colour: What are the main colours that you notice on the page? (The green of the boat’s prow, the orange sail, the blue ocean, the white water.) What emotions and ideas do you associate with green and orange? (Green: life, freshness, renewal, nature; orange: warmth, life and energy.) Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to use these colours for the boat? (To give the picture a cheerful, optimistic tone and make the viewer feel positive towards the people on the boat.)

Contrast: Look at how the whitewater at the front of the picture stands out against the dark blue ocean. What is the illustrator trying to emphasise through this contrast? (The power of the boat as it moves purposefully across the waves; the roughness of the ocean.) What other examples of contrast can you find? (The white title against the colourful background.)

Light and Shadow: Which parts of this picture are the brightest? (The right side of the boat.) Which parts are in shadow? (The left.) What is providing the source of light in this picture? (Sunlight, from the top right.) Do you think the lighting could be symbolic in any way? What could it be hinting at? (Answers will vary but could include a hidden sorrow, secrecy, and a movement from darkness to light in the characters' lives.)

Font: This refers to the typeface or lettering. How would you describe the font that has been used on the cover? (Answers will vary.) Note how the outside of the font is slightly rough or shaky. What effect does this create? (Suggests sorrow or fear; mimics the movement of waves; makes the words look as though they were a long way off, thereby linking to the title.) If the designer had used lowercase, rather than capitals, how would the effect or feeling have been different? (The title may have lacked gravity or seriousness.)

- After analysing the cover of the book, write down three questions that you have about the story and share these with the class.
- In pairs, discuss what sort of place the “edge of the world” might be. What would it look like? Who, if anyone, might live there? What feelings or emotions would you experience if you visited? Draw a picture to represent your ideas.
- Imagine that you were one of the sailors depicted on the cover and write a short story from their perspective. Before you begin writing, consider what your character is like, where the boat is going and what sort of relationships you have with the other characters. Try to bring the scene to life by using descriptive language which appeals to the senses. What smells might be around you? The tang of salt? Fish? Tar? What might you be feeling? The cut of icy wind across your cheeks? The spray of sea foam? The deck lurching beneath your feet? What would you hear? Gulls cawing? Sails flapping ...?

After reading Exploring Themes and Ideas

- Write a journal entry/reflection after reading the book. Some questions to consider could be:
 - What did you feel while reading the book?
 - Which parts of the story made you feel most emotional?
 - Have you had any experiences like those in the story?
 - Do you know anyone who is like a character in the book?
 - If you were telling this story, what would you change?
 - Why do you think the author wanted the story to end as it does? Were you satisfied with the ending?
 - What do you think is the main message of the story?
 - If you could speak to the author or illustrator, what comments would you make?
- Where and when do you think the story is set? What clues did you get from the text?
- Where do you think the silver pots might have originated? Make up a story about how they came to be on the bottom of the ocean and tell it to a classmate.
- How did the last page of the book help you better understand Toby as a character? Up until this point, what did you think was the cause of his sadness?
- Discuss the meaning of the word “catharsis” (when a person expresses powerful emotions through art, music, writing, etc., and so gains a feeling of cleansing or relief). Write out your own definition in your workbook. Have you ever experienced this? For instance, writing a journal entry and feeling better afterwards. Do you think Toby painting the memorial for his family could be viewed as a form of catharsis?
- As a class, identify some of the main themes of the text (e.g. grief, healing, change, isolation). What messages about these themes do you think the text is communicating?
- Discuss the ways different people cope with grief. How does their behaviour and personality change? What impact can this have on their relationship with others? What are some things people can do to support those who are grieving or have experienced loss? Do you think a book like *Edge of the World* might help in situations like this?

Research

- The edge of the world was thought to exist in ancient times. What did people of that time believe would happen if they ventured too close to it?
- Fishing was a major part of lives for people in the village near the edge of the world. How did everyone contribute to this? Research fishing practices 200 years ago and today then draw a Venn diagram showing similarities and differences.

Language

- Compile a list of words from the book which are unfamiliar or new. For instance, “hearth”, “cobbles”, “wake” and “forlorn”. What do you think these words might mean, based on the way they are used in the story i.e. their context? Look these words up in the dictionary and draw a rough picture for each to help you remember their meaning.
- Decide which word you feel is the most important on each page. Arrange these words on the page to create a poem summarising the text. Compare your poem with another class member. Have they chosen the same words as you? Discuss the reasons for your choices.
- The author writes, “But Toby McPhee did not join in [with the talk of the fishermen]. Instead, he plunged his brush into the sticky blackness of the tar pot and painted the deck.” Could this action be symbolic in any way? What might the “sticky blackness” represent?
- A refrain is a repeated phrase or pattern of sound. What line acts as a refrain in the book? Does the wording of this refrain vary in any subtle way as the story progresses? Discuss the way this refrain helps create a haunting, melancholy atmosphere and highlights the key themes of the novel.
- What is meant by the phrase “weather eye”? Can you find any other words or phrases related to boats and sailing?
- “Gulls hung like scraps of dirty paper above the breakwater” is an example of a simile (a language technique where one thing is compared to something else using the word “like” or “as”), creating a listless, bleak atmosphere and reflecting the sadness of the village. Can you locate any other similes in the book? In each instance, discuss what feeling or idea the author is trying to convey through this technique.

- When Toby opens the pots, his eyes “blazed” and “the sizzling colours filled his heart with warmth.” How do the words Trevaskis has used help emphasise this idea of warmth?
- Explore the author’s use of personification. For example, “The cold sea stroked the pebbly beach”. What other things are personified in the book?
- In the story, Trevaskis uses imagery (descriptive language) which appeals to the sense. For instance, verbs such as “shrieked” and “howled” help create a powerful auditory image (i.e. an image that relates to how things sound.) What other examples of auditory imagery can you find in the book? Use your voice or objects found in the classroom to re-create these sounds.
- Find examples of imagery relating to the other senses. Are there any senses which Trevaskis hasn’t appealed to? For instance, smell and taste. Write some extra sentences appealing to these senses and read them to the class, explaining at which points you would incorporate them into the story.
- The “sequined sky” is an example of alliteration, with the repeated “s” creating a silvery sound which evokes the spangled beauty of the stars against the night sky. Has the author used this technique anywhere else in the story? Write a description of something in the classroom or playground using alliteration.
- Read the book aloud slowly and discuss the way the rhythm and sounds of words help create atmosphere. For instance, “swayed in time to the gentle rhythm of the swell” has a gentle, lilting rhythm which evokes a sense of peace. The assonance of “slick, black deck” evokes the feeling and appearance of the slippery surface of the ship. Similarly, the sharpness of verbs such as “flashed” and “skidded” suggests swiftness and energy.
- The curlew has always been a bird of bad omen to sailors, with a sighting of a curlew usually associated with a storm brewing. Hearing the cry of a curlew was also supposed to herald ill fortune or death. What references to the curlew can you find in *Edge of the World*? How has Trevaskis used this symbol to create mood and enhance the main themes of the book? Can you identify any other symbols in the book?
- Discuss the principle of “show, don’t tell” – advice which is often given to writers to make their work more vivid and engaging. Has Trevaskis followed this principle in your opinion? Explain your answer with reference to the text.
- Choose one picture in the book and analyse the facial expressions and body language of the subjects. What feelings might they be experiencing? Is this emotion conveyed through their face, a movement or gesture, their posture or a combination of these things. Where is each person looking? Does their gaze draw our attention to any other part of the picture? Or does any part of their body direct our attention to another part of the picture? For example, are they pointing at something or moving towards it?
- Look at the image of Toby on the final page of the book. The illustrator has chosen to draw him from a low angle, making him look tall, heroic and strong. What does this tell us about how his emotional state has altered from the start of the book? What do you notice about the village behind him in the picture?
- Colour symbolism plays an important role in the book, reflecting the emotions of the protagonist and vividly externalising his journey from sorrow to acceptance. As a class, brainstorm a list of colours and discuss the feelings or associations they arouse for you. Use the internet or a library book to look up what each colour traditionally symbolises in western culture then display this information on a poster. The following sites may be useful: <http://www.squidoo.com/colorexpress> and <http://visual.ly/what-colors-mean-different-cultures>.
- Research famous paintings where the artist has used colour to convey emotion or express the mood or personality of the subject. For instance, paintings from Picasso’s “blue” and “rose” periods. Draw or paint a self-portrait using colour to express your feelings and personality. Write a reflection statement explaining your work.

Responding creatively

- Use a program like Wordle (www.wordle.com) or Tagxedo (www.tagxedo.com) to create a word cloud summarising the subject, mood and key themes of the book. Try to manipulate colour, font, shape, size and line in a manner that demonstrates your understanding of the text. See below for an example.

Visual literacy

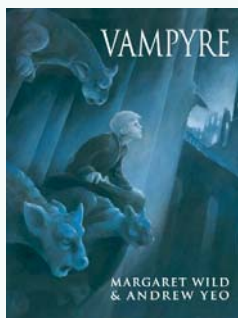
- At the beginning of the book, “The village shivered beneath a blanket of snow”. How is this symbolic of Toby, who covers up his feelings and “had no wish to remember”? As Toby journeys from sadness and grief to acceptance and healing, how are his feelings reflected in his surroundings?
- Look at the way the illustrations change throughout the book, moving from cool, subdued tones to warm, bright, saturated colours. When does this change start to occur? How does this reflect the healing that both Toby and the village experience?



Word cloud created using Tagxedo.

- Create a soundscape for *Edge of the World*, showing the journey from grief to healing. Work in small groups, with each group taking responsibility for one double-page spread of the text.
 - Work out what the emotion the character on your page would be feeling.
 - Brainstorm the different noises/vocal sounds/instruments/body percussion sounds that could be used to show this emotion. (Try to be creative and use everyday objects around you, as well as proper instruments.)
 - Work out what volume and pace would be appropriate for this emotion.
 - Record your section of the soundscape. (It should be approximately 20 seconds long.)
 - After each group has recorded their piece, play all the sections of the soundscape in order.
 - Write a reflection on the soundscape. Did it sound as you imagined it would?
 - What sounds or instruments worked well or didn't work well? Did the different parts fit together smoothly?
- What is an obituary? As a class, read an obituary from a local paper, discussing its structure, purpose and language style. Alternately, you might like to analyse an historical obituary from <http://trove.nla.gov.au/> Compose an obituary that may have been written at the time Toby McPhee lost his family.
- Write a fictional newspaper report about the drowning of Toby's family. Make sure you include all the key information in the opening paragraph (the "five W's") and use language which is a combination of persuasive and informative.
- Compose a diary entry as written by Toby at the end of the book. Focus particularly on exploring his thoughts and feelings after completing his memorial to his family. Is he satisfied? At peace? Inspired? What attitude does he have towards the future?

Other Visual Texts with a Deeper Meaning



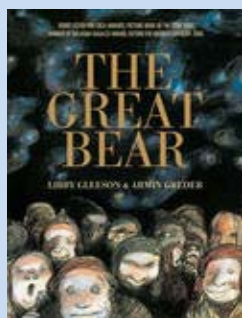
Vampyre

Author: Margaret Wild
Illustrator: Andrew Yeo
ISBN: 9781921529221 (HB)
AU\$29.95/NZ\$31.99

I am Vampyre. Feared. Despised. I live in darkness. I long for light.

From the depths of his vampyre world, a vampyre boy reflects on the joyous days of his childhood and his current life as a vampyre.

This monumental picture book takes the reader on an intensely emotional journey from a world of darkness to light. Sophisticated illustrations and evocative prose are seamlessly interwoven to create a powerful allegory exploring complex themes of identity, choices, belonging and growing up.



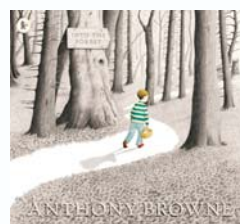
The Great Bear

Author: Libby Gleeson
Illustrator: Armin Greder
ISBN: 9781921529696 (PB)
AU\$16.95/NZ\$19.99

The circus bear spends her days in a cage and her nights performing for a crowd. The crowd taunts her as she dances – poking her with sticks or throwing stones. Can she ever break free?

This powerful text uses a deceptively simple narrative about a bear to raise complex issues about freedom, dignity and self determination.

– Short-listed for CBCA Picture Book of the Year, 2000
– Winner of the Bologna Ragazzi Award, Fiction for Infants category, 2000



Into the Forest

Author: Anthony Browne
ISBN: 9781844285594
Paperback
AU\$16.95/NZ\$18.99

One night a boy is woken by a terrible storm. In the morning Dad is gone and Mum doesn't know when he'll be back. The boy is asked to take a cake to his sick grandma. "Don't go into the forest," he is warned, as always. But this time the boy does.

This is an atmospheric exploration of fear and anxiety by a Children's Laureate and Hans Christian Andersen Medal Winner.

"Into the Forest repays many readings. So little said but so much implied; that is the certain delight of Anthony Browne's picture books, a right feast for the imagination." – *Magpies magazine*



A Monster Calls

Author: Patrick Ness
Illustrator: Jim Kay
ISBN: 9781406311525 (HB)
AU\$27.95/NZ\$31.99

The monster showed up just after midnight. As they do. But it isn't the monster Conor's been expecting. He's been expecting the one from his nightmare, the one he's had nearly every night since his mother started her treatments, the one with the darkness and the wind and the screaming ...

From Carnegie Medal-winning author, Patrick Ness, comes this poignant and darkly mischievous fable about fear, grief and coming to terms with loss.

For information about new releases, the latest awards news and links to a range of teacher resources, sign up to our education newsletter at www.walkerbooks.com.au/Teachers



EDGE OF THE WORLD

IAN TREVASKIS · WAYNE HARRIS

What Colours Mean

Colour is a powerful tool for artists, helping them to create mood and arouse strong emotions in viewers. Each colour traditionally has its own set of symbolic meanings and associations. These meanings can be both positive and negative.

For instance, *red* is commonly associated with love, but also with danger. Importantly, these symbolic meanings can vary dramatically between individuals and across cultures: for example, in Chinese culture white is the colour of mourning and is used for funerals.

1. Use coloured pencils to shade each part of the artist's palette in the appropriate colour from the colour bank. (Hint: the explanations relate to colour symbolism in the Western world.) Make sure you look up any words you don't know.
2. For each colour, underline the symbolic meanings which are positive, circle the ones which are negative and leave any which you consider neutral. Add any other symbolic meanings you can think of for each colour.
3. Use the Internet to research what these colours symbolise in other cultures around the world. Create a poster to display your findings.



Colour bank

orange, pink, yellow, green, purple,
black, blue, red, grey, white, brown