



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Paper Things

by Jennifer Richard Jacobson
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

When Ari's mother died four years ago, she had two final wishes: that Ari and her older brother, Gage, would stay together always, and that Ari would go to Carter, the middle school for gifted students. So when nineteen-year-old Gage decides he can no longer live with their bossy guardian, Janna, Ari knows she has to go with him. But it's been two months, and Gage still hasn't found them an apartment. He and Ari have been "couch surfing," staying with Gage's friend in a tiny apartment, crashing with Gage's girlfriend and two roommates, and if necessary, sneaking into a juvenile shelter to escape the cold Maine nights. But all of this jumping around makes it hard for Ari to keep up with her schoolwork, never mind her friendships, and getting into Carter starts to seem impossible. Will Ari be forced to break one of her promises to Mama? Told in an open, authentic voice, this nuanced story of hiding in plain sight may have readers thinking about homelessness in a whole new way.

Author Information:

Jennifer Richard Jacobson is the author of several books for children and young adults, including the middle-grade novel *Small as an Elephant* and the Andy Shane early chapter books, illustrated by Abby Carter. She lives in Cumberland, Maine.

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.

<p>These notes are for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary • Years 5-6 • Ages 10+ 	<p>Key Learning Areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English 	<p>Example of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiction 	<p>Themes/Ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty/Homelessness • Family • Relationships • Resourcefulness 			
<p>National Curriculum Focus:*</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="272 1848 732 2049"> <p>English</p> <p>Year 5 ACELA1429 ACELT1575 ACELT1577 ACELT1783 ACELT1578 ACELY1646 ACELY1647</p> </td> <td data-bbox="732 1883 962 2049"> <p>Year 6 ACELT1581 ACELT1582 ACELT1583 ACELT1584 ACELY1655 ACELY1656 ACELY1657</p> </td> <td data-bbox="962 1874 1310 2056"> <p>*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.</p> </td> </tr> </table>				<p>English</p> <p>Year 5 ACELA1429 ACELT1575 ACELT1577 ACELT1783 ACELT1578 ACELY1646 ACELY1647</p>	<p>Year 6 ACELT1581 ACELT1582 ACELT1583 ACELT1584 ACELY1655 ACELY1656 ACELY1657</p>	<p>*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.</p>
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Discussion Questions And Activities:

Before reading the book write a description of a homeless person. After reading the book, revisit your description and write a new description of a homeless person. What have you learnt from this book about stereotypes?

Ari is unhappy that the traditions of her school have been banned. Why do you think traditions might be more important to her than some of her peers? Make a list of traditions that your school or family have with a short description about each explaining whether you like it or not and why it is significant for you. Do you believe traditions are important? Why or why not?

When things get difficult for Ari she tries to be invisible. Why do you think Ari wants to be invisible? Do you think that it is a good thing to feel invisible?

Ari keeps secrets from her friends and teachers. Why do you think she does this? What are the dangers in keeping secrets from loved ones? Have a class discussion about times when it's good to keep secrets and when it's bad to keep secrets.

“Ever notice that a shrug hardly ever means what it's meant to?” — page 150.

Sometimes people say or do things to hide what they really think or feel. Why do you think people do this? Find examples from the book of people behaving like this.

Do you think it was responsible of Gage to take Ari away from Janna when he didn't have stable accommodation arranged? Hold a class debate on this topic with one side arguing that Gage did the right thing and the other side arguing that he did the wrong thing. Use evidence from the book in your debate.

How does Ari feel when the girls at the shelter take her paper things folder away? What you think she feels so strongly about this?

The girls at the shelter tearing Miles is a significant event in Ari's story. Why did this event upset her so much? What is the significance of having the paper child tearing during a struggle between two people?

Many of the choices that Gage makes are fuelled by pride. What is pride? Describe how it can be a good or bad thing. Find examples in the text of when Gage's pride was a negative influence on his decision-making.

“I smile and tell her that all kinds of valuable things are around us—we just have to open our eyes.” —page 319. This quote is referring to finding coins on the ground. What other meaning do you think it could have?

By the end of the book, Ari decides to stop wishing for specific things. What brings her to this decision? Think of a time in your life where something bad happened that led to something good. If you could change the past would you avoid that bad thing knowing that you would lose the good thing that came from it?

Write a short paragraph about each of the following relationships in the book. Describe how they change over the course of the book and what causes the change.

- Ari and Gage
- Gage and Janna
- Gage and Chloe
- Ari and Sasha
- Ari and Daniel
- Ari and Ms Finch

What are the themes of this novel? Write a statement of belief for each theme and then assess how the books treatment of these themes makes you feel.

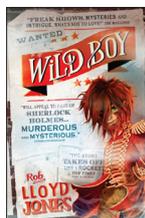
Design a new book cover and/or pick a new name for the book.

Write a book report on *Paper Things*. Write about if you enjoyed the book, using evidence from the text to support your evaluation. Make a recommendation about who would be interested in this book and draw connections to similar or related books.

Other Great Titles From Walker Books:



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