



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Cloud Boy

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

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Outline:

Harry Christmas and Angie Moon are best friends and almost-twins. Ever since they were born two days apart they've been partners in cloud-spotting, sweet-eating and treehouse-building. But when Harry is taken to hospital for headaches that won't go away, he needs Angie more than ever. Because when things fall apart, only a best friend can stitch them back together. Told through Angie's lively diary, this is a bittersweet story about friendship and growing up.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Marcia Williams is famous for her retellings of classic stories. From Shakespeare and Dickens to the Canterbury Tales and Greek Myths, her humorous comic-strip illustrations are hugely popular all over the world. Recent titles include *The Romans: Gods, Emperors and Dormice*, *Archie's War*, *My Secret War Diary* and *The Tudors: Kings, Queens, Scribes and Ferrets*. She lives in London, SW13. www.marciawilliams.co.uk

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:

- Primary years 4-6
- Ages 9-12

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Novel

Themes/Ideas:

- Illness/cancer
- Friendship
- Resilience
- History



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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Each chapter/diary entry begins with a note of the clouds Angie can see. Research online or in your school library for photos of the cloud formations. Form the class into groups and assign each group a cloud formation. Each group can research their formation and prepare a short presentation.

Grandma Gertie lived in Singapore as a child during World War II. During the invasion by the Japanese, Gertie and her parent were imprisoned in Changi. Discuss the concept of prisoners of war. Read *The Happiness Box: A Wartime Book of Hope* by Mark Greenwood and Andrew McLean as an introduction to Changi prison.

Cloud Boy is an epistolary novel, that is a novel written as a series of documents – in this case a journal. Why do you think Marcia Williams chose to write the story as a journal from Angie's perspective? How might it be different if it was from Harry's perspective or written in third-person?

Angie and Harry share Artcloud. Why is it special to them? What do they like to do there? Do you have a special place that you share with a friend or sibling?

Grandma Gertie shows Angie and Harry the telescope, which has great sentimental value to her. What does "sentimental value" mean? Why is the telescope special?

Based on the letters, discuss Gertie's experience in Changi prison. How did she feel? What connections did she make with people? Why do reading the letters still make her upset, even though it has been over 60 years since she was in Changi?

Discuss the diary entry from 5th June, specifically what Angie writes about Harry in the morning compared to the afternoon. What emotions does Angie feel?

"Now I see why people keep a diary and it's not to report on the day, it's to give your true heart and feelings a place to explode." (p 49)

What does Angie mean by this? Keep your own diary for at least a week and use it as place to write how you are feeling that day. This should be a private exercise.

Why does Grandma Gertie tells Angie to "never give up on someone" (p 58)? Why might Harry have been rude to Angie and Gertie at the hospital?

Why does Grandma Gertie suggest Angie makes a quilt? What memories does Angie put into the quilt? Make a class quilt out of paper where each student can draw or write something special to them on a square (or other tessellating shape) and then tape all the pieces together to make a paper quilt.

Why did Harry want Angie to shave his head? Why was Lilly so upset about it? Why does Angie shave her own head afterwards?

Examine the diary entry from 23rd July. Why do you think it is designed this way? Why is the next diary entry not for another two days?

How does Angie react to the news that Harry might not get better? How does she comfort Harry as his sickness gets worse?

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