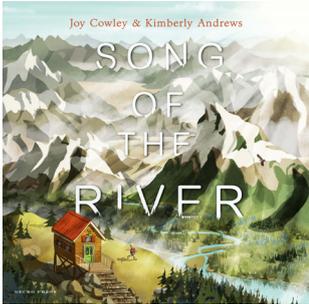




# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## Song of the River

Author: Joy Cowley  
Illustrator: Kimberly Andrews  
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\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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## Outline:

In this resonant story from Joy Cowley, Cam the mountain boy follows the river from its trickling source in the snow all the way to the sea. The river leads him through forest, farms and towns to the salty wind of the sea. The dramatic landscapes are packed with detail to discover in the world of the river.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Joy Cowley is one of New Zealand's best-loved writers for children and adults, with an international reputation. She has won a multitude of awards and honours for her bestselling books, including the Prime Minister's Award for contribution to literature. She was shortlisted for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2018.

## 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 F-3
- Ages 5-9

### Key Learning Areas:

- English

### Example of:

- Picture Book

### Themes/Ideas:

- Nature
- Habitats
- Geography
- Science



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## Discussion Questions and Activities:

### 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

In *Song of the River*, Joy Cowley uses a literary device called personification, which means giving something qualities or abilities that humans have. For example, “the water splashed and sang in the voice of snow”. Why do you think Joy Cowley used this device? Can you find other examples of personification in this book or in others?

The sounds of the river are described in many different ways throughout the book. Listen to sounds of nature outside, or search for sounds online, such as a gently flowing stream, a rushing waterfall, light breeze, a rough storm, heavy rain, etc. List some adjectives for each sound and imagine what those sounds might be saying if they were voices.

Examine each spread and make a list of the animals that Kimberly Andrews has included in the illustrations. Discuss why the animals are included in that spread but not others (for example, why is the bear shown sleeping in cave on the mountain and not on the farm or in the city?) What other animals might you find in these areas?

Why do these animals live near the river? How do they use the river?

How do humans use the river and the sea as shown in the book? What other ways do humans use bodies of water?

Use this book to help introduce the water cycle to the class. After reading, show a diagram of the water cycle to the class and ask what part of the cycle is shown in *Song of the River*.

How can you stay safe when you are near streams, rivers and the ocean?

Examine the colours Kimberly Andrews uses in the illustrations. Do the colours change from spread to spread? Make a list of the colours used in each area (this is called

the colour palette). Why do you think she used these colour palettes for the mountain, farm, city and ocean?

Choose two spreads to compare and contrast the perspective, that is the angle the reader/viewer sees what is happening in the illustrations. For example, compare the spread where Cam is sitting by the river looking at the fishes, to the spread of the farm. What can you see in the illustration? What is the illustrator trying to draw your attention to? Where is Cam in each spread – is he drawn large or small?

There have been lots of great songs written about rivers. In pairs or small groups of 3-4, choose a song about a river or rivers and perform for your class. You could use instruments or sing a cappella. You can decide if you want to perform the whole song or just the chorus.

Trace the source of a river near where you live. You could look it up on a map or if you are able, travel to the source of the river. What are the main landmarks that the river passes? Are there any conservation threats to the river? Create a poster illustrating the river’s course and your findings about your chosen river. You can do this activity on your own or in pairs.

### Creative Responses to the Text

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?

### Other Great Titles From Walker Books



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Jodi Toering  
Tannya Harricks  
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Classroom ideas available



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Matt Shanks  
9781760650346 HB  
Classroom ideas available



**The Anzac Billy**  
Claire Saxby  
Mark Jackson, Heather Potter  
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Classroom ideas available



**Wilam**  
Aunty Joy Murphy, Andrew Kelly  
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