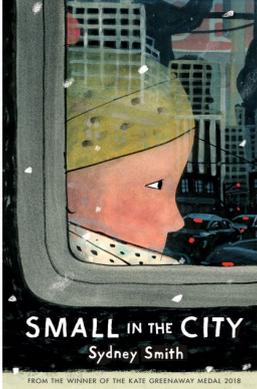




Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Small in the City

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

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Outline:

Being small can be overwhelming in a city. People don't see you. The loud sounds of the sirens and cyclists can be scary. And the streets are so busy it can make your brain feel like there's too much stuff in it. But if you know where to find good hiding places, warm dryer vents that blow out hot steam that smells like summer, music to listen to or friends to say hi to, there can be comfort in the city, too.

We follow our little protagonist, who knows all about what its like to be small in the city, as he gives his best advice for surviving there. As we turn the pages, Sydney Smith's masterful storytelling allows us to glimpse exactly who this advice is for, leading us to a powerful, heart-rending realization...

Author/Illustrator Information:

Sydney Smith has illustrated multiple children's books, including *Town is by the Sea*, the winner of the 2017 Kate Greenaway Medal, *The White Cat and the Monk*, written by Jo Ellen Bogart, and the acclaimed *Footpath Flowers*, which was a New York Times Children's Book of the Year and a winner of the Governor General Award for Illustration. Born in Nova Scotia in Canada, Sydney now lives in Toronto with his wife and son. Find him online at hutten.org/sydney and on Twitter and Instagram as @sydneydraws.

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:

- Ages 5-8
- Years F-2

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Picture Book

Themes/Ideas:

- Pets
- Loss
- Hope



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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Before reading

View the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:

- The title
- The author–illustrator
- The publisher
- The blurb

What do you think the story might be about from looking at the title only? Do your ideas change after seeing the cover? Write your own story using the title *Small in the City*.

Exploring the story

In *Small in the City*, the narrator is talking directly to you, the reader. Why do you think Sydney Smith chose to write the story this way?

The reader finds out later in the story that the narrator is talking to a missing cat. How do we find this out? Did this surprise you? Why?

The last illustration shows paw prints in the snow. What do you think this is showing?

This story has an ambiguous ending. Discuss the term ambiguous – what does it mean? What makes this ending ambiguous? Why do you think the author wrote this ending?

Have a class discussion about cats. What do you know about them? What are they like as pets? Any students in the class who have a pet cat could share stories about their pet.

Write a story from the cat's point of view. It could be about one small moment of its time in the city, or about why it ran away, why it decided to come home, etc.

The child puts “Lost” posters up in the city. Why do they do that? Design your own poster for the lost cat. Think about what information could be useful to help strangers recognise and help find the cat.

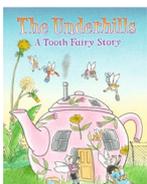
Exploring the illustrations

Choose one of the illustrations and discuss it using the following prompts:

- What colours are used? How do these colours make you feel?
- What is the composition (i.e. where are the key elements placed)? Is the main character large or small? In the foreground or background? Do they seem powerful or weak; happy or sad; scared or confident, etc?
- Is the illustration framed or does it take up the whole page? Why do you think Sydney Smith illustrated it this way?

In many of the illustrations, the reader can't see the child's facial features. Facial expressions are key to reading the emotions of people, however readers can still understand the body language of the child. Discuss how you can tell how the child is feeling even without seeing their facial features.

Other Great Titles From Walker Books:



The Underhills
Bob Graham
9781406387612 HB



The Pigeon Has to Go to School
Mo Willems
9781406389012 PB
Classroom ideas available



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Mac Barnett
Isabelle Arsenault
9781406388763 HB
Classroom ideas available



Cornelia and the Jungle Machine
Nora Brech
9781776572595 HB
Classroom ideas available