Notes for teachers

Free exhibition
10 June 2016 – 20 January 2018


Story Island: an adventure in pictures is a State Library Victoria touring exhibition displaying items from the Scholastic Dromkeen Children’s Literature Collection.
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Using this resource

This education resource has been designed to complement the State Library Victoria touring exhibition *Story Island: an adventure in pictures*. The exhibition is aimed at children aged 0–8 years old and their families; however, this resource is aimed at teachers of children of kinder and school age in academic years K–3. It is designed to address general education outcomes with reference to the Australian Curriculum and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework. The use of this resource can enhance students’ experience of attending the exhibition, and can support visual and textual literacy through the lens of storytelling. Because the exhibition themes broadly address literacy, a unit based on the exhibition can be incorporated into a number of curriculum areas such as Literature Studies, Art, Media Studies and Drama. The exhibition design is innovative and is integral to the viewers’ experience, and would form an excellent foundation for a study of exhibition design for children, as part of a senior design curriculum.

This resource is available as a downloadable PDF on the exhibition’s web pages at


A visit to the exhibition is highly recommended. However, if you are unable to visit, or if you wish to use this resource beyond the life of the exhibition, the activities and materials can be used independently.
About the exhibition

Story Island: an adventure in pictures is aimed at ages 0–8 years – key years in the development of foundation literacy, and the starting point at which to foster a lifelong love of reading. Three broad messages underpin the exhibition:

- Reading stories is something we can share as a family, and sharing stories brings us closer.
- Stories help us understand the world around us.
- Stories can be told in many ways (reading silently, reading aloud together, dialoguing, singing, acting out, writing, image making, and engaging sound, smell and touch).

The exhibition showcases children’s book illustrations, carefully reproduced from original artwork from the Scholastic Dromkeen Children’s Literature Collection, housed at State Library Victoria. It is themed to frame the journey from bath to bedtime as a space of stories, imagination and closeness. The innovative design of the exhibition supports this feeling of intimacy and imagination. The exhibition will tour to suburban and regional libraries across Victoria. The curators and designers have created an environment to support the development of literacy during children’s early years, specifically to encourage the shared reading of stories at home and at school. The exhibition features activities to go with each of the images, a trail, single activity sheets, and a suggested booklist for further reading, all downloadable from the State Library Victoria website (www.slv.vic.gov.au/story-island). Each library will also develop activities specific to its own program of events.

Educational principles

The educational principles that support the activities in the exhibition, both those incorporated in the design of the exhibition and in the additional materials, are based on the idea of ‘making meaning’ as a key to developing early literacy. This is achieved through creating correspondences and relationships between sounds, movements, words, images and narrative. The activities provide opportunities to explore phonetics, song, alliteration, drawing, different styles of text, new vocabulary, story authorship, story grammar, prediction, concepts of number, visual/spatial awareness, identifying emotions and sensations, and fostering empathy through dialogue and discussion.

The activities embedded in the exhibition labelling can be engaged in without any additional materials such as paper and pencils. They can follow any order. These activities are designed to:

- Support the core concept of making meaning from texts, images and environments
- Foster child-led exploration
- Stimulate and provide a model for dialogue about text, images and environments.
Visiting the exhibition

Story Island: an adventure in pictures is a diverse and entertaining exhibition that will support a range of literacy programs. It will be especially useful in the exploration of narrative structures, and the relationship between pictures and text.

Planning your visit

To arrange for your students to visit the exhibition, contact the local host library to find out about opening times, school programs and booking arrangements. Before your visit, with your students, discuss appropriate conduct in a library setting. You may also wish to discuss this with library staff as part of your planning.
Introduction: the history of the Scholastic Dromkeen Children’s Literature Collection

In the late 1950s, Joyce Oldmeadow (1921–2001) and her husband Courtney founded Oldmeadow Booksellers, a bookshop specialising in children’s literature. Joyce Oldmeadow had previously trained as a kindergarten teacher. The couple promoted children’s authors through their advocacy, and through conducting a series of ‘meet-the-author’ sessions. In 1973 the couple purchased the Dromkeen Homestead, a large 19th-century farmhouse near Riddells Creek in Victoria. This initially served as their home and a storage facility for their bookshop, and not long after the couple opened up the Dromkeen homestead to the public as ‘The Dromkeen National Centre for Picture Book Art’. Dromkeen quickly became a haven for illustrators and authors, and Joyce Oldmeadow’s vision of ‘bringing children and books together’ saw the implementation of educational programs and teacher-development workshops. The Dromkeen Collection developed over the years to include a unique archive of original artworks and manuscripts, including approximately 7500 original illustrations, sketches, preliminary artwork, diagrams and mock-ups, revealing the complex creative journey in producing picture-book stories for children. After Courtney Oldmeadow’s death in 1977, children’s book publisher Scholastic Australia took over the responsibility for maintaining the collection, and in 1985 they purchased the homestead as a home for the collection.

In 1989 Joyce Oldmeadow was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her services to children’s literature.

In 2012 the Dromkeen Foundation and Scholastic Australia gifted the entire Dromkeen Collection to State Library Victoria so that it could be shared with the public and to continue the Oldmeadow’s legacy by fostering a love of reading and supporting literacy among young people.
The Pod Themes

Splash

The introductory ‘pod’ incorporates the themes of ‘bath time’ and ‘water’. The idea of the bath creates a safe, warm and familiar environment from which to explore the journey that the exhibition presents. The following concepts may be used as starting points for discussion (reflection), or as the basis for a unit of study (exploration):

- Bath-time rituals
- The purpose of a bath – not just to get clean, but to relax and play and ‘wash away the day’
- Water usage and the environment.

The idea of water is the linking theme into the world of imagination, a call to adventure and an extension into the unknown. Starting points for reflection and exploration might incorporate:

- Water-based activities such as swimming, boating or fishing
- What it feels like to be in the water
- The special physical qualities of water.

Bush Friends

‘Bush Friends’ incorporates the themes of ‘trees’ and ‘country’. The audience is invited into a world of animals and natural environments, and then to look at human activities in a regional or ‘country’ setting. Starting points for reflection and exploration could be:

- What animals do you meet in your daily life? How do you relate to them? Are they wild or tame? What is the difference between wild and tame animals?
- What kind of environment do you inhabit? Is it wild or tame?
- How has our relationship to the Australian landscape changed over time?
- Compare the issues of environment for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. What is similar? What is different?
The Pod Themes

City Dreams

‘City Dreams’ takes the viewer into an urban and suburban experience, exploring the multicultural and exciting, yet sometimes foreboding, world of the city. This morphs into a fantastical world of dreams, dragons and strange creatures.

Starting points might include:

- What is your experience of the city?
- How is the city different to the country?
- How is the city different during daytime and night-time? Which is your favourite?
- What sort of things do you dream about?

Snuggle

The centre pod, ‘Snuggle’, creates a space for shared reading. Snuggle features images of a sharing and cosy bedtime experience. The pod incorporates a space for library staff to fill with their own selection of books from the library, that can be shared together. This space is suitable for students to read to each other and to explore stories together through dialogue. Discussion points might include:

- What makes a good, engaging story reading?
- What do I need to do to be a good listener?
- How can we find things in the story to talk about? What are we curious about?
The Pods: design process

The exhibition was designed by Scott Parker, who is experienced in both exhibition and playground design. Scott worked with the curators from the very beginning of the project to develop a design that would meet the complex exhibition brief. The design needed to be practical – the exhibition was going to travel to libraries all over Victoria over a two-year time frame, so it needed to be durable, easy to pack and transport, and simple for library staff to construct. It also needed to be able to fit into a variety of spaces with different sizes and shapes. Scott was also asked to create an innovative design that would be attractive to young children. The design was intended to create a comfortable space for both children and adults, in order to encourage them to spend time together enjoying the illustrations and engaging in the activities together for an extended period of time.

At the beginning of the process Scott asked the curators to answer three core questions to assist him in creating a successful design concept for the exhibition. The questions are, with the curators’ answers:

1. What do adults and children feel when they approach the exhibit?
   Welcome (this exhibition has something for me)
   Curious (I wonder what’s there)
   Attracted (I want to find out what’s there)

2. What do people feel as they explore the exhibition?
   Comfortable
   Stimulated
   Having fun together
   Exploring emotions (positive and negative)
   Uncovering and discovering the unknown

3. What do people feel when they leave the exhibition?
   Empowered
   Enthusiastic about reading together
   Inspired by stories, and inspired to share stories

Starting points for reflection and exploration:

- Do you think that Scott’s design has been successful? Discuss how and why.
- Explore the idea of a design brief – give one another design briefs to create your own exhibition.
- After viewing the exhibition, can you think of any other considerations that may have affected the exhibition design?
About the curators

Kirsten McKay and Kate Stones spent several years working together as curator and educator, respectively, at Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum in Central Victoria. Kirsten McKay is an experienced curator and mother to three daughters, whilst Kate Stones is a practicing artist, arts educator and education writer. Kirsten and Kate brought their own unique perspectives to the process of curating Story Island: an adventure in pictures, including creating the activities and programming materials, providing a broad background of professional and personal experience. The process was collaborative, with both curators having input into the selection of works and the creation of the activities.
Our reading list features children’s books with engaging stories and beautiful illustrations to suit a variety of ages.

For infants and early readers

- Baby face and Mesmerised by Katey Love (Mesmerised, 2010)
- Hello baby by Mem Fox and Steve Jenkins (Puffin Books, 2009)
- Touch and feel: farm animals by Lucy Cousins (Baby Walker, 2013)
- Time for bed by Mem Fox and Jane Dyer (Scholastic Australia, 1997)
- You and me together by Anna Pignataro (Scholastic Australia, 2015)
- Maisy’s first 123 by Lucy Cousins (Walker Books, 2013)
- Daddy cuddle by Ruthie May, Kate Mayes and Sara Acton (ABC Books, 2015)

For pre-school and early school-age readers

- Miki books by Stephen Mackey (Hachette Children’s Group, 2009)
- I want my hat back and This is not my hat by Jon Klassen (Walker Books, 2011, 2012)
- Room on the broom by Julia Donaldson and Axel Sheffler (McMillan, 2002)
- I’m green and I’m grumpy by Alison Lester (Puffin, 1993)
- Where giants hide by Mij Kelly and Ross Collins (Hodder Children’s Books, 2010)
- The last noo-noo by Jill Murphy (Walker Books, 2011)
- There’s going to be a baby by John Burningham (Candlewick Press, 2010)
- Stupid baby by Stephanie Blake (Gecko Press, 2012).

Further reading adventures

- The Minpins by Roald Dahl, illustrated by Patrick Benson (Puffin, 2013)
- The complete adventures of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie by May Gibbs (Harper Collins, 2007)
- Sophie Scott goes south by Alison Lester (Viking, 2012)
- Peggy by Anna Walker (Scholastic Press, 2012)
- Lucky break and Academy all-stars (two-books-in-one with a cricket theme)
  - by Patrick Loughlin (Random House, 2015)
- Billy Slater series (rugby theme) by Patrick Loughlin (Random House, 2014)
- The legends of Moonie Jarl by Moonie Jarl (Wilf Reeves) and Wandi (Olga Miller)
  - (Indigenous Literacy Foundation, first published 1964)
- The viewer by Gary Crew and Shaun Tan (Hachette Australia, 2011)
- Any classic picture books by Dr Seuss
- Any classic picture books by Beatrix Potter