



The Children Who Loved Books

By Peter Carnavas

Synopsis:

The Children Who Loved Books is the story of siblings Angus and Lucy. Their family doesn't have a television, or a car, and they don't even live in a house. But they have hundreds and hundreds of books. However, one day their pile of books becomes so big that the books burst out of the windows and door of their little trailer. Dad gets rid of the books, but as the family gradually drift apart from each other they soon discover they need books more than they ever imagined. And after a single library book re-enters their lives, they are drawn together and fill their home with books once more.

Author/Illustrator Style and Medium:

Peter has used watercolor paints and black ink for the book illustrations. The family members are depicted in bright, cheerful colors to emphasize their happiness despite not having many material possessions. The books are very colorful, symbolizing the joy they bring to the children. White space is employed to create a sense of emotional distance when the books are taken away, and especially when the family are drifting apart. Color is used to represent hope, particularly when the family reads a book at night: their humble trailer shines with a golden glow in contrast to the darkness and blue of the large homes around it.

Author/Illustrator Motivation:

As a father, teacher and children's author, much of Peter Carnavas' life has revolved around books and children's relationships with books. He is interested in the ways in which books bring people together, the connections we form via books. This may be a parent-child bonding over a picture book at bedtime, or strangers forming a friendship at a book club. Books bring us closer together both physically and emotionally, and it is this idea that Peter wanted to capture in *The Children Who Loved Books*. The moment when the family wake up on top of each other, as close (physically and emotionally) as they can possibly be, is Peter's ultimate representation of this idea.

Before Reading the Book:

- Talk to the children about a favorite book. Ask them to name their own favorite books and explain why they like them. Then ask the children if they have ever enjoyed sharing a book with someone else, such as reading with somebody at home, or reading together with another student.



-
- Introduce the book – read the title and ask students to comment on the cover illustration. What sort of things might happen in the story? What relationship do they think the characters have with each other – friends? Siblings?
 - Pause occasionally at important plot points and ask the children for comments and ideas. For example, where do you think the father is taking the books? When the family pedals in the morning air, where are they going?

After Reading the Book:

- Ask the children what the message of the story might be. What is the author trying to say? Why are books important to this family?
- Ask what they notice about the page that reads: "That night, as darkness fell upon the town, one small home shone brighter than any other."
- What do the children notice about the use of color in the illustrations and the lack of color/white space on some pages. How does this contribute to the story.

Activities

Angus and Lucy's Books

- Angus and Lucy loved reading books, but they also used books for other things: books held up the table, they helped Angus reach the window and they propped up the toaster and fruit bowl.
- Ask the children to draw some other ways in which Angus and Lucy might use books in interesting ways in their home.

Contrasting Color

- Discuss how color is very important in picture books. Show how the the bright mobile home is contrasted against the dark, shadowy neighborhood in the nighttime scene.
- Children can demonstrate this technique themselves. Have them paint a piece of paper in dark colors. Then on another piece of paper draw a small picture of anything (such as a person, car, animal, etc.) and stick the small picture on top of the dark page.
- To further elaborate you might present the color wheel and discuss contrasting colors.

Family Tree of Favorite Books

- Discuss favorite books then make a class list or chart of the children's favorite books.



-
- Have the children ask as many family members as they can (including grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) what their favorite books are. Then have the children draw a family tree using the book titles. This activity is meant to encourage conversations at both home and school about books.

Books versus Other Entertainment

- Point out how Angus and Lucy don't have a television but seem more than happy with books. Discuss the benefits of books over other forms of entertainment such as television or computer games. Then discuss the benefits of the other modes of entertainment.
- This discussion may be set up as a class debate of books vs. television or books vs. computer games.

Library Field Trip

- Students may be familiar with your school library, but perhaps not as familiar with the public library in your town. Organize a guided tour of your local public library to demonstrate to the children all the wonderful things that these institutions have to offer.

Teacher Tips adapted from New Frontier Publishing