



---

## Boy

Written by Phil Cummings

Illustrated by Shane Devries

- Introducing the book aloud
  - First, look at the front cover. Have the students point out what they notice about the cover and list them on the board (e.g. the bare trees, Boy standing in the shadow of the dragon's head, the stick in his hand, etc.).
  - After reading the book aloud, review the list and see if those objects were involved in the story. Discuss foreshadowing.
- Explain what onomatopoeia is, then read the book a second time and have the students point out each time onomatopoeia is used.
- Sign Language
  - Explain how there are many different sign languages – ASL, Auslan in Australia, and New Zealand and Britain have their own – and while speakers from all these countries can understand each other verbally, their signs are very different.
  - Research why sign languages are so different, and brainstorm as a class why the users of sign language would struggle to understand their foreign counterparts.
  - Consider asking an ASL interpreter to visit the classroom to discuss ASL.
- Imagine you were born without a language. As a class, brainstorm all the things you couldn't do if you didn't have a language. Discuss other ways of effective communication.
- Conflict and Communication
  - Look at pages 21-22. Why are all the characters pointing at each other? What does the phrase “pointing the finger” mean?
  - The king and the dragon had been fighting because they did not talk to each other first. Each had jumped to a conclusion about the other. Have you ever jumped to a conclusion and assumed something? What did you learn from that experience?
  - In the story, Boy acted as a mediator for the argument between the king and the dragon. Does your school have peer mediators? What is the role of a mediator?
  - As a class, brainstorm how the king and dragon could have communicated better before fighting each other.
- Art Activities
  - Choose a well-known fairy tale, and draw it without using any words. As a class, see if you can guess which fairy tale each student has drawn. (Point out how images are used inside the speech bubbles instead of text on pages 23-24.)
  - Dragons are mythical creatures, which is why there are so many different interpretations of what they look like. Search different images of dragons and compare them to the one in the book. What are the differences and what effect do the differences have? Draw your own dragon and add whatever features you want (e.g. fire breathing, horns, scales, etc.).



---

**Phil Cummings on writing *Boy***

*Boy was inspired by a strong childhood memory. My cousin was deaf and one day, when I was about five years old, he came with his brother and sister to visit us. I am the youngest of eight children so there was quite a crowd. It was a cold day and five of us were playing noisily in the warm country kitchen. During the mayhem my sister began shouting to try and talk above the noise, she wanted to have her say but nobody would listen. I tried to join her chorus for silence and shouted with her but still no-one would listen.*

*And then, in a moment I have never forgotten, my cousin began moving his hands to sign and everyone fell silent. I was stunned because someone who I thought had no power in the politics of kitchen shouting had, through the power of silent, innocent gesture, more power than any of us. With this memory in the front of my mind, I sat to write *Boy*.*

**Shane Devries on illustrating *Boy***

*It was a great pleasure to illustrate *Boy* by Phil Cummings. His witty and touching story is a clever invitation to slow down and listen. So often the reason for conflict becomes lost amid the din of those who shout and clang the loudest. *Boy* demonstrates to me the power of listening to those quiet voices that ordinarily say little, however when heard, have much effect.*