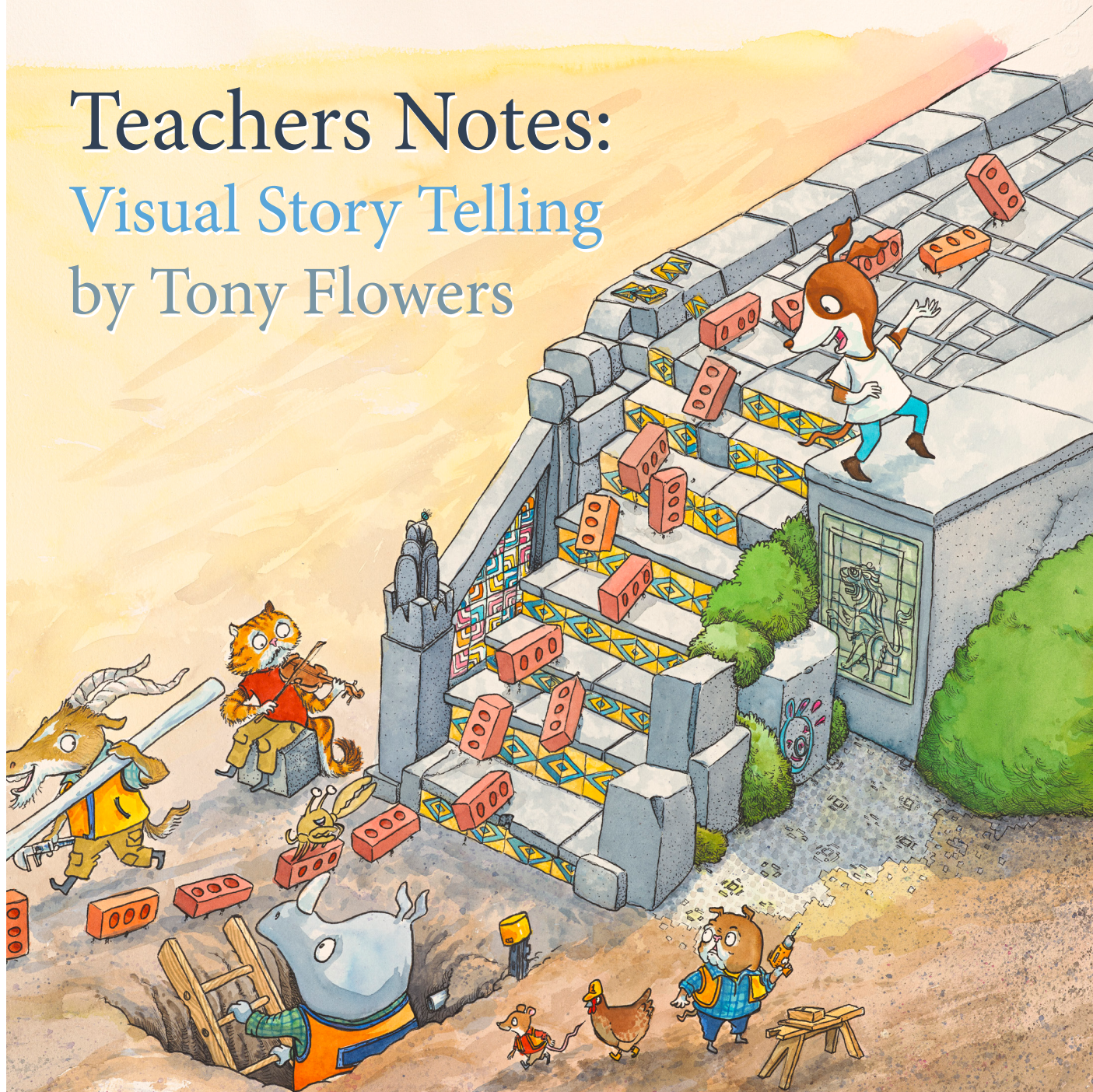


Teachers Notes:

Visual Story Telling

by Tony Flowers



You, Me, Community

Text by Zanni Louise, Illustrations by Tony Flowers, Publisher Walker Books Australia.

18 July 2024

water colour

100 150 200 250 300 350 400 450 500

Picture 0.1 0.2 0.4 0.8

July 2024 Tony Flowers

Image 14 Right edge

YMC

'Cause differences our middle name



Dinant, Belgium - December 2023

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tony Flowers is an internationally acclaimed illustrator, author, and educator based in Hobart, Tasmania. With a Master's degree in Visual Communication, Tony teaches design and creative thinking at the University of Tasmania and is deeply committed to fostering literacy and storytelling through art.

His latest picture book, *You, Me, Community*, explores the power of connection and belonging through layered visual and textual metaphors—inviting readers to reflect on the roles we play in shaping the world around us. Known for his humorous detail and imaginative flair, Tony's work often draws inspiration from travel, culture, and the everyday moments that spark curiosity.



Collégiale Notre-Dame de Dinant, Belgium in illustrated city scape.

Key Learning Areas:

Engaging with and responding to literature

- Form opinions about characters, settings, and events in texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others' opinions and justifying a response.
- Discuss the aesthetic and social value of literary texts using appropriate metalanguage.

Examining literature

- Identify and explain how literary devices—such as metaphor and imagery—create layers of meaning in texts including poetry and picture books.
- Explore how illustrations and layout contribute to meaning and mood in multimodal texts.

Language

- Language for expressing and developing ideas
- Understand how authors use figurative language (e.g. metaphor, simile, personification) to convey abstract ideas.
- Analyse how visual techniques (e.g. composition, framing, vectors) in illustrations support or extend the meaning of the written text.

Literacy

- Creating texts
- Plan and create multimodal texts that combine written language with visual elements to express ideas imaginatively and reflectively.
- Use extended metaphors and symbolic imagery to communicate themes such as community, identity, and belonging.

How *You, Me, Community* Supports the Curriculum

- The music metaphors in the text help students explore abstract concepts like harmony, rhythm, and collaboration—key to understanding metaphor and symbolism.
- The illustrations act as a parallel narrative, encouraging students to interpret visual storytelling and understand how images can function like a musical score—enhancing mood, pacing, and emotional tone.
- The book invites discussion around community roles, fostering empathy and social awareness, which supports the curriculum's goal of developing ethical and informed citizens.





Introduction for Teachers

Have you ever felt alone—like a pebble washed up on the shore?

This book reminds us that we're never really on our own. We're part of something bigger: a community.

Zanni Louise's text reads like a gentle, lyrical poem. When I first read it, I was drawn in by the rhythm and rhyme—it's beautiful and full of heart. But as an illustrator, that posed a challenge: the words don't describe characters or a clear storyline. There's no obvious "main character" or plot.

How to introduce the book to your class:

Normally with a picture book I would suggest doing this activity in reverse. By starting with a showing the class the illustration first then reading it with the text as a second reading. But this is quite a unique book. One where the text and images tell narrative arch in images and tone is set in the text.

First Read-Through (No Pictures!)

Read the text aloud **WITHOUT** showing the illustrations. Ask your students:

- o Who do you think this story is about?
- o What's happening in the story?
- o Can you imagine what the main character might look like?

Before showing the illustrations, ask students to imagine what the characters might look like.

- Draw or describe their ideas.
- Later compare these with the illustrations.
- Discuss how pictures change or deepen our understanding of the story.



Second Read-Through (With Pictures)

Now show them the illustrations as you read the story.

Ask:

- Who are the main characters?
- What is the story about?
- Where is the story set?

This helps students explore how words and pictures work together to tell a story and how illustrations can add meaning, emotion, and imagination.



Exploring Picture Book Features

In *Raising Readers* (UQP, 2025), Megan Daley highlights the importance of looking at the physical features of a picture book as a tool for sparking classroom discussions. Megan outlines (p65) the key elements that teachers can explore with students, including:

- Front and back covers, Spine, Endpapers, Other physical features (i.e. dust jackets, embossing, flaps...etc).

These features offer rich opportunities for visual literacy, prediction, and deeper engagement with storytelling—even before reading a single word!





Endpapers:

As with all of my picture books, in *You, Me, Community* I've carefully created endpapers to set the tone and visual language of the story. The front and back endpapers are different, offering students a chance to compare and reflect.

Classroom Discussion Prompts:

- What do you expect the book will be like, based on the endpapers?
- What do the endpapers tell you about the story or themes?
- What differences do you notice between the front and back endpapers? Why might they be different?

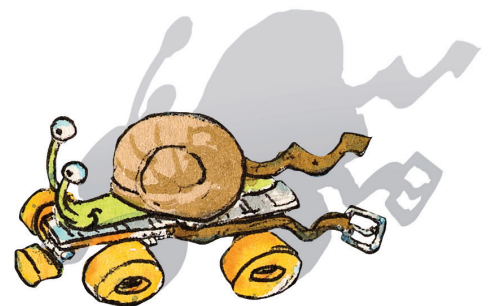
Activity: Ask your students to draw themselves as a snail heading off to their favourite activity (e.g. playing soccer, reading, baking, dancing). Encourage them to include visual prompts in their drawing—such as props, clothing, or background details—that help show what their snail is doing.

Discussion Questions:

- What clues did you include to show your snail's activity?
- How can we tell what each snail is doing just by looking at the picture?

Learning Focus:

This activity introduces students to the concepts of denotation (what we literally see) and connotation (the ideas or feelings those visuals suggest). These are key principles in Visual Literacy, helping students understand how signs, symbols, and icons are used to communicate meaning in images.



“For artists and designers, endpapers can be a gloriously blank canvas, setting the mood for the story inside with images full of wit, surprise, and deep emotion”

- The Eric Carle museum of picture book art (2025) Explore the Unsung Creativity of Endpapers. Exhibition: Open + Shut: Celebrating the Art of Endpapers

My Illustrator's Approach:

When I read the text, I started thinking of it like a musical score—something that sets a mood and rhythm, rather than a strict storyline. That gave me the freedom to invent a whole world that matched the feeling of the poem. I also like to challenge myself with each new book. For this one, I set two big goals:

1. Anthropomorphic Animals

I've always loved Richard Scarry's books, so I wanted to create a fun world full of animal characters doing human things.

2. Perspective Drawing

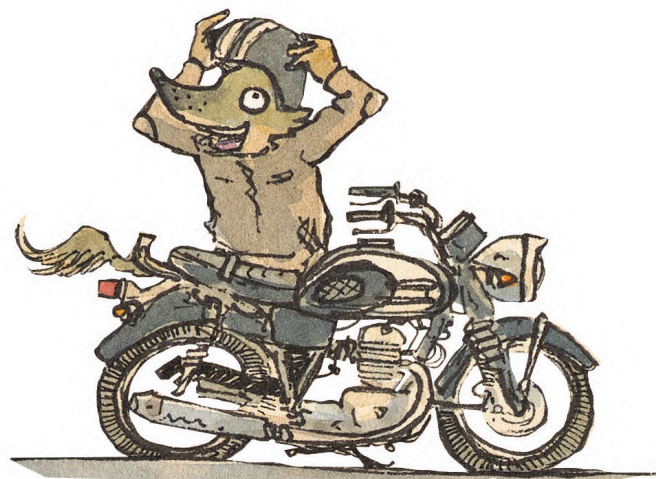
I usually fudge perspective a bit—but this time, I wanted to push myself. I used 2-point and 3-point perspective to create dynamic buildings, cliff faces, and interesting viewpoints.

I've also woven elements from my travels into the illustrations to help make the world feel rich and authentic. You'll notice isometric drawings, sweeping landscapes, and cloud-filled skies—techniques I've developed across previous projects.

Like many illustrators, I enjoy including aspects of my real life in my work. Years ago, a publisher I'd never worked with advised me not to depict high-risk activities in my work—specifically referencing my motorcycle riding. Ever since, I've made a point of including my motorcycle in every picture book I illustrate. It's become a quiet signature and a personal nod to the freedom and adventure that inspire my storytelling.



Working on sketch for book illustration.



close up from an illustration.



My 2009 t100 Bonneville as featured in my book illustrations.

Classroom Activities

1. Draw yourself as a story.

In *You, Me, Community*, all the characters are anthropomorphic animals—animals that act like humans. This creative approach adds humor and deeper meaning to the story. For example, an elephant might suggest strong memory, while a cheetah could represent speed.

This activity builds on the endpaper snail exercise, encouraging students to explore identity, personality, and storytelling through character design.

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Create Your Animal Character

- Ask students to draw themselves as an animal character.
- They should choose an animal that reflects part of their personality or a favorite activity.
- Encourage them to think about:
 - What the character is wearing
 - What the character is doing (e.g. playing, reading, exploring)

Step 2: Share and Describe

- Students can either:
 - Write a short character description
 - Or present their drawing to the class and explain why they chose that animal and activity

Step 3: Write a Short Story

- Now that their character is developed, students write a short story featuring their animal-self.
- They can use their own name or create a new one for their character.

Story Prompts (Choose One)

Alternative Reality Adventure

- The character slips into a magical or fantastical world.
- They remain themselves—how do they react to this new environment?

SUPERPOWER AT SCHOOL

- The character discovers an unexpected superpower while at school.
- The story explores how they respond and what they do with their new ability.





This activity fosters visual literacy, creative writing, and self-reflection. It's an engaging way to blend art and English, while helping students explore themes of identity, imagination, and narrative structure.

Choosing a Narrative Style

Encourage students to select a storytelling style that suits their personal preferences. There's no one "right" way to tell a story—just the way that feels most natural and expressive to them.

1. Text-Based

- Use the character drawing as a prompt to write a traditional short story.
- Focus on descriptive language, character development, and plot.

2. Blended

- Begin with sketches and notes to explore the story idea visually.
- Then write a short story based on those visual explorations.

3. Visual (Storyboard or Comic Style)

- Use the character drawing to create a storyboard, comic, or graphic novel layout.
- Illustrate the key moments of the story.
- Add dialogue and captions to support the narrative.

This flexible approach allows students to express themselves in the format that best suits their strengths—whether they're budding writers, visual storytellers, or somewhere in between.

Glossary

- **Anthropomorphic** – Animals that act like humans—wearing clothes, driving cars, doing jobs.
- **Composition** – How things are arranged in a picture—like where characters and buildings are placed.
- **Connotation** – The feeling or idea a picture gives you—like a red apple might mean love or danger.
- **Denotation** – What you can see in a picture—like a red apple, a dog, or a tree. It's the literal meaning.
- **Icons** – Small, clear images that represent objects or actions—like a trash bin icon on a computer.
- **Illustration** – A picture that helps tell a story or explain something.
- **Isometric Drawing** – A type of drawing where everything is shown from a bird's-eye view, with no vanishing points.
- **Narrative** – The story or message being told—sometimes through pictures, not just words.
- **Perspective** (2-point / 3-point) – A way of drawing that makes things look 3D—like buildings getting smaller in the distance.
- **Signs** – Simple pictures or marks that give information—like arrows or stop signs.
- **Symbols** – Pictures that stand for something bigger—like a heart for love or a dove for peace.
- **Visual Literacy** – Understanding how pictures tell stories or share ideas—just like reading and writing words.
- **Visual Techniques** – Special ways illustrators use colour, shape, and layout to create mood or meaning.

For more behind the scenes see;
<https://diviandfrey.com/>
or Instagram: [tony_flowersink99](#)

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