

Teachers' Notes

Compiled by Amy Hong (Just Right Words)

Suitable for Foundation – Year 6

Christmas Under the Overpass

Written by Katie Flannigan

Illustrated by Katrina Fisher

Published by Little Pink Dog Books

October 2023

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About Christmas Under the Overpass

Christmas Under the Overpass is a heartwarming tale that addresses the underlying truth of what makes us human – our connections with others. This story brings to light some of the challenges and hardships encountered by people who are, or have been, unhoused, as compassion and warmth are shared between strangers when a child decides to bring some joy to a man who appears to have lost everything. This book creates multiple opportunities to discuss social issues such as housing, treating people with dignity, and other problems faced by people from all walks of life.

About the Author: Katie Flannigan

Katie is an emerging author/illustrator. Drawing on her background as a health professional, her stories have a human and social justice focus. Her illustrations have been described as quirky and fun, and she uses mixed media, handmade figurines and found objects to create her work. Katie has completed a Faber Academy course with Allen & Unwin for Children's Books and was awarded a Maurice Saxby Mentorship in 2016. Katie is available for school visits across all primary years. To contact Katie, visit www.katieflannigan.com.au

About the Illustrator: Katrina Fisher

Katrina is based on the beautiful Bellarine Peninsula, in Victoria. From her home studio, she enjoys illustrating in traditional mediums and aims to convey a sense of emotion, playfulness, and tenderness in her illustrations. She enjoys creating images of beauty and finds it wonderfully satisfying when her work connects with people.

Katrina has been teaching art to primary aged children since 2018 and thoroughly enjoys illustrating for children. She studied Fine Art at Federation University, Victoria and Visual Communication Design at Deakin University. To find out more about Katrina and her work, visit www.katrinafisherillustration.com

Themes

- People without homes
- Refugees
- Dignity
- Community
- Connection
- Christmas
- Sharing
- Gifts
- Lanterns
- Compassion

An important note about themes contained in the book:

- The story does not talk about 'homelessness'. This is a sensitive topic in which students in your class may be, or may have been, impacted by. The more recent and widely accepted terminology, which is used in these teaching notes (and may be a good topic for discussion in your class), includes:
 - 'unhoused' (instead of 'homeless')
 - 'people who are unhoused' (instead of 'homeless people')
 - 'people without homes' (instead of 'homelessness')
- The story addresses 'refugees', which is another sensitive topic and may directly impact people in your class and/or their families. Be mindful of individual circumstances and potential stereotypes when discussing this with your class.
- The story is set at Christmas time; however, not all students and their families celebrate Christmas. Although this story presents Christmas as a time for lanterns and gift-giving, activities in these notes have been extended to include multiple holidays that are based around giving and can be easily adapted to the needs of and holidays celebrated by your class. It is important to focus on the spirit of building community and connection rather than the holidays themselves.

For further information about being unhoused, statistics and services, suggested websites are (note that not all have adopted the new terminology):

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare:
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/homelessness-and-homelessness-services>

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics:
<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/latest-release>
- Salvation Army: <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/homelessness-week/homelessness-statistics/#:~:text=What%20is%20Australia's%20homeless%20population,cent%20since%20the%202016%20Census.>
- Blanchet House (on terminology): <https://blanchethouse.org/homeless-houseless-unhoused-glossary-about-homelessness/#:~:text=In%20recent%20years%20advocates%20and,experiencing%20homelessness%20or%20housing%20insecurity.>

For more information about refugees in Australia, see:

- Australian Red Cross – Refugee and asylum seeker facts:
<https://www.redcross.org.au/act/help-refugees/refugee-facts/#:~:text=Australia%20reported%20that%20during%20the,more%20refugees%20than%20other%20countries%3F&text=No.,-In%202021%2C%20most>
- Refugee Council of Australia: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/statistics/>
- Parliament of Australia:
https://www.aph.gov.au/about_parliament/parliamentary_departments/parliamentary_library/pubs/rp/rp1415/asylumfacts

All links were live as of 7 September 2023.

Links to the Australian Curriculum

English

- Language (F-6)
- Literature (F-6)
- Literacy (F-6)

Humanities and Social Sciences

- History (F, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)
- Geography (F, 1, 2, 6)
- Civics and Citizenship (3, 4, 5)
- Skills (F-6)

The Arts

- Dance (F-6)
- Drama (F-6)
- Music (F-6)
- Visual Arts (F-6)
- Media Arts (F-6)

Health and Physical Education

- Personal, Social and Community Health (F-6)
- Movement and Physical Activity (F-6)

General Capabilities

NB. These are incorporated throughout the curriculum areas across F – 6.

- Critical and creative thinking
- Ethical understanding
- Intercultural understanding
- Literacy
- Personal and social capability

Cross-curriculum Priorities

NB. These are incorporated throughout the curriculum areas across F – 6.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures (Country/Place)
- Sustainability (Systems and Designs)

In-class Activities

Discussion Questions and Related Activities

Before Reading

Explore the title

Show students the book title.

- What do you think this book is about based on the title? What is an overpass?

Explore the cover and blurb

Look at the illustrations on the front and back cover.

- List everything you see on the front and back cover.
- Where and when do you think the story is set?
- Who might the story be about?
- What might the themes include?
- What clues did you use to make those predictions?

Read the blurb on the back cover

- What additional information was included in the blurb to help you add to or revise your predictions about what the story might be about?
- Have you ever seen a person living in a makeshift home? Where?
- The blurb finishes with: 'Melody has a choice to make about what, if anything, she will do about it.' What do you think she will do and why?

Predicting text from illustrations

Cover the text and flick through the book, looking only at the illustrations.

- Write what is happening in the story.
- Tell the story orally, based on the illustrations.
- Create and perform a dialogue between the characters.
- Perform a story improvisation based on the pictures.
- In groups, have each student tell the story of one page, continuing through until the story is told. Encourage students to build on the previous part of the story.

During and After Reading

Initial reading

The initial reading of *Christmas Under the Overpass* would be best completed in one go.

Questions to ask after reading:

- What does Mum call Mo when they see him for the first time under the overpass?
- Why do you think Mo doesn't initially talk to Melody?
- What circumstances might have led to Mo living in a makeshift dwelling under the overpass?
- Why do you think Melody chose to talk to Mo and bring him presents when he was a stranger to her?
- What message is the book sending about people who are unhoused?
- How do you think Mo felt after Melody and Mum brought him some Christmas gifts?
- Do you think it's a good idea to always talk to people sleeping on the streets? Why or why not? (Safety focus – notice that Mum was with Melody and she wasn't alone).

Connecting with other texts

- Have you read any other stories that address the issue of being unhoused? If so, what are they? How did they address the issue? How was that story similar and how was it different?
- What other stories have you read that address a social inequality issue? What issue were they addressing? What similarities and differences did you notice between the texts?

Imagine, brainstorm and research

- Imagine that you are in Mo's shoes. How would you be feeling about your situation? About yourself? What challenges might you face trying to improve your situation?
- Brainstorm some of the challenges faced by people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, unhoused.
- How many people in Australia do you think are experiencing being unhoused right now? How many are at risk of becoming unhoused? Research the statistics

and discuss your findings. What interesting facts did you discover during your research?

Take action

- Ask students what they could do to raise awareness, fundraise or help out in some way locally for being unhoused? Suggestions:
 - Host a 'free dress' or 'activist day' with a gold coin donation to raise funds for a local charity or organisation supporting those experiencing being unhoused. Students may also wear an old t-shirt that they write messages on to raise awareness about their chosen issue or create posters to hang around the school and speak to different classes about the issue and why they are raising funds.
 - Students can hold a canteen day or a stall to sell items as a way to raise funds for an organisation.

English

The activities in this section are divided into activity types. They cover outcomes across *Language, Literature* and *Literacy* and can be scaled to meet the needs of different year levels. There are also English links throughout other curriculum areas.

Responding to the Text

Discussion questions

Reread *Christmas Under the Overpass* and ask students to discuss how the text made them feel, acknowledging differing reactions. Accept all responses (even negative ones) and encourage students to justify their opinions and deeply explore their ideas using relevant metalanguage. Use some of the prompts:

- Christmas Under the Overpass* made me feel ... because ...
- I would like to know more about ...
- I liked/didn't like the part of the story when ...
- The story made me think about ... [another story/person/place/experience/etc.]
- The character ... had the greatest impact on me because ...
- If I were in Melody's shoes, I would/wouldn't have ... because ...
- If I were Mo, I would be feeling ... when ...
- If I were unhoused, I would want people to ... because ...
- The story may have been different if Mo had been the one to talk to Melody first because ... [This could lead into HPE units *Being Human* and *People Without Houses*]

Responding to the text

Respond to the text either as a whole or to one element of it. Students should discuss or write a brief analysis to explain their reasoning for their responses upon completion.

Suggestions:

- Draw your favourite part of the story.
- Retell the story through a storyboard, comic strip or improvisational drama.
- Write a book review, article (such as for a school paper) or letter (e.g. to the school board) to make a case for (or against) reading the book.

- Write a letter to the author or illustrator to discuss how the book made you feel, what it made you think about, or how it challenged preexisting ideas you had about unhoused people.
- Write a list of questions you would like to ask the illustrator and/or author if they were to visit your school.
- Design a poster or mural to display that encourages people to practice non-judgement, kindness and empathy for those who are experiencing adverse circumstances.

Examining the Text

Examining the narrative elements of the text

- Identify the setting, characters, and plot.
- Create a story map or story mountain that maps out the problem and resolution in the story.
- Identify and analyse the themes in the story. Choose one theme and do a case study that explores how that theme is addressed across two or more texts.
- Read another text that addresses the issue of being unhoused. Compare and contrast the two texts.
- Classify the type of text this is and the target audience.
- What point was the author trying to make? How successful were they? How relevant are the themes addressed in the book today?
- Have students retell the story through an improvisational skit, then 'interview' the characters. Have students ask them questions about their situations, thoughts and feelings about each other, themselves, etc.

Creating Texts

Retelling the story

Retell the story using key characters, setting and events. Suggestions:

- Retell the story using a storyboard or a 'still-life' storyboard where students pose to show different scenarios and the teacher photographs it, and the images are used to create a digital storyboard for the class.

- Retell the story orally or through an improvised drama.
- Write a retelling of the story through a play format and retell it through Reader's Theatre.
- Retell the story from another character's perspective.
- Retell the story as a class through writing or through a mural.
- Retell the story through writing but change one key detail in the story (such as a character, an event, the ending, etc.).

Writing about characters

- Create character profiles for each of the characters, and then choose one character to write an imaginative backstory for.
- Write a diary entry for a day in the life of one or more characters.
- Choose a character from the story and write a dialogue between them and a character you create (or yourself), such as an interview. Experiment with purpose, word choice, narrative structure, narrative devices or voice.

Links to Other Units

Feeding the Ducks (The Arts)

- Research and create an informative text (oral, written or visual) about the dangers of feeding bread to ducks and provide appropriate alternatives.

Making an Impact (HASS)

Addressing the issue of being unhoused:

- Create a PowerPoint, podcast or video documentary that explores one issue faced by those that are unhoused and provide suggestions for ways to help.
- Create a text from the perspective of an unhoused person, or a person who meets an unhoused person.

Thinking about other social injustice and inequality issues:

- Write and deliver a speech or multimodal presentation on a social or humanitarian issue that you are passionate about. How is it relevant to your local

community? Why is it important to you? How can people get involved? Why should they listen to what you have to say?

- Create an informative text about a social issue affecting people in your community.
- Write an original narrative inspired by *Christmas Under the Overpass* in which your character/s come into contact with another person facing a humanitarian/social issue in the community.

Lanterns (The Arts)

- Create an informative text outlining the history and development of lanterns.
- Create and illustrate an original story using a lantern as your inspiration.

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year (HASS)

- Create and illustrate an original text inspired by *Christmas Under the Overpass* that captures the spirit of community and giving, using a holiday (students' choice) as the setting.

Humanities and Social Sciences

The activities in this section are sorted by theme and have the relevant HASS curriculum areas flagged in the headings. The activities can span across multiple year levels and can be scaled to suit different ages and abilities. The Skills (Questioning and researching; Interpreting, analysing and evaluating; Concluding and decision-making; and Communicating) are integrated throughout the different activities.

My Family (History)

In the story, Melody lives with her mum and dog, Cooper.

- Create a 'typical' family structure in a family tree, and use this as a discussion to talk about non-traditional families and modern family structures (blended families, same-sex parents, etc.) in an age- and grade-appropriate way.
- Complete a family profile for Melody. In the profile, create a background for each character (English link).
- Create a family tree or home portfolio that showcases your family tree or the relationships between the people who share your home. Suggestions:
 - Trace your family tree as far back as possible.
 - For a home portfolio, consider looking at the cultural, linguistic, religious and other identity-related aspects that make your family unique. What holidays and celebrations do you observe? Are these celebrated in the wider community (or which communities are they celebrated in)?
 - What patterns of migration can you find in your family history, if any? Do you know what their motivations were for moving to Australia?
 - Choose one or more family members to interview/complete a project on. Where and when were they born? How were they raised? What was life like for them? What language/s and/or culture/s were they exposed to growing up? How is life different now from the time and place they grew up in? How have family roles changed in their lifetime?
 - Using the information you learned from your interview, create a character and have them 'live' in the time period of the person

you interviewed. Explore 'a day in their life' through improvisational drama, art, narrative, diary entry, a letter, etc.

- Choose an element from your home portfolio/family tree as the basis for a project. Suggestions:
 - Present an information report about a language, culture, celebration or place that is important to your family history or someone you live with using any medium (English link).
 - Write an original story using an element of your family history as the basis for your story (English link).
 - Create an original artwork, dance or drama about that showcases an element of your family history that you find interesting (The Arts link).
 - Create an original piece of music that serves as a 'theme song' to your family story (Music link).

It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year (History)

Christmas Under the Overpass takes place at Christmas time. For many people, the end of the year marks Christmas, which is a time for family, food and festivities. But not all Australians celebrate Christmas. In the later part of the year (October to February), holidays such as Diwali, Hanukkah, Chinese New Year, Day of the Dead, and many more are celebrated by different cultures all around the world. Suggestions:

- Create a 'world holiday calendar' that lists the different major holidays for different groups of people across the year.
- Choose one holiday to investigate and present to the class. Write an information sheet about the origins of that holiday, the dates, who celebrates it and where, and how to celebrate it. Add it to a class holiday book (English link).
- Get involved as a class with celebrating different holidays throughout the year (in a respectful way), making related crafts, playing related games, making foods, decorating the classroom, and using the experience as a way to build community, inspire written and creative art pieces, then reflect on the experiences.

Symbols and Identity (History)

Like Mo, everyone has a unique story to tell, and he shares photographs with Melody and her mum of his veterinary days.

- Host a 'Where did I come from?' day in the class, where students are invited to share something about their family history with the class. This may be in the form of music, dance, food, art, etc. [Note: This is a sensitive topic, so this should be done in the spirit of sharing and joy, rather than judgement. If appropriate, you may invite students' parents to share something with the class as well].
- Explore the concept of identity through the lenses of country, nationality, family history, language, culture, religion, and other appropriate lenses. How do you see yourself in the wider context of the environment around you, and how do these different spheres of your life help shape who you are and how you see yourself? Present your findings through a written/verbal format and an expressive format (music/art/dance/drama). How does diversity impact on what it means to be an Australian?
- Using the Australian flag and one or more other flags of your choice (such as a flag relevant to your family history) and compare/contrast the symbolism and colours in those flags. Learn about how and when the flags are flown and the different positions they sit in for different events.
- Thinking about the diversity of Australians, choose a significant emblem, symbol or event that are important to Australia's identity and diversity. Consider:
 - The history of that symbol, emblem or event (e.g. Australia Day, Anzac Day, National Sorry Day, Easter, Christmas, Eid, Diwali) and how it is celebrated, commemorated or recognised in Australia.
 - How is that symbol/emblem/event significant to all or some Australians?
 - How does it relate to identity? To diversity?
 - How do you think that will change in the future? Make predictions based on past and current trends and justify your predictions.

Refugees and Migrants (History & Geography)

Mo tells Melody that he comes from 'far away' and that he had to leave because of war.

- Investigate the migration of refugees to Australia in the past. Suggestions:
 - What conflicts were they escaping?
 - What nationalities/ethnicities came from which countries?
 - What patterns of migration can you establish (based on religion, ethnicity, culture, language, year, areas of settlement, etc.)
 - Create a timeline that shows refugee migration patterns to Australia over a set period and discuss your findings using any format (presentation, video, written, podcast, etc.)
 - Create a percussion beat that explores the waves of migration to Australia over a set time period.
 - Investigate which policies have helped or hindered refugees in coming to Australia. Which policies have positive and/or negative impacts on refugees in everyday life?
 - What have refugees brought to Australia? (skills, foods, language, etc.)
 - What motivates refugees to seek asylum in Australia? How does this differ to the motivation of migrants who are not fleeing their home?
- Explore migration to Australia from different regions around the world.

Suggestions:

 - What inspired different people to migrate to Australia?
 - How have migrants contributed to Australia's development? (e.g. overall development, cultural, religious, culinary, architecture, laws, etc.)
 - Choose a well-known migrant and/or refugee to Australia who brought value to Australia in some way and complete a project using any medium to showcase their achievements and describe their contributions.
- Do a case study on Australia's engagement and relationship with Asia or one region of Asia. You can look at the influence of culture, language, cuisine, religion, political or philosophical ideas, trade, inventions, medicine, etc. Make predictions about the future engagement between Australia and that region, and make suggestions about positive ways to improve relations between the two countries.

- Pose the question: ‘How does Australia’s interconnection with another country change people and places?’ Make a hypothesis and investigate how the exchange of people, goods, language and culture impact people and places. What did you discover? Refine your hypothesis and present your findings in a case study, podcast, interview format, documentary, or other medium.

My Local Community (History & Geography)

Melody and Mum are involved in their local community by going to a carols night and getting to know Mo. Thinking about your own local community:

- What significant events, symbols, celebrations, commemorations are there in your community? Choose one to research and present an informative or create piece on this (English link).
- Consider the ways in which you get involved within your local community. Discuss the different community events you have been involved with (if any)?
 - Plan an event in your local community that captures the spirit of your local community. What activities would you organise? Where would you host it? Who would you invite? Create a flyer, poster, radio or film advertisement for your event and present your ideas to the class.
 - Host a ‘community day’ where students are invited to set up a stall, workshop or activity where they share something important with them to the class. (Perhaps have different timeslots where multiple students have different activities going, such as sharing a skill, a story, information, or something they are passionate about with others).
- Choose a person, place or building that is important to your community. What makes it/them important? How long have they been a part of the community? What do they represent? Find an image of that person, place or building and see what you can uncover about them through digital sources or an archive.
- War impacts not just refugees and migrants, but also people in Australia. Complete a project that looks at how war has impacted your community at a certain time in history. This could involve investigating a local war memorial, attending an Anzac or Remembrance Day service (depending on the time of

year), researching the records of a person's war service from the community, or even at the impact of migrants into the area who migrated due to war, etc.

- What are the features and landmarks in your local area? Locate these features on a map. Explore the significance of these features and landmarks to the community.
 - Create a large 3D or digital scaled model of your community that contains these features from a bird's eye view (links to Mathematics).
- Explore the importance of place to First Nations Australians in your local community. What local stories, landmarks and community events exist in your local area? If possible, invite a local elder to talk to the students about the significance of place and belonging to students.
- Thinking about the people in your local community, how are they connected to other countries throughout the world? Interview people that you know and create a map that links people and places around the world.
- Create a 'class connections' wall in the classroom.
 - Interview people in the classroom and find out how they are connected to other countries (through family, friends, or places they were born or have visited).
 - Using pins and string (e.g. coloured wool), put a large pin/nail into the mural to represent where you are on the map, and from this place, each student connects their string from that starting point out onto different parts of the world to which they are connected. (This could also be done digitally on a smartboard).
 - Following one of the strings, ask students to:
 - Create an original story based on one of the locations on the map (English link).
 - Identify the connections between Australia and that country (e.g. history of migration, trade, conflicts/partnerships, etc.), make predictions about Australia's future connections with that country, and present your findings (English link).

- Using the concept of 'looking through the window' (such as Melody looking at Mo through the window to see how someone else lives), highlight what life might look like for a person living in that area of the world and compare/contrast it to your own life. Use any medium or combination of mediums to present and explore this (links to Through the Window Unit – The Arts).

Making an Impact (Civics and Citizenship)

Melody was inspired to make an impact on Mo when she saw him sleeping under the overpass. Thinking about the needs of your community:

- Record all questions that students have around the issue of being unhoused. Research the issues surrounding being unhoused and being at risk of being unhoused in your community. How many people are affected? What are the main drivers that cause people to experience being unhoused in your community? What government and/or community organisations exist that support people who are unhoused or are at risk of becoming unhoused? Does this adequately support people or not? Why or why not? What more could be done? Make a proposal to improve the existing services individually or in groups and write a letter to the local council, government representative, or organisation to make your suggestions (English link).
- Investigate the main humanitarian/social issues your community is facing including the supports available to help people who are experiencing these issues. Invite a representative from that organisation to come and talk to your class about the work they do. Ask students to prepare questions in advance.
- Choose a local charity, organisation or another need in your community to do a class humanitarian project for with the theme of 'dignity', 'compassion', 'connection' or a similar theme. Investigate the charity/organisation/need, create a proposal for how you can make a difference in your community (such as raising awareness, fundraising, putting together care packages, etc.), and then put that plan into action. Create a class logbook, journal, digital diary etc. to record the process, and then reflect on it at the end. Was it effective/what was the impact? How did it make you feel? What did you learn from the experience?

How did it change your perceptions on the issues? What would you do differently next time?

- Investigate why people get involved with community projects, humanitarian organisations and volunteer work. Explore the different motivations and what inspires people. Suggestions:
 - Research an individual who has been a pioneer or key figure for a humanitarian cause. What inspires them? How are they able to make such an impact? What challenges do they face? If possible, create a collage of images of that person or images related to the work they do to make an image of their face, of them, or something that represents the work they do (The Arts link).
 - Thinking of your own motivations, explore what social or humanitarian (or other) issues interest you. What is it about that issue that makes you feel passionate about it? If you had unlimited time and resources, what would you do to help that cause, if anything? Or, why not?
 - Create a story and artistic piece in any medium inspired by the idea of motivation and/or inspiration of the human spirit and restoring dignity and humanity in the world (English and The Arts links).
 - How do you think people work together to achieve a goal? Discuss and roleplay issues that people may face when wanting to achieve a certain goal but having very different ideas of how to go about it. Find strategies that work as a class that allow people to behave respectfully but allow people to cooperate and achieve an outcome (HPE link).
- Explore how students and young people can get involved in different community projects. If possible, spend a day or part of a day as a class getting involved with a community project and write about their experiences.

The Impact of Laws and Rules on Society (Civics and Citizenship)

All societies need rules and laws in order to function efficiently.

- Investigate the differences between 'rules' and 'laws', and how these impact people. In particular:

- How do these rules and/or laws negatively affect people who are, or who at risk of, being unhoused?
- Do these laws and/or rules contribute to people being unhoused and/or prevent people from finding adequate housing?
- Investigate which governing bodies are responsible for making laws and policies surrounding social and humanitarian issues, such as being unhoused.

Suggestions:

- What laws currently exist that make it difficult for people experiencing being unhoused to find accommodation or access services? Investigate what the function of those laws are and their effectiveness.
- What changes to laws or proposals could you make that would improve the situations and outcomes for people who are unhoused? Write a letter to a member of parliament or local council member addressing your concerns and propose any ideas or suggestions you have (English link).

The Arts

The activities in this section are based around themes that are scalable to different year levels and include a variety of dance, drama, music, media arts and visual arts options.

Through the Window

Melody and her dog Cooper can see the overpass under which Mo has made a makeshift house. Using the concept of looking ‘through the window’, explore the issues of being unhoused or of different holidays through artistic mediums:

- Create and display an artwork using any medium that depicts looking through a frame to explore the disparity between being housed and unhoused.
- Create and perform a dance or drama that explores the differences in experience between a person who is unhoused and a person who is housed through a window/frame.
- Create and perform a musical piece using any medium that explores the disparities in feeling between those who are housed and those who are unhoused.
- Using the concept of ‘looking through the window’, choose a holiday that you celebrate or one you are interested in, and create an artwork that ‘looks in through a window’ to show how that holiday is celebrated in the home or in another important place (link to It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year unit – The Arts).

Carols

- Write an original carol to a new or existing tune for Christmas or another holiday of your choice. Perform and/or record the carol. (Optional: present one or more songs at assembly or at a Carol’s night).
- Create a class carol book that includes handwritten or typed carols on decorated pages complete with illustrations.
- Create an artistic piece (dance, drama, visual art or media art) that captures the essence of your carol (whether it be a feeling, a message, a theme, etc.).

Cloud Gazing

Melody and Mum make pictures from the clouds on their ride to and from school. Go outside and lay down in the grass and spend some time cloud gazing.

- Take a sketchbook and draw what you see, including making notes about the shapes, colours, feelings it evokes, and any other things you notice about it. Write a short reflection on your experience.
- Create an artistic piece that captures either one or more of the clouds that you saw or captures the essence of your experience of feeling during cloud gazing. It could be a dance, drama, musical piece, media art or visual art using any medium.

Lanterns

Note that in the book, the lanterns were Christmas themed. Use an appropriate theme for your class (whether a humanitarian theme, seasonal theme, or a holiday that is important to the individual student) to base your lantern designs on:

- Design and create (or decorate) a lantern using age-appropriate materials.
- Display the lanterns around the room, OR light the lanterns (either with a candle or a battery-operated candle) and turn the lights off in the classroom to experience living by candlelight.
- Discuss the challenges a person might face with a lantern or torch at night while unhoused. Create an artistic piece that depicts the story of such an experience; write a caption, narrative or factual piece to add to your artwork.
- Brainstorm ideas for an event involving your lanterns (such as a lantern walk, where students are able to walk through a course with their lanterns at dusk.)
- Explore how lanterns play an important role in different celebrations for different people (e.g. Christmas, Diwali, etc.) and then host a 'lantern festival' day in the class where students can sit with their lanterns and share stories and anecdotes. (See English for related activity).

The Giving Tree

Create a class 'giving tree' (it may or may not be Christmas themed). You may use a real tree, an old Christmas tree, create a tree from sticks found in the school, etc.

- Create decorations based on the book's themes to hang on the tree (e.g. lanterns).
- Create and hang suggestion cards on the tree that explores ways to help people who are unhoused or kindness cards with messages of hope (English link).

- Liaise with a local organisation that supports people who are unhoused and create care packages to donate. What should be included in the packages? Include messages and pictures of hope and kindness from students. After the packages have been donated, students can write about the experiences (links to Making an Impact unit – HASS and English).

Feeding the Ducks

In the story, Mum and Melody through crusts to the ducks.

- Feeding bread to waterbirds is something many people still do, but is this a good idea? Research the food that waterbirds eat naturally. Discuss the issues of feeding bread to waterbirds. Invite students to create a poster or artwork in another medium about safe wildlife feeding. Display the posters around the school (see English for related activity).

Health and Physical Education

The activities in this section are scalable across year levels and are based around themes from both *Personal, Social and Community Health* and *Movement and Physical Activity*.

Getting Around Town

In the story, Mum and Melody travel to and from school using their bicycles.

- Discuss the benefits and limitations of using bicycles as their main mode of transportation, including potential dangers.
 - Create posters promoting safety and display them.
 - Perform scenarios in small groups involving unsafe and safe practices.
- Discuss bicycle safety. Host a bicycle safety day and invite students to bring their bicycles to school. Set up a course on the oval with cones, signage and/or lights and have students ride the course.
- Design a bicycle to meet certain requirements (e.g. considering its limitations, weather, safety, sustainability, on/off road, additional features, etc.).
 - Build a prototype/model of the bike.
 - Create an advertisement of the bike using any medium and present it.
 - Create a text around the bicycle and its design (such as a narrative, a user manual or other informative text or a persuasive text – English link).
 - Create an artistic piece that demonstrates why the bike is better than an ordinary bike using any medium (The Arts link).
- Host a ‘silly transport day’ in which students suggest unusual ways to get around, such as skipping or walking like a crab everywhere for the day.

Smart Cities

Melody and Mum have to ride under the overpass every day. Consider your own city and the way you get to school, go to the shops, etc. Look at a plan/map of your local city and consider how safe it is for bicycle riders and pedestrians and any existing hazards/issues.

- Write letters to the council asking for improved safety for bicycle riders and/or pedestrians (including suggestions for improvement, statistics, data collected from the community/interviews, etc. – English link).

- Redesign your city/area as a 'smart city' that includes improved bicycle and walking pathways to encourage people to ride more to their destinations.
 - Create a miniature model (3D or digital) of the city and present it.
 - Create an advertisement for your city using any medium and present it as a pitch (as if you were a developer pitching to the council), including the health benefits of living in your city.
 - Create a 'theme song' for your city (The Arts link).
 - Write a narrative that explores life in your city. What problems might someone face? How would life be different? (English link)

People Without Houses

In the beginning, Mo doesn't want to acknowledge Melody, but by the end of the story they become friends.

- List the stereotypes that come to mind when thinking about being unhoused. Brainstorm how these stereotypes influence choice, actions, thoughts and feelings from the perspectives of those who are and aren't experiencing being unhoused.
 - Explore these different perspectives through improvisational drama.
 - Write a narrative exploring stereotypes from an unhoused perspective (English link).
 - Create a brochure that explains the dangers of stereotypes and their impacts, including strategies for restoring dignity to those who are unhoused (English link).
- Explore the various reasons that result in people becoming unhoused, and what kind of issues they face including barriers to work, housing, health, etc.
- Explore the impact on a person's mental, social, physical and emotional health when they experience being unhoused. Create strategies that can be used by an unhoused person to improve their overall health and wellbeing.
- Research the kinds of organisations and charities that exist in your local area and state that support people without homes. Do you notice any gaps in the services provided, or do these services adequately support people without homes? What suggestions can you think of to help fill these gaps? (Links to HASS)

- Look at the ways in which people experiencing being unhoused find ways to live.
 - Look at the backpack bed by the award-winning Australian company that is fighting to restore dignity and safety through shelter to Aussies without houses (link <https://backpackbed.org/au/>). Create a chart that lists the pros and cons of the design.
 - Challenge: Design a solution for providing shelter to those experiencing being unhoused that protects them from the heat, cold, inclement weather, and provide them with safety, OR focus on another problem faced by unhoused people and propose/design a solution for that problem (e.g. accessing food, hygiene, a light source, etc.). (Link to Design and Technologies)

Being Human

Being human encompasses a wide range of emotions, actions and perspectives. While it can be a good thing to get involved in your local community and connect to others at a human level, it can also come with risks.

- Explore the concept of ‘what does it mean to be human’? Look at several people throughout history, and the kinds of actions, thoughts and perspectives they experienced the world through, and the results of those. Notice that not all humans are geared towards love and kindness, but there exists a spectrum within each human.
 - Explore the idea of ‘personal responsibility’ with your own thoughts and actions, and what that looks like in practice. Discuss this as a class or in groups and roleplay different scenarios to explore this concept.
 - Create an artistic piece, narrative or piece of media that explores the concept of what it means to be human and the role of personal responsibility.
- Discuss the potential risks and safety issues of talking to strangers (and even people you know), and why it is not always a good idea (especially without an adult present). Suggest strategies to get yourself out of these situations if you find yourself in a situation that makes you uncomfortable.
 - Create posters that promote safety in the community.
 - Create skits in small groups that explores how to be safe in the community.

- Write a narrative that explores being safe in the community (English link).
- Do a class project on resilience. Suggestions:
 - Explore the relationship between success and challenge.
 - Explore the relationship between how a person sees themselves (their identity) and how they experience success and challenge.
 - Discuss, research and practice strategies for building resilience (and build the practice into the class routine, such as a few minutes in the morning or as a transition activity).
 - Explore the role of resilience in the face of experiencing hardships (looking through multiple perspectives would be good – e.g. migrant, refugee, being unhoused, etc.)
 - Do a case study between two texts that explore resilience (English link).
 - Create an artistic/media piece or narrative that explores building resilience (The Arts link).
 - Write (and perform) a play or skit that explores the differences between a resilient person and a non-resilient person handling a situation (English and The Arts links).
 - Create a journal, workbook, brochure or other form of media that explains resilience, how to build it, and includes strategies for practicing building resilience.

Note: A suggested resource for teachers from Beyond Blue:

<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/healthy-homes/building-resilience>