



Teachers' Notes

The Terrible Suitcase

Written by Emma Allen
 Illustrated by Freya Blackwood

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OMNIBUS BOOKS

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illustrator	Freya Blackwood
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Contents

About the Story.....	2
About the Author	2
About the Illustrator.....	2
Study Notes for Teachers.....	3

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About the Story

Sometimes you don't always get what you want. Instead of the rocket backpack, you might end up with a terrible suitcase for the very first day of school. And this makes you mad! But sometimes what you think is terrible, might not be so terrible after all, especially when there are rocket ships and new friends involved.

The Terrible Suitcase is a lovely story about acceptance, making friends and new experiences.

About the Author

Emma Allen was a trained speech pathologist, specialising in early childhood, before she returned to university, majoring in film and English literature at the Australian National University. She recently completed her Masters of Creative Writing at the University of Canberra. She works from home while caring for her two young children, Harriet and Rupert, with baby number three on the way.

About the Illustrator

Freya Blackwood grew up in Orange in NSW, Australia. The daughter of a painter and an architect, she was encouraged to draw from a young age. She produced many illustrated books when at school but after completing a degree in Design at the University of Technology, Sydney, she became interested in filmmaking. She worked for several years in the special effects industry in Sydney and in Wellington, New Zealand, before eventually returning to illustration. Her previous books include *Two Summers*, *Amy & Louis* and *Harry & Hopper*.

Freya won the 2010 Kate Greenaway Medal for *Harry & Hopper*.

Study Notes for Teachers

1. *The Terrible Suitcase* is a great starting point for visual literacy learning and teaching children to think about how and what they read. It is important to reread picture books, as children will learn new things with each reading.
 - On the first reading just show the children the illustrations instead of reading aloud to them. Have them come up with their own ideas for what the children in the story are doing. You can prompt their learning with questions such as, what do you think the suitcase is for?
 - On one of the later readings, don't show the children the illustrations. Instead when you read each page, ask them to mime the actions they hear.
 - Ask the children what they thought the book was about. Then see how they responded to the plot. Is a suitcase really terrible? Can they relate to the scenario? Is the main character fair to Howard? What do they think of the mum and the brother?
 - When you read the story, ask children to think about the pictorial elements. Prompt their discussion with questions like, what do we learn from this picture? How do we know she is mad? How does a box become a spaceship? How does a suitcase become a computer?
2. Use the theme of space in *The Terrible Suitcase* as a starting point for activities and discussion.
 - Begin by asking children what they know about space. Are they familiar with rocket ships? Do they know about the moon?
 - As you read through the book, ask children to identify words related to space. You should find space craft, intergalactic, Halley's Comet, space dust, space food, rocket, moon, moon beams and star.
 - Create a space vocabulary list using the words you've found and other words children may know that are associated with space. Assign children space words and ask them to create sentences to demonstrate they understand the word's meaning.
 - For older children, you can introduce the concept of the solar system.
 - As a class, create a mobile with all the space images from the book.

- Ask children to make their own suitcases to take into space. As a class brainstorm all the items people might need on their space journey. Ask the children to use personal experiences of going away for ideas on what to pack.
3. *The Terrible Suitcase* is a great text to talk about starting school.
- For children of preschool age, begin by asking them what they know about school. Engage them in discussion with questions such as ‘what is it for?’; ‘Why do we go?’ ‘Are children excited about going?’
 - Talk to children about all the different types of learning they will encounter at school. See if anyone is looking forward to something in particular.
 - Have a look at what is packed in the suitcase on pages 26 and 27. Ask the children if they know what you take to school.
 - Making friends is a big part of attending school. Ask the class to think about how the children make friends in the story and then to think about how they made the friends they have.
4. Use *The Terrible Suitcase* for creative activities:
- If you don’t have one already, it might be a good idea to set up an imagination corner for children to play.
 - The classmates in the book imagine they have a rocket to explore space and fly to the moon. Have a chat about the kinds of places children would like to explore and why.
 - In the story a box becomes a rocket, demonstrating the power of imagination. Pass around a small box and have children say, ‘this is not a box, it’s a ...’
 - Children can build their own space vehicles using cardboard boxes and art materials.
 - The character in the story is mad because instead of getting a backpack as she wanted, she got a suitcase. See if children can come up with creative ideas to brighten up the suitcase (wheels, stuck-on pockets, etc.)? If they want to make their own stickers, this is a really useful site for instructions:

<http://voices.yahoo.com/homemade-custom-sticker-recipe-kids-paper-crafts-455364.html?cat=24>

5. *The Terrible Suitcase* can be used for language activities and discussion.
- Using the title as an example, introduce children to adjectives and explain that they are describing words.
 - Ask children to go around the classroom using adjectives to describe objects, like the small chair, the colourful paint, etc.
 - The girl in the story is mad, but what other words can children think of to describe being angry? Jealous, embarrassed ...
 - Come up with a class list of words that can be used to describe how we feel.
 - Ask children to assign each emotion to a situation: 'I feel angry when I ...'; 'I feel angry because ...'
 - Ask children to develop their own story based on something they didn't/don't want. Encourage them to imagine how their feelings might change towards the object if others wanted it; or if it became famous on YouTube; or if it became rare ...