



TEACHERS' NOTES FOR TRAPEZE:

TREKKERS. GREEN

Macmillan Education. 2005 ISBN 0-7329-9940-5

Readers: 10.5 to 12.5 years.

Here are a range of activities which can be used to extend students' knowledge of the story, explore research skills and gives students the opportunity to express their ideas.

OUTLINE:

Life is pretty tough for Ritchie at the moment. Mum and Dad have separated, and Dad has moved to Darwin. Ritchie and Mum are now living in a large apartment block. And now Ritchie's eyes are playing tricks on him. Surely lumps and bumps don't just appear in the ceiling and then vanish without any explanation? The one good thing in Ritchie's life at the moment is his new friend, Lilla Winterbottom. Lilla used to be an acrobat who flew from one trapeze to another.

a. RATIONALE: *MAGIC REALISM.*

In magic realism, the trend is that it

- starts with the premise 'in a familiar situation, what if something extraordinary happens'?
- describes someone or something that is probably not possible

- has some kind of weird internal logic
- can contain unusual but sustained characters with whom the reader can identify.

Other examples of magic realism can be found in:

Cowpat\$. Macmillan Education.

Virus Killer: An Anthology of Short Stories. Phoenix Education.

(This collection includes several stories with magic realism as their theme)

b. TALKING POINTS:

1. Why is life extra hard for Ritchie?
2. Describe Miss Lilla Winterbottom.
3. Imagine you are sleeping under a ceiling where bumps suddenly appear. What might they be? What would you do? Give some possible reasons not mentioned in this story.
4. Ritchie's ambition is to be a great rollerblader. A champion. How do his parents feel about this? Why do they disagree? How does this make Ritchie feel?
5. Ritchie envies Derryn. Why?
6. How does Ritchie try to improve to his rollerblading skills? What are some of the moves he makes? Which move is almost too difficult to master?
7. Ritchie checks out some of his neighbours. Who are they?
8. Who else is interested in the rollerblade competition? How do they try to stop Ritchie and Derryn from competing?
9. Describe the circus that finally appears in this story? In what ways might this circus differ from a present day circus?
10. Consider the story's end. Do we ever find out why the circus might have appeared?
11. This story has lots of satisfactory conclusions. What are they?
12. Why is this story called TRAPEZE? Can you think of another title?
13. This story is not as simple as it might appear on first reading. There are several messages or themes. They include comments on 'split families' and 'caring for older neighbours'. You might like to give the class some of your views on these subjects.

c. ACTIVITIES:

- Make a story-board or collage to convey ‘THE CIRCUS’ or some other unexpected situation.
- Sketch Lilla Winterbottom as an old woman, and then as a young girl.
- Mock up an interview with Lilla Winterbottom with you as the interviewer. Ask a friend to be the interviewer.
- Then change roles with him or her.
- Illustrate a cover for this story.
- What might happen after this story ends?

d. WRITING EXERCISES:

1. Design your own circus. What does it look like? What acts would you like it to have?
2. Write a story called “CIRCUS SCHOOL”.
3. Time Travel. Imagine you are able to travel back or forwards fifty years. How does life differ from the present?
4. Create the rules for a new sport called “Kite Hockey”.

e. DEBATE:

1. “Fences make good neighbours.”
2. “Time travel will always be impossible”
3. “No such thing as ghosts.”

f. WHAT INSPIRED THIS STORY?

This story was inspired by a very noisy neighbour who lived directly above me. Her intermittent thumps and bumps were intensely annoying. I spent many nights wondering what could create such a terrible racket? How could I prevent those thumps and bumps from waking me? In the middle of the night I would ponder what might happen if something unusual appeared on my ceiling. When I tried to imagine what it could be, a circus came into my mind. After many inquiries, I heard that some hard to close windows were responsible for all that noise. Unfortunately, though I love circuses, not a single one ever appeared on my ceiling.