

Teacher's Notes/Reader's Report

Title: Max Meets a Monster

Author: Tracey Hawkins

1. Synopsis

Max is having his first ever sleepover at Grandpa's house and decides to take his new birthday torch and Old Ted.

During the night Max is woken by a horrible, sucking, snorting, noise unlike anything he has ever heard.

Max heads off on an adventure in his quest to find the monster. Along the way he sees scary images in the bathroom, horrible monster shadows on the wall and monsters hidden in the clothes hanging on the coat rack.

Max finally comes face to face with his monster, his snoring Grandpa.

Confronting fear and the wonderful relationship a child shares with his grandparent are the key themes in this book.

2. Author/Illustrator style or medium

The brightly coloured illustrations have been used over double page spreads. Inanimate objects have been brought to life to look like possible monsters, such as Grandpa's socks, coat pockets and the bathtub. The text varies in colour (from blue to white) depending on the darkness of the background. The snoring sounds have been wrapped across the page in a rhythmic flow in keeping with the flow and volume of a snoring sound.

3. Author/Illustrator Motivation

The idea for Max meets a monster happened after Tracey's youngest son came down for breakfast one morning, complaining about the horrible snorting, sucking noises he had heard in the night. He was sure it was a monster. Tracey assured him it wasn't a monster only his Grandfather he'd heard snoring in the bedroom next door.

Author/Illustrator Background Information

Tracey Hawkins was born in Sydney in 1961. Her mother was a nurse and her father was a Policeman.

Tracey grew up on the mid north coast in Kempsey and spent her teenage years in the in Armidale. After finishing school she went to Armidale College of Advanced Education where she studied to be a teacher. When Tracey graduated there were 12,000 unemployed teachers looking for work, so she joined the Australian Federal

Police Force in Canberra. Tracey worked as a general duties police officer, helping members of the public everyday and was also a detective in the Fraud squad. After the birth of her third child she hung up her gun holster for a nappy bag and became a full-time mother, a job she loved best of all.

Feeling the need to expand her life outside of the home and have conversations with someone older than seven, Tracey started evening creative writing classes and found she enjoyed writing for adults, mostly murder mystery stories of course. She also found she enjoyed writing funny stories for her children. Tracey's books are centred on the things that happen to her family. Her children are featured in her stories under secret names, but they know who they are.

Tracey also hosts murder mystery workshops in Primary and High schools. She isn't allowed to really murder people so she takes a 'fake' life-sized body with her to the schools, often dressing it up and sitting it in the car with a seatbelt on to see if people notice it at the traffic lights. Unlike 'regular' mother's, Tracey has a strange collection of skeletons, severed arms and floating eyeballs in a cupboard under the stairs ready for her next murder. She has always, well nearly always, been brave...except for when she was a little bit scared of the dark.

4. Educational Applicability

Family relationships and confronting fear are the key themes in this book.

Discussion topics:

Before reading the book

1. Ask the children have they ever been frightened?
2. Discuss what types of things or situations frightened them.
3. How did they cope with the situation?
4. Ask the children if they have ever had a sleepover at a friends/grandparents house?
5. Discuss what was different sleeping there than at home.
6. Discuss if they took something special with them, and what did they pack to take with them.

After reading the book

1. Ask the children what they thought might have been the monster?
2. Ask them did they think Max was brave looking for the monster?
3. Did they think Old Ted was really scared or was Max the scared one?
4. Discuss the sorts of noises they might hear in the night.
5. Ask the children if they know somebody who snores very loudly?
6. Discuss old toys that are special or old toys that belonged to their parents/grandparents.
7. Ask the children what special things they do/share with a grandparent.

Write a story or a poem

Ask the children to create their own story about monsters, a night time adventure, a story about their parents/grandparents or family members or sleepovers with friends.

Ask the children to write a silly verse poem about snoring or noisy noses using lots of funny sounding words to describe the sounds the snorer would make.

Make a monster

The children can create a monster or giant nose using paper Mache or other mediums such as felt, pipe cleaners, play dough, egg trays, bottle tops, lids, leggo, and various textiles.

Display the creative works with poems or stories about their monster or noses.

Make a poster/Draw a portrait

Write a list of all the things they might take on a sleepover. Draw the items inside a large suitcase.

Have the children draw their favourite monster doing something funny, like sitting in a bubble bath or hiding in a cupboard.

Draw a portrait of a grandparent or family member.

Make a puppet

Get each child to bring in a sock and have them create a sock puppet/monster like the sock monsters in the book.

Shadow pictures

Using a torch/light source in a darkened room show the children how to make basic shapes on a wall.

Further Research

1. Each child could conduct a survey in their family to find out who snores and who doesn't.
2. Students could discuss relationships and family.
3. Students could research games and toys their parents/grandparents played with as children.
4. The children might like to discuss what sort of people do 'brave' things in their lives and work- such as Policemen and Firemen and what makes a person do something that's brave when they are scared?

5. Marketing and Selling Points

- Max meets a monster sends a message to children that hearing noises in the night isn't always scary.
- The children will relate to Max, as nearly all children have a fear or are scared of the dark at some time in their life.
- The story also depicts the loving bond between a child and a grandparent or adult that they will relate to.
- All kids love an adventure and the anticipation of something exciting happening.

6. How the book is to be promoted

- Tracey Hawkins makes author visits to schools.
- Promotion through book launches and signings at bookshops
- Reviews
- Reading Catalogues