

Antonia Pesenti & Hilary Bell

# SUMMER TIME



## TEACHERS' NOTES

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NEWSOUTH

## OVERVIEW

Summer is here. Put your school shoes away,  
The long, lazy days can begin.  
Mangoes and magpies, municipal pools...  
Take a deep breath and dive in.



From the award-winning creators of *Alphabetical Sydney* and *Numerical Street* comes a dreamy celebration of the Australian summer.

The third collaboration between playwright Hilary Bell and architect/illustrator Antonia Pesenti, *Summer Time* was inspired by a family road-trip to the South Coast of New South Wales. Antonia started writing a list of images of an Australian summer as they flashed by her car window – caravan parks, picnic tables, seagulls, public pools. Over the next four years she and Hilary built the book together, using units of time as a framework for the ideas. They researched *Summer Time* together, tasting Neapolitan ice cream and testing waterslides for the first time in yonks.

The book progresses in a loosely chronological way, travelling from an instant to eternity, mixing units of time both quantifiable and poetic: eight seconds for the revolving fan to turn your way; and an eternity before you are allowed to swim after lunch.

Units of time expand slowly, until the reluctant purchase of school shoes heralds the end of summer.

*Summer Time* continues an exploration of place, zooming in closer to focus on detail – an intimate and nostalgic look at moments shared by both adults and children. It feels spacious and languid, tranquil and thoughtful. It is also, in our hyper-stimulated world, a reminder to pause and appreciate the quiet poetry in everyday life.

**Hilary Bell** is an award-winning playwright, lyricist and librettist of musical theatre and opera. A graduate of NIDA, AFTRS and New York's Juilliard School, she was the Patrick White Fellow at the Sydney Theatre Company and the Tennessee Williams Fellow at the University of the South, Tennessee.

**Antonia Pesenti** is an award-winning architect and illustrator. She combines co-directing design partnership MAKE Creative with illustrating/designing and making beautiful books, exploring all formats from experimental zines through to picture books.

## CLASSROOM IDEAS

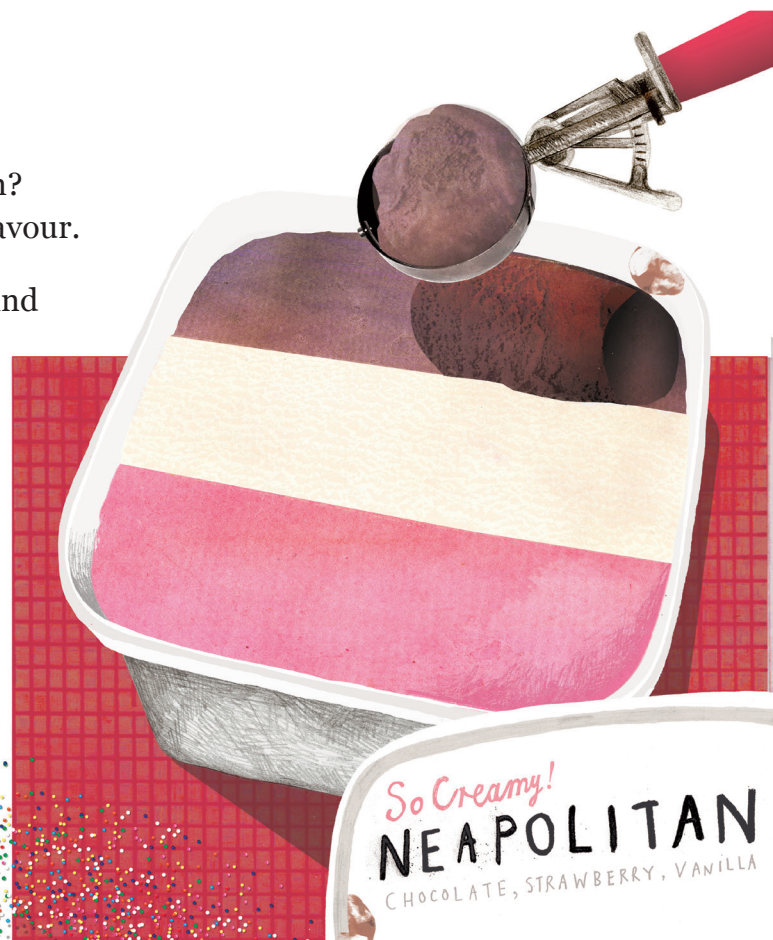
- Discuss the cover image, what is the book about? Why is *Summer Time* split into two words? Prepare students for themes and concepts explored in *Summer Time*.
- Why did the illustrator use clocks on the end papers, and why is the time at the beginning different to the end?
- Before reading, explain the difference between quantifiable measures of time and poetic ones (e.g. ‘hour’ as opposed to ‘yonks’). See how many poetic ideas can be listed.
- Create a word wall with units of time.
- Discuss seasons. What is everyone’s favourite season?

## IMAGINATION

- There are two creatures that reappear during the book. What are they?
- Do any of the people in the book reappear? Or are all the children different?
- Several places are revisited in the book. What are they and why are they important?
- Why do you think the creators started and ended with eternity? What is the difference between these two concepts of ‘eternity’?
- Are there any time periods the authors didn’t use?

## JUST FOR FUN

- Have you ever tasted Neapolitan ice cream? Run a vote to see which is the preferred flavour.
- Invent your own multi-flavour ice cream and create its name and label.



## TIME CAPSULE ACTIVITY

Print out the attached pdf. Cut out all the units of time in small strips, fold them in half collect them all together in a 'time capsule' (ice cream container!). Each student chooses a piece of paper, to discover their own unit of time.

Think about what kind of transformation can happen over that period of time.

One class who did the Time Capsule activity had the following ideas:

- 15 minutes: for a pedicure to dry
- 1 month: for a seed to turn into a tiny plant
- An afternoon: to make a batch of slime
- A week: to learn a new song on the trumpet.

Students can choose to draw or write a 4-line verse about their idea, using Hilary's rhyming structure.



## SCIENCE

- Have you ever been swooped by a magpie? What makes them swoop? And why only in spring?
- Why do shadows ‘shrink’ between the morning and noon? Why do we have such small shadows at midday?
- Have you ever seen a Golden Orb spider? Have you noticed their webs are golden (not silver)? Why?
- There are two pages in the book about bushfire. Did you know that sometimes fire can help certain Australian species regenerate? For example, Australian gum trees carry seeds in their canopies in a hard, wooden capsule. When the capsule burns seeds are released, and when rain comes again, the ash left by the fires is the perfect seedbed. The grass trees we can see in the illustrations are another example, a fire may burn their leaves and blacken their trunks, but the trees usually survive: the living growth-point is buried underground, protected by their solid bases. In fact, some grass trees are stimulated by fire – in the spring after a summer bushfire, large numbers of plants can flower.
- Why do our fingers and toes go wrinkly after a long time in the water? And why do our lips go blue when we are cold?
- Aboriginal astronomy – find out more about the Emu in the Sky and Indigenous astronomy on the Australian Indigenous Astronomy website: [aboriginalastronomy.com.au/content/topics](http://aboriginalastronomy.com.au/content/topics)



## ENGLISH

- Identify similes (e.g. ‘wrinkled as prunes’, ‘hard as a rock’) in the verses.
- How does the book enlist the five senses? What words are used to identify smells, tastes, textures and sounds?
- What are some aspects of summer that the author and illustrator left out? Make up your own verse about it.
- Look for places where alliteration is used, e.g. ‘mopoke and moon’. How about onomatopoeia? E.g. ‘Bump and kerchunk’.
- What is the rhyming structure and what effect does it create? Is it fun to read aloud?
- Find places where the author has used internal rhymes, e.g. ‘dusty old bunkbed and musty old books’.

## DRAMA

In pairs or groups, choose one of the pages and create a little scene. Think about what happens leading up to, and after, the moment. A couple of examples:

- Going into the change room at the beach only to find there’s no hot water. You’re shivering with cold. The salt is making you itchy. Your mum’s outside calling you to hurry up. Do you plunge under the cold shower or go out itching?
- You’ve never been on a waterslide before and you’re scared! It’s really long and steep and you can’t see the bottom. Everyone’s screaming. Behind you is an impatient queue of kids telling you to hurry up. Someone pushes you... is it fun? Do you run back up for more?

The class could put all the scenes together and create a play. Maybe you bookend the play with ‘eternity’ scenes.

