



Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Song of the River

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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

"Where the mist swallows mountains and winds whisper through ancient trees, a mother and her pup run wild and free. They hunt, but they are also hunted. Carted away. Sold for bounty. And then, one careless night ... The last thylacine is gone."

This is the beautiful but heartbreaking story of Australia's last thylacine (Tasmanian tiger), which died in captivity."

Author/Illustrator Information:

Author and illustrator Christina Booth works from her bush studio in Tasmania, Australia. Trained as a teacher and painter, she loves that she makes up stories and colours for a living. Christina started her literary career illustrating for great Australian authors such as Max Fatchen, Colin Thiele, Christobel Mattingley and Jackie French. Many of Christina's previous books are award-winning, including the Environment Award, CBCA Honour Book and CBCA Notables. *Spirit* (written by Cherri Ryan) was her first picture book with Black Dog Books.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Primary F-3
- Ages 5-9

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Picture Book

Themes/Ideas:

- Nature
- Habitats
- History
- Science



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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Before Reading

Brainstorm thylacines/Tasmanian Tigers. What do you know about them? What might you learn from reading the book? What will you need to research further?

Consider the title “One Careless Night”. What do you think it means? Revisit your answer after reading the book and compare your prediction with the actual story.

Exploring the Text

Christina Booth uses a number of literary devices in *One Careless Night*. For each, explain the device and discuss why you think the author used it – does it convey meaning or make the story more interesting for the reader? Are there other examples of the device in the story?

- Personification
“Where the mist swallows mountains”
- Alliteration
“...wild winds whisper”
- Metaphor
“...a forest of concrete and steel”
- Simile
“...fades like mist in the sun”
- Short sentences
“Caught. Carted away. Sold for a bounty.”

Much of the story is told in subtext (i.e. not explicitly stated in the text or illustrations). Discuss the following parts of the story and ask students to explain their interpretation of what is happening:

- “The trap has been laid” – What is the trap? Who laid it? What happens when the tigers are trapped?
- “...her mother grows tired and fades like mist in the sun” – What happens to the mother? Why does she grow tired?
- “In the cold of one careless night, she is gone” – Why is the night described as “careless”? What is the meaning of “gone” in this context?
- “Now furs that were trophies hang in shame” – Why were the furs trophies? Why are they now shameful? What are the “glass-eyed tygers”?

Examine the spread where the tiger is sitting against a white background with the word “Alone” above her. Consider the colour, faint cage lines covering the pages, the tiger’s body language and expression and the text. How does this spread make you feel? How do you think the tiger feels? Why?

The thylacine, or Tasmanian tiger is now considered extinct. What does that mean? What other animals are extinct? What does endangered mean? Find an animal that is an endangered or threatened species and research what is causing the threat and what would need to happen for the animal to not be endangered anymore. What can people do to help?

This story has an ambiguous ending. Discuss the term ambiguous – what does it mean? What makes this ending ambiguous? Why do you think the author wrote this ending?

Read the author’s note and the newspaper advertisement on the following page. Why do you think these were included in the book? What extra information do they give you about thylacines?

Exploring the Illustrations

Examine the colour palette of each spread (i.e. the colours used in each illustration). What colours are used? Why has Christina Booth used these colours (for example: black and dark brown used while the tiger hunts at night; white and grey while the tiger is caged, showing the concrete and steel along with the cold weather).

What medium has been used to create these illustrations (digital art)? Does this surprise you? Why?

Christina Booth uses positioning (background, midground, foreground) to create meaning in her illustrations. Examine the positioning used in several of the spreads and discuss how the positioning of objects in the illustrations makes you feel. For example, in the spread where the tigers are hiding in the “belly of an ancient pine”, the silhouettes of the hunters are in the background showing a distant yet real threat; the tigers are in the midground, small and hidden in the pine; and the crow is in the foreground right above hunters, possibly symbolising death or a bad omen of what is to come.

Crows are featured in many of the spreads, although they aren’t mentioned in the text. Why do you think they have been included in the illustrations? What do crows or ravens often symbolise in stories (i.e. death, bad luck, loss, prophecy, insight. In some cultural folklore the raven or crow is the spirit of a damned person)? How do you think this symbolism adds meaning to *One Careless Night*?

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