

TEACHERS NOTES



Written by Jane Godwin

Illustrated by Alison Lester

Suitable for Ages 3-7

Themes

Seasonal changes

Being outdoors

Appreciating nature

Togetherness

Contents of this pack

- Overview of *Sing Me the Summer*
- Before we begin reading
- Key themes
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Description

Sing Me the Summer combines Jane Godwin's lyrical rhyming text with Alison Lester's lively watercolour illustrations to delight in the distinct joys that each season brings. The book cherishes family togetherness in the natural world and the small moments outside that often become our lasting memories of childhood.

About the author

Jane Godwin is the highly acclaimed author of over twenty books for young people, across all styles and ages. Her work is published internationally and she has received many commendations. Jane is dedicated to pursuing quality and enriching reading and writing experiences for young people, whether it's as a writer, a publisher or a speaker/facilitator in schools. She lives in Melbourne.

About the illustrator

Alison Lester grew up on a farm overlooking the sea and first rode a horse as a baby in her father's arms. She still lives in the country and still rides her horse whenever she can. Her picture books mix imaginary worlds with everyday life, encouraging children to believe in themselves and celebrate the differences that make them special. In a career spanning decades, Alison has written many books, and won several prestigious awards including the 2019 Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA) Early Childhood Book of the Year Award for *Tricky's Bad Day*, the 2012 CBCA Eve Pownall Book of the Year Award for *One Small Island*, and the 2005 CBCA Picture Book of the Year Award for *Are We There Yet?*. Alison was Australia's Inaugural Children's Laureate from 2011 to 2013.

Find this book at our website:

<https://affirmpress.com.au/publishing/sing-me-the-summer/>

Another book created by Jane Godwin and Alison Lester and published by Affirm Press is *The Silver Sea*, co-created with young people at the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne. Find this book at our website: <https://affirmpress.com.au/publishing/the-silver-sea/>



Before we begin reading

- Have a look at the front cover and describe what you see. What do you think this book will be about?
- This book is called *Sing Me the Summer*. Do you think it is summer in the front cover picture? Why/why not?
- Open the book so that you can see the front and back cover together. What do you think about this picture now that you can see the back cover too? How does this picture make you feel?
- Describe all the colours on the front cover. How many colours are used to paint the tree?

Key themes

- Seasonal changes
- Being outdoors
- Appreciating nature
- Togetherness



Discussion points

Comprehension

- We open *Sing Me the Summer* to find a crowd at the beach. There is lots of activity happening here! Describe some of the things that the characters are doing.
- In this first beach scene, we read the words, 'a crab scuttles over my hand'. Can you guess who is narrating the book?
- As we read this book, we learn how the four seasons look during the day and during the night. Compare each season by looking at:
 - The colours used in the daytimes. For example, what do the colours in the sky, trees and land show us about each season?
 - The activities in each season. For example, why might there be a bonfire during winter but not during summer? Can you go camping in any season?
 - The clothes in each season. Can you guess which season we're in just by looking at the characters' clothes?
- Our narrator tells us some facts about each season. Describe what you've learned about summer, autumn, winter and spring through the story on these pages. For example, in autumn, we have cooler mornings.
- Now revisit each season and describe something you've learned just through the pictures rather than the words. For example, in winter, there can be hailstones or even snow!
- We see the ocean many times in this book. Sometimes the sea is very still and other times

we can see large waves. Can you find examples of this? Why might the sea be shown as calm at night but lively during the day?

- On pages 26 and 27, we see the characters riding horses over the hills. Study this picture. Which animals are moving in this picture? How can you tell? The words on this page tell us that 'the north wind is blowing'. How do we know it's windy in the picture?
- It looks like someone is celebrating their fourth birthday on pages 12 and 13. During which season would this character have been born? Which months would her birthday fall in? (*Autumn; March to May in Australia!*)
- Compare the first summer beach scene with the beach scene towards the end of this book. How are they different? Why do you think this might be? How do we know when it's about to rain?
- This book is called *Sing me the Summer*, but you might be surprised to find the book contains no singing! However, there are lots of sounds in this story. In fact, each season seems to have a song of its own. Flip through the book and describe some of the sounds you hear in each season. For example, bees buzzing in spring. Can you think of other sounds for each season?



Literacy

- **Verbs:** This story contains a lot of verbs. Can you find five verbs in this book? As an extra verb activity, can you match the verbs to their season? For example, swimming in summer.
- **Rhyme:** Rhyme is important in this book. Can you find some rhyming words?
- **Adjectives:** On pages 14 and 15, we see the characters indoors by the fire. Some are reading and some are playing cards. We might describe this scene as 'cosy'. Can you think of other adjectives that describe this scene?
- **Onomatopoeia:** There are lots of words that have interesting sounds



when you say them aloud! Words like 'scuttle' and 'crackle' are called onomatopoeia words because they sound like the noise they are describing. Can you find other examples of onomatopoeia in the story?

- **Alliteration:** Some of the words begin with the same first sounds, like 'silvery spray'. Can you find other examples of alliteration?



Numeracy

- How many children are there in this book? How many adults?
- Do we always see adults with the children? Can you spot the activities that adults need to join the children for? Which activities can the children do together or alone?
- How many different animals are featured in this book?
- How many dogs are there, and how many times does each dog appear in the book? Why do you think one dog appears more than the other?
- We see a flock of birds on page 10, and later in the book we see one bird by itself in its nest. Can you find this bird? What do you think the bird is doing here?
- Hats are a good clue for showing us which season it is. What types of hats do the characters wear during the year? How many different types of hats can you find? Are there some hats that can be worn at all times of the year?
- This book starts with summer and ends with summer. How much time has passed over the course of this book?

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- We see lots of trees in this book! Can you describe what the trees look like in each season? For example, are their colours different in summer to autumn and spring?
- The winter pages show us two types of tree. On page 16, we see bare trees that have lost their leaves, but on page 17, we see a tree that is still green and full of life. The trees on page 16 are deciduous, which means they have lost their leaves for the cooler months, while the trees on page 17 are non-deciduous, which means they do not lose their leaves. Think of all the trees you see when you're outside. Do you know of any trees whose leaves change colour and drop off over autumn and winter? Have a look at the trees when you're next



outside and see if you can tell if they're deciduous or not!

- On page 10, we see lots of birds flying together. Do you know the name of a group of birds? These birds are all shown heading somewhere together in autumn. They might be leaving their homes to find a new place to live for a while. Do you know what this movement is called?
- In spring, we see new life emerging after winter. We even have a phrase for this: 'spring is sprung'. Re-read pages 20 to 23 and describe some of the new life that we see in spring.

Social and emotional development

- This story shows us the days and the nights of each season. At the end of each season, we read the words 'as day ... turns to night'. The night-times have different colours and show different activities. How do you feel when you flip the page over to a night-time scene? Do the days feel differently to the nights? (Teachers' tip: use pages 4-5 and 6-7 as an example.)
- The characters in this book appear to be having a lot of fun playing together outdoors! They're creating memories that they will look back on fondly when they're older. Can you think of some happy times that you have had when outdoors?
- If you had to use one word to describe how you feel during each season, what would you pick? For example, winter could be 'snug' and spring could be 'hopeful'.
- Our main character is shown with her family and friends, but sometimes she is alone with her dog, like on page 16. Why is it important to spend time by yourself? What do you think the girl is thinking about when she is lying down on page 10?



Questions to ask when we've finished reading

- Which season in this book is your favourite and why?
- This book shows us that there are many ways to enjoy being outdoors in nature. Tell the class what you think is the best activity in this book.
- What did you think of this book? Did the story give you lots to think about? Did you enjoy looking at the pictures? Would you read this book again?

Activity one: Write an acrostic poem

An acrostic poem is a poem which has a word spelled out downwards, with each line beginning with a letter from the word. Write a poem about any of the seasons using this form. If you like, you can do it for 'summer' below! Be as imaginative as you wish!

S _____

U _____

M _____

M _____

E _____

R _____



Activity two: Write a diary entry

Imagine that you are one of the characters in this story. Pick page from the book, and write about it in your diary. Use the prompts below or ask your teacher for a blank piece of paper to write your own diary entry.

Dear Diary,

Today has been rather adventurous! The

weather was _____ today, which

made me feel _____. We went

to _____, where we _____

My favourite part of the day was _____

I love this time of year because _____

Tonight, we will be _____

Goodnight!

Activity three: Explore the outdoors

[Teacher-guided activity]

Take a walk around your neighbourhood, or perhaps even the playground. As you walk, stop and observe your surroundings.

Ask:

- What can you hear?
- What can you smell?
- Can you spot any animals nearby?
- Are there different textures that you can touch?
- How do you feel being outside right now compared to being inside?

Once the sensory elements have been discussed, consider the season that you're in. Discuss what the weather feels like while you're outside:

- Is the air humid or does it feel fresh?
- Is there a gentle breeze or a squally wind?
- Is the sunshine weak or strong?
- Will there be rain today?
- Is this type of weather usual for this time of year?

To bring this discussion back to the book, discuss:

- The trees that you see around you. Do they resemble any of the trees in the book? You could use this as a conversation-starter around deciduous trees!
- The outdoor activities that the characters are doing in the season that you are currently in. Will any of the students be doing these activities after school?



Activity four: Draw your perfect day

Imagine you had a day where you can do absolutely anything you like outdoors! What would you choose to do? Who would you choose to spend your day with? Draw it below! If you need inspiration, have a look at the way Alison Lester has drawn people, animals, trees and scenery in *Sing Me the Summer*.

