



OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Mates series
Title	Losing Reuben
Author	Leonie Norrington
Illustrator	Beth Norling
Extent	64 pp
Age	Primary school
ISBN	978 1 74299 022 4

Teachers' Notes

Losing Reuben

Written by
Leonie Norrington
Illustrated by Beth Norling

Teachers' Notes written by Rae Carlyle

Contents

Introduction.....	2
About the Author.....	2
About the Illustrator.....	2
Activities.....	3

Teachers' Notes may be reproduced for use in school activities. They may not be redistributed for commercial sale or posted to other networks.

Introduction

Losing Reuben tells the story of how Reuben and his family go to One Mile Beach every Saturday. They go fishing, catch prawns, and eat oysters from the rocks. One Mile Beach holds many challenges for Reuben, but with the support of his family he finds the inner strength to overcome his fears. But one Saturday the biggest challenge comes when his mother miscounts the children as they are getting into the car, and Reuben is left behind. How will he cope with being alone, and can he face his fears when his family are not there?

About the Author

Leonie Norrington was born in Darwin and grew up in a remote community among Aboriginal people. Her first children's book, *The Barrumbi Kids*, was Honour Book in the CBCA Awards in 2002 and shortlisted for the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards. *The Spirit of Barrumbi* was shortlisted for the 2004 SA Festival Awards. *Leaving Barrumbi* and *You and Me: Our Place* were shortlisted in the 2008 CBCA Awards and *Look See, Look at Me* was an Honour Book in the 2011 Awards. Her novel *The Devil You Know* won the Territory Reads Award 2010.

About the Illustrator

Beth Norling is a fine artist, published author and illustrator whose work has been published internationally and been recognised by IBBI, the International Board of Book Illustration. Beth won the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee trust award and residencies at Varuna Writers Centre (2003 & 2007), Bundanon (2004), the Tyrone Guthrie centre in Ireland (2005), and Hill End (2006). Beth has illustrated a number of books for Omnibus including *Cherry Blossom and the Golden Bear*, *Aussie Dog* by Eleanor Nilsson in the Mates series, and the *Solos Croc Bait* (also by Leonie Norrington) and *The Best Pet*. She wrote and illustrated *Little School*, a picture book about a day at pre-school.

Activities

English

During the course of their day Reuben and his family experience a variety of both positive and negative emotions. Discuss as a class how the author and illustrator show us what Reuben and his family are feeling.

1. What words does the author use to describe the characters' feelings? Make a list on the board of all the different words used, and next to them a list of the events that caused Reuben and his family to feel that way.
2. Divide the list into two parts, one with words describing positive feelings, and one with words describing negative feelings.
3. Make your own lists of as many words as you can think of that describe different types of feelings.
 - Discuss how Reuben felt at different times during the story. How would you feel if some of the events happened to you?
 - Think about times you have been scared, and times you have been happy and felt safe and strong. Write a short paragraph using words from your list to describe one of these times.

How an author describes a place, or an event, helps the reader understand what the characters must be feeling. The adjectives and adverbs they choose can tell the reader a lot about how a character views a place or event.

Some words that can make a description seem scary or bad are:

- Big
- Dark
- Roaring
- Sucking
- Crashing
- Hard
- Cold.

Some words that can make a description seem safe, pleasant or good are:

- Warm
- Soft
- Shining
- Clear
- Gentle.

4. Read the description of the mangrove forest. What words has the author used to describe it and the creatures that live in it? How does Reuben feel when he is in the mangrove forest?
 - Copy the two sentences on page 8. Underline all the verbs and adjectives that help the reader understand that the mangrove forest is a scary place. Think of alternatives to these words that would convey a different image, and use them to replace the original words. (e.g. replace *click their sharp claws* with *tinkle their pretty claws*). Read the paragraph again and discuss the differences.
 - Write two short paragraphs that describe a familiar local place such as a beach, bushland, city street, or park. For the first paragraph choose adjectives, adverbs and verbs that make the description seem to be of a scary place. To write the second paragraph, replace all the adjectives and verbs with words that make it seem to be safe and welcoming.
5. Beth Norling's illustrations show the characters with facial expressions that reflect their feelings throughout the story. Look at the pictures of Reuben and his family, and discuss what you think each character is feeling, and what features of the illustrations show this.

Creative Activities

1. Some of the words in *Losing Reuben* are in different type. Does the 'look' of the different type add to the meaning of these words?
2. Think of words that describe an emotional state such as scared, happy, sad, cheerful, nervous, worried, or gleeful. Invent a different way to write each word, as is done in the book. Try to match the design and the colour to the emotion that the word describes – for example 'scared' might be written in black jagged letters, while 'gleeful' has rounded blue and yellow bubble-like letters. Make a poster of all your words.
3. Write a short story describing a day trip that your family has taken and the place you went.
4. Going to One Mile Beach is a family tradition for Reuben's family, and so is the way his mother counts all the children before they leave. What other kinds of family traditions are there? What traditions do your family have? Write a poem about one.
5. Make a wordsearch using all the words in *Finding Reuben* that are the names of different types of seafood.

6. Take a walk around the school grounds and collect natural materials such as leaves, twigs, and grass. Make a collage of a place that is special to you or your family using the natural materials that you have collected.
7. Research different ways of tying rope together to make fishing nets. Choose the way that you think is best and try to make a miniature fishing net out of string or wool. As a class discuss which ways worked well and which were too difficult. Was one way easier, or worked better than the others? Did the material used affect the ease of making?

Science

Reuben and his family visit One Mile Beach every Saturday. The beach is not just one place though; there are several different environments there, and each has its own characteristics and is the habitat of different creatures. The seafood Reuben's family gathers varies depending on whether they are collecting it from the rocks, the mangroves or the ocean, and also on the time of day, the tide, and the weather.

1. What are the different factors that influence which seafood Reuben and his family collect when they visit One Mile Beach?
2. Make a list of all the different creatures mentioned in the story. Which ones do people eat? Do any of them eat each other? Research one creature mentioned in the story and make a poster showing
 - Its place in the food chain.
 - Its preferred habitat.
 - Its life cycle.
3. Different environments support different ecosystems. Look at your local environment and discuss what plants and animals can be found near where you live.
 - What foods are traditional to your local area?
 - How are/were they gathered?
 - Does this differ today from 50 years ago? From 100? From 500? If so, in what way and why.
4. At the back of the book Leonie Norrington talks about how the Salt Water people have been visiting places like One Mile Beach for thousands of years to gather seafood. Although the seafood Reuben and his family catch is the same as their ancestors caught, some of the things they use to help them are different. Talk about the modern things that they use that their ancestors didn't have (nylon fishing line, nylon netting and floats etc.)
 - Why do Reuben and his family use modern technology to help them?

- Research traditional fishing methods and discuss what Reuben's ancestors would have used instead of nylon fishing lines and nets.
 - What foods do Reuben and his family gather in exactly the same way as his ancestors would have?
 - Think about your own home. List three items of modern technology that make cooking and eating easier than your grandparents or great-grandparents did not have. List three things in your home that are essentially the same as something that was used by people 100 years ago. Is there anything in your house that is just like something that was used 1000 years ago?
5. Go for a walk around the school grounds and note all the living creatures that you can see (including bugs and insects). Choose one to research. Find out where it lives, what it eats, and what likes to eat it.

Health

In *Losing Reuben*, Reuben worries about a lot of things that might go wrong.

He worries about:

- A wave washing him off the rocks and him drowning
- Mud sucking him into a crab hole and the crabs eating him.
- Getting dragged into the sea by the fishing net.
- Letting go of the net, and it wrapping round his father and brothers and drowning them.
- An eagle swooping down and eating him.

Reuben's family help him to cope with his fears. They help him when they are there with him, and then when he is left alone he uses what his father has taught him to cope with being scared and stay safe until his family returns.

1. What are the things that Reuben does to help himself cope with being in a scary situation? Think of some things that you could do to help yourself stay safe and not get too scared if you were left behind somewhere.
2. What are the things Reuben's brothers, sisters, and parents do and say to help him feel happy and safe? What is something a friend or family member has said or done that has made you feel happy and safe? What is something you could say or do to help a family member or friend who is unhappy feel better?

3. When something scary and unexpected happens, it is important not to panic and to remember what to do. Reuben remembered that his father had told him if he was ever lost, to always just stay where he was and wait.
 - Discuss being lost. What are the different things that you can or should do depending on where you are?
 - Who are some of the people that can help you if you get lost?
 - What should you do if you find someone else who is lost?.
4. When Reuben's family came back to find him, they were all scared that something bad might have happened to him. What were the things they were scared of? How did Reuben keep himself safe from all the dangers? What might have happened if he had panicked instead of sitting and waiting?
5. Being a member of a big family is a very important part of Reuben's life. His role is changing from that of one of the little kids, to one of the big kids. How does his family help him grow into his new role as a bigger kid? What are some of the challenges that come with getting bigger? What are some of the rewards?
6. All families are different. They can be large or small; they can live together or far apart; they can all be related or friends can be part of them.
 - Draw a picture of yourself with your family.
 - Write a paragraph describing your family.
 - Write four sentences describing ways in which you and your family and friends all help each other.