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Tiny Wonders

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Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian
in context with the Australian curriculum
(English)

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Synopsis	2
Themes	2
Writing Style	2
Study Notes	3
Author Motivation	6
About the Author	7

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SYNOPSIS

April's town is grey, but the townspeople are too busy to notice. Inspired by her grandmother's love for dandelions, April dares to wonder what might happen if she makes a wish. She plants some flower seeds and waits.

In a story about patience, joy and beauty, *Tiny Wonders* celebrates the virtues of slowing down, enjoying the world's wonders, and taking action.

Beautiful illustrations render the text an endearing story about hope, happiness, and the power of making a wish.

THEMES

- Hope
- Patience
- Happiness
- Beauty
- Flowers
- Grandmothers
- Community
- Action

WRITING STYLE

Tiny Wonders is written in third person, past tense. Told with restraint, it allows readers the space to make connections between the story's characters, events, and themes. The beautiful illustrations invite the audience to read and reread to reveal multiple layers in the text. Suited to an early childhood audience, this is an engaging book that encourages active literacy skills with scope for enrichment and critical thinking activities for more advanced students.

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STUDY NOTES

- Before reading *Tiny Wonders*, look carefully at the front and back covers. What predictions can you make about the story? Discuss the use of colour, and how this may contribute to the text.
- What does April mean when she says, 'If my town was a colour, it would be grey'? With a partner, discuss what might be making it grey. How could this be changed? How would you describe the colour of your hometown? Why have you described it this way?
- Using the page opening below as stimulus, retell this part of the story from April's point of view. In addition, discuss the use of colour to depict the mindsets of the townspeople as opposed to April's. What is she noticing? What might she be thinking at this stage?



- After reading the page opening in which 'dandelions [float] from the sky', make predictions about what might happen next.
- Use the page openings below to discuss the use of yellow to symbolise hope. How does the written text work together with the illustrations to achieve this?



*With older children, use the page opening above to compare April's quest to find a dandelion seed with Dorothy's wish to return home in *The Wizard of Oz*.

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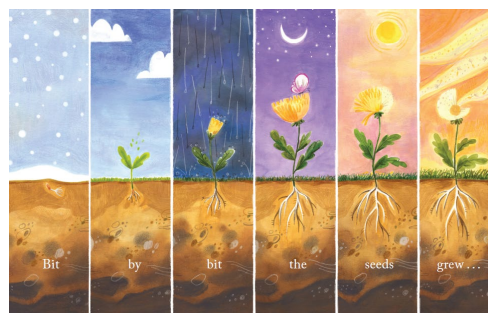
- In small groups, dramatise the following sequence:



- Use the end covers of the book as well as selected pages in the text to discuss the theme of happiness. How are the dandelion's seeds a symbol of this?
- Explain what is happening in the illustrations below. Why is the background on the right-hand side black? Why is the sweeper framed in circular shapes?



- *Tiny Wonders* is a story about slowing down to enjoy the beauty that surrounds us every day. With your class, go on a nature walk around your grounds. Take photos of the various pockets around your school that give you joy. Use these photos to create a photo journal to share with other classes.
- What can we learn about the importance of patience from *Tiny Wonders*? Which page openings help share this theme?
- Using the page opening below, use an app such as *Explain Everything* to narrate this part of the story.



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- Describe the relationship between April and her grandmother. How does it help give April the courage to act? What role do your grandparents play in your life? What have you learnt from them? How have they helped shape your ideas about happiness?
- Grandma tells April ‘the world is full of wonders’. In small groups, create a pictograph of small wonders found in our world. Display these in your classroom.
- In the sequence below, April is met with fixed mindsets about dandelions. What do the sweeper and bus driver think about dandelions? How does the shopkeeper give April’s quest a boost?



- Discuss the importance of ‘reading pictures’ as well as the written text to fully understand the narrative.
- What do you wish for? How might you be able to make that wish come true? Share with a friend.
- When the dandelions finally bloom, so too does happiness. At the same time, the sweeper **stops** sweeping and the bus driver tries to **stop** sneezing. What is the connection between the flowers blooming, happiness and people **stopping** for a moment? What is the author’s purpose in creating this story?
- Which is your favourite page opening of *Tiny Wonders*? Why is this your favourite? Share with a friend.
- Create a simple flow chart that shows the cause and effect between flowers and happiness.
- Create a Word Wall with the vocabulary used in *Tiny Wonders*. Use these words to create a simple recount of this story.
- Use Talking Strips to tell your friend about this story.

First...	Next...	After that...	Finally...

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- Compare the first page opening with the last. What has changed? How has this change been made possible?
 - Looking at the first page opening, discuss which house is April's. How do we know?
 - In the vignette of April looking from her window, why is the background behind her yellow? How does this hint at the themes of hope and happiness that later unfold in the text?
 - Why, on the last page opening, are the people smaller than the flowers? What does this tell us about the place and power of nature?
 - In the role of the shopkeeper, sweeper or bus driver, retell this story. Alternatively, retell this story from a dandelion's point of view.



- What does the bunch of flowers on the front cover remind you of? Why do you think the flowers have been depicted in this way?
- In what ways is April herself a 'tiny wonder'?
- How do April's actions help her community? What can we learn from April?
- Consider planting and creating your own class garden. Investigate the life cycle of a flower.
- What place do flowers (or nature) play in your life, and in those of your loved ones? How are flowers used to bring happiness to one another?
- Take time to read more about the 'secret language' of flowers at the end of *Tiny Wonders*.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

Individualism reigns in the digital era, and people are paying less attention to their surroundings. I wanted to show how this appears from a child's perspective, incorporating the language of flowers.

In Korea, people consider the meaning of flowers when giving them to others. It's interesting how the message varies not only with the type but also the colour

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of each flower. I have not seen a picture book touching on this subject and I thought it could be special to explain and share the language of flowers with others.

So I tried to think of a flower that can be easily propagated (which has a dual meaning of spreading joy) and dandelions were perfect. Dandelion seeds are amazing flyers that can travel for miles. The flowers also have the meaning I was looking for: happiness.

I hope this story and illustrations makes readers happy long after the last page, like April, spreading wonder.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sally Soweol Han is a Korean-Australian artist who is passionate about creating stories and illustrating heart-warming picture books for all ages. She is fascinated with traditional techniques and most of her illustrations are hand drawn and painted. Sally was awarded a gold medal at 3x3 Illustration Awards 2017 and has recently been longlisted in World Illustration Awards. Sally is devoted to illustrating whimsical work for picture books, in the hope of delivering warmth and joy to all readers.