

Where?

AUTHOR

JORDAN COLLINS

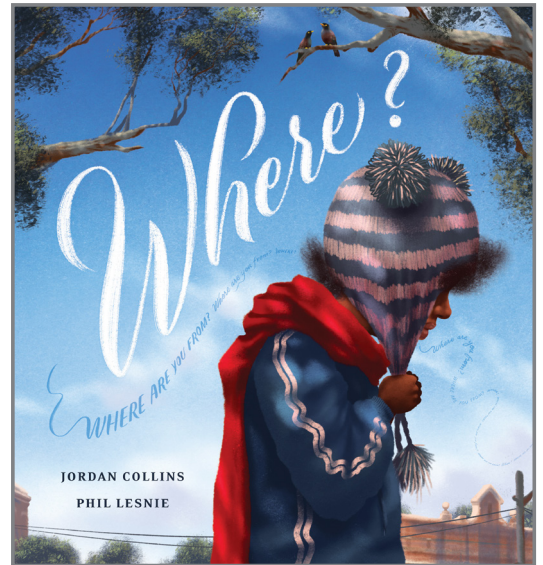
ILLUSTRATOR

PHIL LESNIE

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

'Where are you from?' they say.

What they mean is,

'Why is your skin that colour?'

'Why does your hair look like that?'

I am from the mountains,

The seas and the sky.

I am from children of millions of years,

A timeline of humanity.

I am from this planet

And all others.

A heartfelt picture book that challenges racism from an exciting new voice that is both a cry of pain and a demonstration of inner strength, which takes us on an intergalactic journey past collapsing stars and glowing nebulae to remind us not of our differences but of our shared humanity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jordan Collins was born in Chicago in the United States, moved to Australia when they were eight, and currently lives in Sydney. Growing up, Jordan wanted to be many things: doctor, vet, artist, marine biologist—but stuck with 'author' because of their love of reading. Jordan is African-American-Greek-Australian, which means they have dark skin and curly hair. *Where?* began as a slam poem that Jordan wrote after a lifetime of being asked questions like, 'where are you from?' They first performed the poem at the Poet's Picnic when they were fourteen. *Where?* has now been transformed into Jordan's debut picture book, illustrated by highly acclaimed artist Phil Lesnie.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Phil Lesnie is a Sydney-based illustrator of children's books. They are also a children's bookseller. It remains unclear if this is a conflict of interests. They often work in watercolour, and sometimes on an iPad; occasionally, without thinking, they will tap two fingers on a wet painting to undo it. Their picture book *Feathers* was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards, and their first three books were CBCA Notable Books in 2015, 2016 and 2018. But their first cat, Cassidy, is notable all of the time.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Look at the front cover of *Where?* and ask the following questions:
 - What does the title and the longer question below it suggest?
 - Does the title font suggest that this is a question that is spoken?
 - Might it be significant that the question is repeated many times?
 - Does the question being shown floating away and getting smaller in each iteration remind you of anything?
 - Does anything in the background image help you place where this story will be set?
 - What do you think the person in the foreground is thinking?
 - What was it about them that made you think this?
 - What do you think the story will be about now, after considering each of the elements on the cover?
- Open the cover to the book's endpapers (the pages that consist of a double-size sheet folded, with one half pasted against an inside cover, and the other serving as the first free page). Explain that endpapers can be purely decorative or set a mood for the story to come. Ask students which purpose they think these endpapers serve. Encourage them to explain what it was about this image that made them think that.
- Turn the page to the half-title page showing the person and their cat walking away from the reader, leaving the footprints behind. Ask if this page extends the mood that was set by the endpapers, and why?
- Before proceeding, explain that this book was written and performed by the author when they were fourteen years old at the Poet's Picnic in Sydney. Now, turn to the title page showing a group of people listening to the person on the cover speaking at a microphone. Ask students to compare and contrast this image with those that precede it. What do they notice? (Hint: same bird on both cover and title page, the title of the book is on the piece of paper, the previous images were solitary while this is of a group.) Ask them what they think the significance of this image might be and if it extends or changes the mood that was set earlier?

WHILE READING

- Read the story through once, slowly, and allow students plenty of time to explore each double-page spread closely. Once finished, ask students to suggest single words to encapsulate the story. Write these words on a whiteboard and keep them visible during all discussions. In a whole class discussion, encourage students to pinpoint what it was in the story—either words and/or images—that helped them choose their word. Point out specific words on the whiteboard if and when subsequent discussions allow.
- Ask students to raise their hands if they feel good when they are accepted and made to feel part of a group. Explore why they feel this way and why they might feel uncomfortable in a group of strangers. Returning to the book, ask if they think the person in the story feels like they belong when asked, 'Where are you from?' and why they might feel that way?

AFTER READING

- Break students into pairs and ask each pair to list the things that they share with their partner and their differences, keeping in mind all of the things they have learned in *Where?*
- Ask students what specific elements make this picture book a poem. Encourage them to find examples of poetic devices such as:
 - Repetition

- Rhyme
- Free Verse
- Metaphor
- Metre
- Juxtaposition
- Explain that a symbol is something that can represent an idea, object, or relationship in either word or image. According to Wikipedia, 'Symbols allow people to go beyond what is known or seen by creating linkages between otherwise very different concepts and experiences.' Find images in the story that symbolise:
 - Unconditional friendship and love (the cat)
 - Loneliness (hood pulled low)
 - Separation (the bridge)
 - Moving from the real to the imaginary world (a door)
 - The interconnectedness of all living things (the hill that is the profile of the author).
- Return to the double-page image of the author reading their poem to the group on the title page and ask why this image might seem even more significant after reading the story. (Hint: the people are ethnically diverse but part of a happy group sharing enjoyment in the reading of the poem.)