

The House on Pleasant Street

AUTHOR

SOFIE LAGUNA

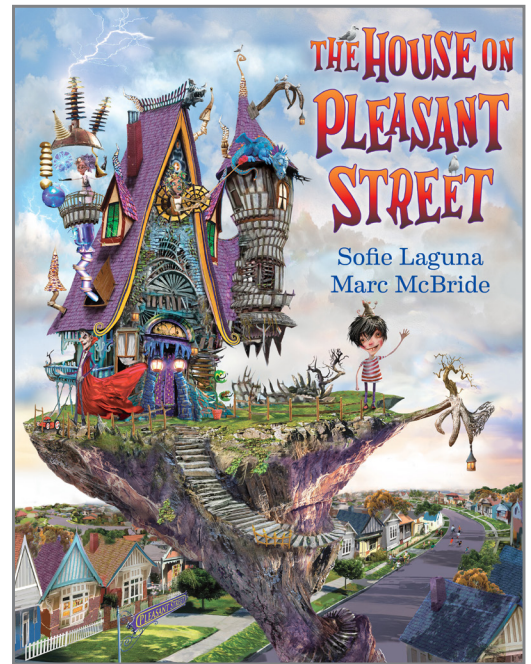
ILLUSTRATOR

MARC MCBRIDE

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

Alby and his family are new on Pleasant Street. Their house is perfect, with a great tree to climb, and a pool. Their pet Delia is still in training, but she's settling in just fine.

And tonight is Halloween—Alby's favourite night of the year—so ANYTHING could happen...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sofie Laguna's many books for young people have been published in the US, the UK and in translation throughout Europe and Asia. She has been shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Awards, and two of her books have been awarded as Honour Books by the Children's Book Council of Australia (CBCA). She is also a highly acclaimed author for adults. Sofie lives in Melbourne with her husband, Marc McBride, and their two young sons.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Marc McBride is the illustrator of Emily Rodda's New York Times bestselling Deltora Quest series, which has sold over 18 million copies worldwide and has become an anime TV show. He has illustrated more than 200 book covers and 10 picture books, including writing and illustrating *World of Monsters*. Marc has exhibited with the New York Society of Illustrators' international show, been shortlisted for the CBCA Awards and Aurealis Awards, and has won the Aurealis Awards twice.

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- Before opening the book, show the cover illustration and run your fingers over the title as you read it out loud. Explain that a book's cover tells us a lot about the story if you look closely for clues and ask a few simple questions, such as:
 - What sort of a story do you think this will be?
 - Do the colours and the lettering in the title (the font) help you guess what sort of story this will be? What is it about the colours or type that made you guess the type of story?
 - Does the illustration make you think the story will be a scary or funny story? Why?
 - Describe the sort of people who live in the 'unusual' house: what do they look like and what is each person doing around the house?
 - Where do you think the story will be set? Will it be a real or fantasy world? Or could it be a bit of both?

- Turn the book over to show the back cover and point out the dragon, walking tree, vampire and boy. Read out loud the words on the back cover and ask students if they might be able to guess which character will be Alby and Delia and what night of the year the story will be set.
- Open the book to the front endpapers and explain that this section often sets a mood for the story ahead. Allow plenty of time for students to come up with words to describe how the endpapers make them feel and write the words on the whiteboard. (Expect words such as creepy, old, frayed, dark, or dangerous.) Turn the page and look at the image of Alby and Delia and ask students if they think the words on the whiteboard apply to these characters.

AFTER READING

- Read the story through once, allowing plenty of time for students to find the real and fantastic elements on each page. After finishing, ask the following questions:
 - How are Alby's house and family different to the rest of Pleasant Street?
 - Why is Alby finding it hard to make new friends?
 - Why did the kids run away from Alby's front door on Halloween?
 - What trick is Alby teaching Delia to do?
 - Who accompanies Alby as he sets out to trick-or-treat on Pleasant Street?
 - What trick does Alby perform at the last house on Pleasant Street? Are people frightened by Alby's trick?
 - What 'trick' do the kids of Pleasant Street play on Alby and his family? Are Alby's parents angry about the trick?
 - How do Alby and the other kids of Pleasant Street feel about each other at the end of the story?
- Turn to the first double-page spread showing Pleasant Street and make a list of the things that students might describe as 'normal' about the image. (Hint: The homes on the left-side of the spread are very neat and suburban, the people are interesting but unremarkable, everyone is behaving as you might expect in such a setting—walking a dog, watering flowers, jumping on a trampoline.) Now find as many unusual things as possible on the right-side of the spread. Ask students if these unusual things seem even weirder, funnier and more out-of-place because they are next to normal things. Explain that the illustrator has done this deliberately for exactly that reason and it is called the 'contrast' effect.
- Picture books often tell two stories at once: one through illustrations and the other through text. And sometimes the two stories can be quite contradictory. Look at the image of Alby sitting around a table eating with other children. The text suggests Alby's a friendly child who is keen to make new friends and that he's a little puzzled by why he is struggling. The picture, however, tells us exactly why. Ask students why they think the children might be wary about making friends with him. Try the same exercise later in the story when Alby says he showed the kids his grandparents' workshop but we see so much more in the image—for instance, a child and dog have the sheet they're wearing blown clean off when they are hit by a bolt of electricity created by the grandparents' weird machine.
- Colour also influences how we read a story and think about its characters. Point out to students that our eye is drawn to Alby's father's cape in the opening spread and ask them what they associate with the colour red. Explain that without even thinking about it we start to associate these attributes to his father. Similarly, Alby and his parents' white faces and dark eye sockets suggest death and decay but as the story progresses, we find the family fun-loving, friendly and generous. Now turn to the image of Alby's grandparents in their workshop and ask students how the choice of colour here makes them feel about the grandparents. Turn the page and talk about the colours that make up Delia's scales. Are they cold and scary colours or warm and friendly ones? Compare the colours of the night's sky in the final image of the story with the rest of the book and see if students can come up with ideas why they are softer and more muted here.
- Compare the below three images of Alby and point out to students that our face and body tell a lot about what we are feeling and encourage students to guess Alby's emotions in each of these images. Make a list of features and the emotions they relate to—for instance: wide eyes + open mouth = surprise, pouting mouth or jutting jaw = frustration, wide and toothy smile = happy.
 - sitting on top of his tree outside the neighbour's house
 - encouraging Delia to 'flash'

- welcoming the neighbourhood kids who return to his house after see Delia's trick.
- The book's illustrator, Marc McBride, says *The House on Pleasant Street* is 'about the fact that we are all different on the outside but inside we are all the same'. Ask students to make a list of things Alby and his family have in common with everyone else on Pleasant Street. After completion, talk about how people around the world share many of these attributes irrespective of what they look like and where or how they live.