

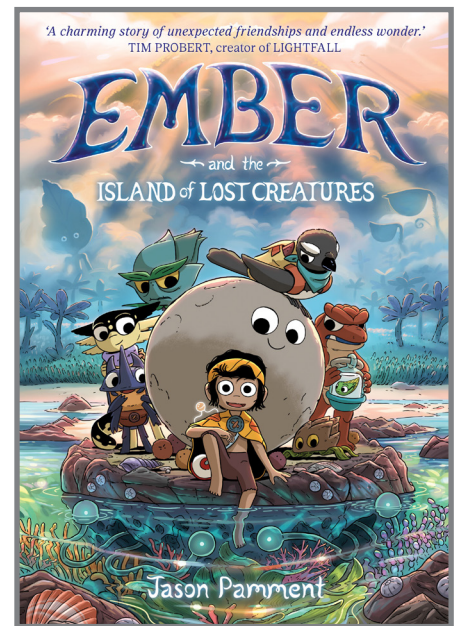
Ember and the Island of Lost Creatures

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

Fitting in can be hard, especially when you're as small as Ember. He's hoping his luck changes when Lua, a kindly sea turtle, escorts him across the ocean to a school for little creatures on a wondrous island. There, Ember learns that first days can also be hard—especially when they involve fantastical cave-dwellers, ferocious storms and classmates that aren't interested in making friends.

As he struggles to adapt to his school, Ember finds himself at the heart of an otherworldly mystery, facing a strange monster from the deep. And though Ember's classmates may seem of little help, any good student knows appearances can be deceiving—and friendship can come from the most unexpected of places.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Since he was very little, Jason Pamment has loved to dream up stories of adventures in vibrant worlds filled with strange and wonderful characters. He's a little taller now and lives in his hometown of Adelaide, South Australia with his wonderful wife, darling daughter and playful pooch. Jason's background is in animation, having designed award-winning films, children's television shows, music videos, commercials and video games.

Jason's writing takes inspiration from the places and events of his childhood, mixed with elements of mystery and adventure. His debut graphic novel, *Treasure in the Lake*, is set in picturesque landscapes reminiscent of the rural, mountainous regions of northern Victoria, a place Jason loved to visit as a child. In *Ember and the Island of Lost Creatures*, he draws from cherished holidays on the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia. Jason's stories speak to our emotionally tricky paths to adulthood, and are interwoven with themes of friendship, resilience and empathy.

STUDY NOTES

- The colours used in a graphic novel play an important role in setting the mood and tone of a story. Compare the gloomy and dark colours used in the city scenes with the pinks and purples of the ocean journey and the lush greens of the island. Choose one setting from the novel and write a paragraph on how the colours of that setting reflect Ember's relationship with it.
- Onomatopoeia is 'when a word describes a sound and actually mimics the sound of the object or action it refers to when it is spoken. Onomatopoeia appeals to the sense of hearing, and writers use it to bring a story or poem to life in the reader's head'. Examples of onomatopoeia in *Ember and the Island of Lost Creatures* include, 'RIP', 'HONK', 'SWIP' and 'RINGGGG' to name just a few. Graphic novels feature lots of onomatopoeic words—and these

are sometimes written in special lettering, so that the word also looks like its meaning and the sound! Find as many other examples of onomatopoeia in *Ember and the Island of Lost Creatures* as you can.

- The term panel is used in graphic novels to describe each sequential image and its accompanying words. Panels are often similar in size but can be bigger or smaller at points as another way to tell the story. Look at the images of Ember on p 11, where the panel of him sliding down the drainpipe takes up half a page, while the rest of the page is divided into three vertical panels. What is emphasised by making the top panel larger? Do the panels following this—which are taller and thinner—have an impact on our understanding of Ember’s size? Can you find other examples in the book where the size of the panel helps tell the story?
 - Panels can also be irregular shapes to create a dramatic effect, such as when Ember is falling from the leaves covering the wall outside Seawinds Elementary on p 19. Why do you think these panels differ from most of the others on the pages surrounding them? How does the slanted sides on each panel on p 19 emphasise the drama of his fall? Can you find other examples of irregular panel shapes in the story that create a similar effect?
- Frames are the lines and borders around a panel. In *Ember and the Island of Lost Creatures* the frames are usually thin black lines but sometimes appear differently to help us realise something has changed in the story. Turn to pp 138–141 to see different kinds of frames. Why might these ones be cloudy?
 - As a class, discuss what sort of frame might you use in a graphic novel to describe the following:
 - a lightning strike
 - a love scene.

Have a go at drawing one of these scenes.

- Most frames are unbroken in a graphic novel but on occasion an element in the panel can break the frame. There are loads of examples of this in *Ember and the Island of Lost Creatures*, such as Ember’s foot on p 19 and the pelican on p 45. Find three examples when this happens in the story along with an explanation in each example of how breaking the frame added to your reading of the story.
- A gutter is the blank space between panels in a graphic novel. This space is often, but not always, thin. Gutters may look simple, but they do a very important job because they help us understand when time has passed and things have changed. Look at the images of Ember cleaning the boat on p 123. In one panel, he is on his hands and knees and scrubbing the deck so thoroughly that he can see his reflection, and in the next he is below deck cleaning his porthole with a grubby face. The gutter helps us understand here that Ember has worked hard for a long period of time to make his new home hospitable. Can you find other examples of gutters doing something similar in the story?
- As in films or television, graphic novels use different shots—long, medium and close—to give the story depth. Turn to p 72 where we see an extremely close shot of Ember’s eyes wide open, followed by a long shot of his new classroom. The close shot of his eyes tells us he is surprised, and the long shot of the class tells us what he is amazed by. Can you find other examples in the story where the type of shot helped you better understand what is happening in the story?
- The angle—high or low—in which a shot is shown in a panel, also helps tell the story in graphic novels. High angle shots, such as the one on p 14 where Ember is looking down on the schoolyard, make him seem big and the students small, giving him the courage to send his message. Low angle shots, emphasise a character’s feeling of being overwhelmed or powerless, as is the case in the panel on p 22 where Ember is looking up at the schoolboy. Can you find other examples of high and low angles telling something about how a character is feeling in *Ember and the Island of Lost Creatures*?
- Lines and shapes communicate ideas in graphic novels, too. Turn to p 63 and look at the lines that show the trajectory of Boulder and Ember, as well as the star-shaped lines that show where Boulder comes to a stop. Can you find other examples of lines or shapes playing a similar role in the story?
- The shape of speech bubbles also tells us a lot about how a character feels or the volume at which they are speaking. Look at Ember on p 153 where the speech bubble is jagged when he is saying ‘STOP!’ and see if you can tell how he is feeling and whether he is shouting. On the preceding p 152, Ember is saying, ‘Psst. Boulder! You’re going too fast.’ Can you tell why the lines around this speech bubble are broken? See if you can find examples of speech bubbles that show a character is weakened or scared.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
CAROLYN WALSH