

What Stars Are For

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary

SYNOPSIS

Henry spends his nights exploring the world alone and wondering one thing: what are stars for? One morning, he decides to come out of his shell and ask someone. Can Henry find the answer to his question and make a friend?

From Margeaux Davis comes a moving story about curiosity, overcoming your fears and finding friendship.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Margeaux Davis is an emerging children's book illustrator as well as a soft toy and sewing pattern designer. She has a background in environmental education, working as a National Parks ranger; and loves to talk, write and think about the natural world. She spends her days drawing, painting and sewing from a tiny cabin studio in her garden, surrounded by macadamia nut farms and cow paddocks, on the far north coast of New South Wales.

THEMES

- Friendship
- Curiosity
- Nature
- Fear

STUDY NOTES

BEFORE READING

- The title of the book is *What Stars Are For*. What do you think the answer is? Compare your answer to the book as you read.
- Explore the cover of the book—does it hint at what the story is about?
- Read the blurb of the book aloud. What information does it give you about the following:
 - Who the book is about (character).
 - What happens in the book (plot).
 - Where the story takes place (setting).

WHILE READING

Comprehension

- List all the animals you see in this book?
- How would you describe Henry?
- Where does Henry explore?
- What are some of the questions Henry asks about the world?
- What words would you use to describe the setting of the book? What does the setting reveal about the story?
- Henry is curious, but sensitive—what are some of the things he’s afraid of in the book?
- How many animals can you count in the book? What do you know about each of them?
- What are some of the dangers that Henry faces in the story? What else is dangerous to a snail?
- How do you think Henry feels when the kookaburra laughs at him? Have you ever felt this way?
- What do you think makes Henry decide to be brave?
- What do Henry and Celeste have in common?

Literacy

- Do you ever struggle to find the words that explain how you’re feeling? Stories can help us build an emotional vocabulary full of words to explain how we feel. How many words can you think of to describe your emotions? Are any of these words used in the story? Compare your ‘feelings words’ to other people in your class and create a full list. Draw a picture to accompany each word that shows its meaning.
- Images can help us to understand the deeper meaning in stories, or to help bring the emotions of the characters to life. In picture books, we have both literal images (the pictures) as well as images created through the words on the page (this is called imagery). Look at one of the pages with no text. In your own words, describe what is happening on the page. Why do you think the writer hasn’t included any text on this page? How does it make you feel?
 - Now think about the kinds of phrases used in the text that create these images in your imagination—‘the softly falling rain’ is one. What other examples can you find?
- Writers sometimes use repeated phrases or images to emphasise a point or message in a story. In *What Stars Are For*, the writer uses the phrase ‘Henry hid himself away’ each time Henry’s question is rejected by someone. Why do you think the writer has chosen to repeat this exact phrase? How does it make you feel? What else could they have written instead? How would this have changed your feelings?
 - Can you find any other words, images or ideas that are repeated in the story?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Draw a map of all of the places that Henry likes to explore. Are any of these places familiar to you? See if you can find a snail like Henry and compare its environment to the pictures in the book, reflecting on the similarities and differences.
- What would you say to Henry? Complete the following sentence and draw a picture to accompany your response. Stars are for.....
- Become an explorer of the world. In the book, Henry lets his curiosity lead him through the world, exploring his surroundings and trying to understand how they work. Go on a nature walk and keep a diary to show your findings. You might want to document your observations of one place over a series of visits to see how it changes depending on the time of day or season. In your diary, include:
 - Notes that document your surroundings (when, where, what time, weather, as well as what you observe).
 - Photos or images to help document what you’ve seen.
 - Any questions you have, eg. what lives here? Why is this tree a different colour or shape?
 - Any evidence of creatures—poo, water, sounds, sightings, habitats.
 - Choose one of your creatures and write a short paragraph that imagines a day in their life. Give them a name and draw a picture to accompany your writing.
- How did the story make you feel? Did you like it?
- What would you say this book is about to someone who hasn’t read it before? Why would they want to read it?
- Discuss the ending of the book. Would you say it’s a happy ending? Why/why not? Discuss your responses with anyone who feels differently about it to you.
- What do you think might happen to Henry and Celeste next?

AUTHOR OF NOTES
BEC KAVANAGH