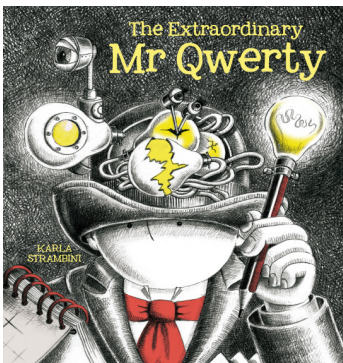


Walker Books Classroom Ideas



The Extraordinary Mr Qwerty

Karla Strambini
ISBN: 9781921720703
ARRP: \$27.95
NZRRP: \$29.99
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

Mr Qwerty worries that his ideas might seem strange ... so he keeps them under his hat. But extraordinary ideas refuse to stay hidden for long.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Born in North Queensland, Karla Strambini is the oldest of three sisters. At school Karla was usually found reading, or sitting under a tree inventing stories. After senior year she completed an Honours Degree in English Literature, because she wasn't able to study Art locally. However, she was passionate about both words and pictures and had always wanted to write and illustrate picture books. When her two children were almost grown up she completed a Diploma of Visual Art, and began work on *The Extraordinary Mr Qwerty*. Karla currently lives and works in Victoria as a Teacher-Aide.

How to use these notes:

Please note, Australian Curriculum links are provided for years 1-4, though this book works on many levels and could potentially be used with all levels of primary and secondary school. Please select activities based on the ability levels of your students.

These notes are for:

- Primary years 1-5
- Ages 5+

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Fiction
- Picture book

Themes/ Ideas:

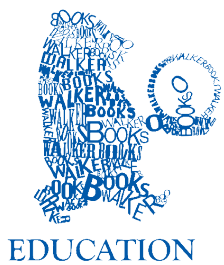
- Inventions
- Imagination
- Belonging
- Acceptance
- Friendships
- Difference

National Curriculum Focus:*

English content descriptions:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
ACELA1443	ACELA1460	ACELA1475	ACELA1496
ACELA1444	ACELA1462	ACELA1478	ACELT1602
ACELA1787	ACELA1465	ACELT1594	ACELT1603
ACELA1449	ACELA1469	ACELT1596	ACELT1605
ACELT1581	ACELT1587	ACELT1599	ACELT1607
ACELT1582	ACELT1589	ACELY1675	
ACELT1583	ACELT1590		Year 5
ACELT1584	ACELT1591		ACELA1504
ACELY1656			ACELT1608
ACELY1660			ACELT1609
			ACELT1610
			ACELT1612

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Karla Strambini on *The Extraordinary Mr Qwerty*

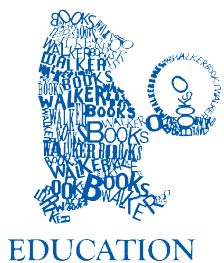
Mr Qwerty began life as just an image, and a few vague thoughts about the concept of normality. Is there any such thing as normal, and is it really preferable? I wrote the first version of Mr Qwerty's story in 2008 whilst studying Graphic Design. (You'll find that date in one of my illustrations.) Study commitments left no time to work on the book until the following year, when I finally abandoned computers forever, and switched to art. My first storyboard formed part of my assessment, and I was lucky to work in a studio-environment with quirky and supportive artists, who either didn't notice, or didn't mind that I was weird. At a literary festival in Marburg I met the author-illustrator Terry Denton, who suggested I show my book to publishers. Neither of the publishers I approached wanted to publish Mr Qwerty, but one of them wrote such a positive rejection letter that I was encouraged to keep trying. At the conclusion of my Diploma course, I put everything (including my bull calf) into storage, and moved to Victoria full of grand plans to become an author-illustrator. Even though I was lonely, broke, freezing and beginning to doubt whether my book was any good, I wrote Mr Qwerty a letter of introduction and sent him off to Walker Books to make a name for himself.



He has been re-written at least 17 times since then, and the book has had three or four working titles. The only things which haven't changed are Mr Qwerty's name, his clothes and his six fingers. He was originally painted in gouache, and then in sepia pen and ink. But because my editor liked the scribbly pencil illustrations I'd done for the storyboard, I experimented with pencil and small amounts of coloured pencil. However, I found it difficult to stop myself from colouring-in everything, so eventually we decided that I would illustrate the book in black and white, and that colour would be added afterwards, on the computer! (I think this was also to prevent a new illustrator from panicking too much.) Although it was a relief to start working on the final illustrations, I found the storyboarding process the most fun, because this was where I got to be creative and play with ideas. This was where accidents could turn into Eureka moments. It wasn't until after I began drawing the second storyboard that I knew what Mr Qwerty's "extraordinary" idea was going to be. (I didn't tell my editor that, of course.) Some of my best and most creative ideas came when attempting to solve design problems in a way which would keep both my editor and me happy, without compromising my vision for the book. Without an editor, the process of writing and illustrating a picture book would be quicker and much less stressful, but the finished book would certainly not be as good.



Karla's studio



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Discussion Questions and Activities

Preliminary questions

Before reading *The Extraordinary Mr Qwerty*, view the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:

- The title of the book
- The author
- The publisher
- The blurb.

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end?

Listen to the book being read aloud without looking at the illustrations. Then read the story while viewing the illustrations. Do the illustrations change your understanding of the story in any way? How?

On the front cover, the light bulbs inside Mr Qwerty's hat are a metaphor. What do they symbolise? Why would he have a light-bulb on the end of his pencil?

Why has the illustrator drawn cogs on the cover, copyright page and throughout the book? What do they symbolise?

On the copyright page, what do you think is meant by the mathematical equation (1 hat + 1 hat > 1 hat)? Keeping in mind the equation, what do you think is meant by the dedication: "with thanks to the many hats who made light work"?

Spread 1

A Picture Paints a Thousand Words

The first double-page spread in the book introduces Norman Qwerty, and is intended to tell you everything you need to know about the character.

By carefully studying the picture of Mr Qwerty's bedroom-workshop, and making inferences, how many things can you discover about Mr Qwerty? What are his daily habits, activities, skills, interests, likes, tastes, obsessions? What sort of person is Mr Qwerty?

Look at characters in paintings or other picture books, and (without reading the story) try to make similar inferences. Write a short story about the character.

Why does Mr Qwerty have the notebook contraption by his bed? Keep a notebook by your bed and write down or draw a picture of whatever you are thinking when you wake up. It could be something that you dreamed about or a brilliant idea you had when waking up. Bring your ideas to school to share with the class.

Why do the words "Norman" and "Qwerty" start with a capital letter even when they are not at the beginning of a sentence?

What's in a Name?

Where have you seen the word QWERTY before? (Look around your classroom.) Try typing his name on the computer. Can you type it with one hand?

Find out about the story behind the qwerty keyboard. Was the Qwerty typewriter the best model of typewriter?

Why do you think the author has named her character Norman? (Note: Karla's father is called Norman, but that is not the reason.)

What does the word "norm" mean?

What does the word "extraordinary" mean?

How is Mr Qwerty extraordinary or different to other people? How is he the same?

Typewriters are featured prominently in this book. Why don't we use typewriters any more? What has replaced them? How is a typewriter different to a word processor on a computer?

Sixes

Why do you think the author has given Mr Qwerty six fingers on each hand? (There could be more than one reason.)

How many other things appear six times on the first double-page spread?

In this story, does Mr Qwerty appear to be more or less abled because of his extra fingers?

Discuss people who might consider their differences or disabilities to be a positive strength, a desirable quality, or even an advantage or extra ability?

Find and read other stories (and/or write your own story) about a character with a difference or disability, who is therefore able to do something better than anyone else.



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Spread 2

Invention and Creativity

Apart from the zip-up striped suit for giraffes who don't want to be spotted, most of Mr Qwerty's devices have been invented to solve a simple problem which he encounters in his day-to-day life. He has invented a wind-up mouse-trap to chase the wind-up mice, a machine to stir his cup, a machine which delivers the precise squeeze of toothpaste and a machine to warm his socks.

Think of a problem that you face every day, and draw a picture, or build a model of a machine, to solve that problem.

How many examples of simple machines (cogs, wheels, pulleys, levers, inclined planes, screws) can you find in Mr Qwerty's inventions?

Spread 3

Where do ideas come from?

Discuss the idea of originality. Are any ideas completely new, or do they build on or adapt existing ideas?

What do you think the other characters are thinking about Mr Qwerty? Pick one of the characters and write a short story or a list of adjectives that describe what they are thinking during this spread.

Why is Mr Qwerty drawn on a separate page to the other characters?

How does the illustration on this spread match the text?

Spread 4

Mr Qwerty thought that nobody else in the world thought the way that he thought ... but he was wrong.

Discuss each of the hats on the double page spread in which the characters' hats change. What would it mean if your mind was like a lighthouse, an abacus, a cage, a merry-go-round, a hot air balloon, a teapot, or a science laboratory?

Draw a picture (or make a wearable hat) which is a metaphor for the type of mind that you have. Is your mind like a mixing bowl, a filing cabinet, a sponge, or a computer? See how many different similes your class can come up with.

Why is Mr Qwerty no longer on a page by himself in this spread? What is the author revealing about the other

characters? Do you think Mr Qwerty realises this yet?

Spread 5

Mr Qwerty was afraid that people would think his ideas were strange

Why is the man in the white coat and butterfly net chasing the girl with the blue scarf?

Why is this girl the only character with a mouth at this point in the story? When do the other characters get mouths?

Look inside Mr Qwerty's head. What does he think will happen to him if he tells anyone about his ideas?

Find and discuss examples of brilliant people throughout history whose ideas were at first considered crazy or wrong.

Make a poster or PowerPoint presentation on one of these historical figures. Why were their ideas rejected, feared, or laughed at? What happened to them as a result? How have their ideas changed the world?

Spread 6

... and he felt completely alone

How does this page make you feel? What is it about the illustration that makes you feel that way?

Mr Qwerty had people all around him. Can you be in a crowded space and alone at the same time? What is meant by "alone" in this context?

What does the image inside Mr Qwerty's head mean?

Spread 7

Can you find the moment in the book where Mr Qwerty first gets his idea to build the enormous bird? Was he inspired by any one else's ideas?

What do the traffic signs on this spread mean?

What is the author suggesting about the world in which Mr Qwerty lives?

How does the author show that she does not approve of these signs?

Why do these signs have pictures on them rather than words?



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Spread 9

What is happening to the other characters' hats? Why do you think this is happening?

Spread 10

This spread shows Mr Qwerty's little idea growing bigger and bigger. Can you think of a small idea you've had that got bigger and bigger as you thought about it more?

Spreads 11-12

What do you think Mr Qwerty's extraordinary invention is for? What would you name it?

How does the invention help the other characters?

Why do you think the man with the net has stopped chasing the lady with the blue scarf?

How many items from spread 1 has Mr Qwerty used in his big invention?

Spread 13

How might the world be changed by Mr Qwerty's invention?

Do you think the author is suggesting that Mr Qwerty's invention literally enables the characters to fly?

Spreads 14-15

... and Mr Qwerty was never alone. That is, unless he needed to be

Why might Mr Qwerty need to be alone sometimes? Do you ever need to be alone?

What is he inventing in his head on spread 15? What problem did he encounter on spread 14 to prompt the invention?

Ice-cream is featured on the last two pages of the book. How does ice-cream bring characters together and also set them apart from one another?

Can you guess the six flavours of Mr Qwerty's very unusual ice-cream cone? (Parsley, fish, lemon, strawberry, chocolate and chocolate chip). Would you like to eat this ice-cream?

Design a really weird ice-cream of your own, using all of your favourite food flavours. Place the scoops from top to bottom in the order in which you would like to eat them. What might the author be trying to say about personal taste/difference with this image?

After Reading

What do sentences begin and end with? Find examples of these in the book.

How many items pictured in the first double page spread, are used in Mr Qwerty's big invention at the end of the book?

Find other books in your school library about imagination and ideas. Have a class discussion about how these books are similar or different to *The Extraordinary Mr Qwerty*. Which book on this topic do you prefer? Why?

Hats

Hats are used in this book to represent the mind of the wearer.

Draw a picture of your own hat (or use the bowler hat drawing provided) and then fill the hat with your own brilliant ideas or thoughts.

Why have the other characters got locks on their hats at the beginning of the book?

Are all ideas good? Would it ever be better to lock ideas away? How can we decide which ideas should be heard, and which ideas shouldn't?

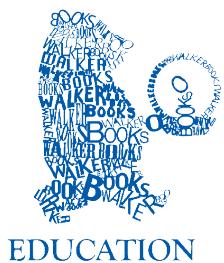
Colour

Why has Mr Qwerty's tie been coloured red throughout the book? What effect does it have?

Can you find the one page where Mr Qwerty is not wearing his tie? Where is the tie on this page?

What is the significance of the blue sky patterns on the curtains and scarf? What emotion does this light blue colour evoke?

What does the use of black and white artwork say about Mr Qwerty's world?



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Look at other books which use black and white drawings, and discuss why the illustrator may have chosen to illustrate in black and white. Do you think it would have been better if they had used colour?

Draw a picture in black and white, with one other colour used for emphasis. What did you choose to emphasise? How effective was it?

Design

How does the size and placement of the text on different pages convey meaning?

Signs and Symbols

A motif is a recurring element that represents an idea in literature or other artistic works. Identify as many motifs used throughout the book as you can (e.g. traffic signs, hats, etc.) What do you think these motifs symbolise?

History

Research a famous inventor. What did they invent? What inspired them to make this invention? Has the invention changed over time or is it still the same as when it was created?

Science

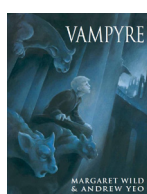
Scientific inventions are used to solve problems that directly affect people's lives. Pick five objects from your classroom and list what you think may have inspired the inventor to create that item.

Invent something that will help you solve a problem you face everyday. It could be a machine to help you get ready in the morning, or get to school faster or anything at all!

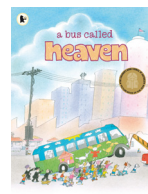
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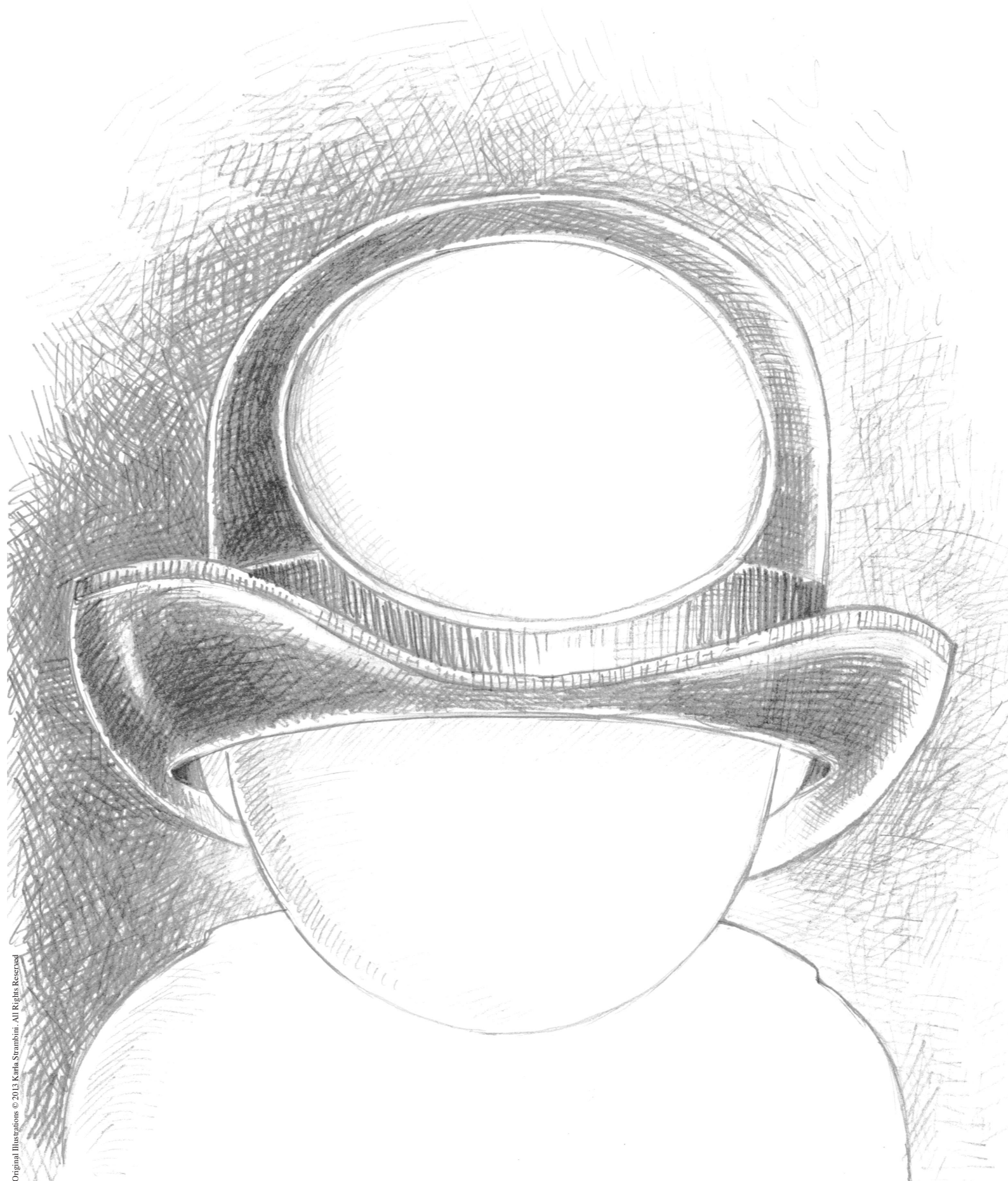
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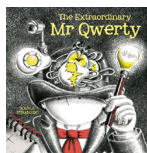
A Bus Called Heaven
Bob Graham
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The Extraordinary

(your name here)



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The Extraordinary Mr Qwerty

Karla Strambini