



Teaching Notes

The Umbrella

by Ingrid and Dieter Schubert

Synopsis

This delightful, wordless book tracks the magical journey of a small dog and a red umbrella.

It's a windy, autumn day when a Highland terrier discovers a bright red umbrella in the woods. The umbrella, like a magic carpet, whirls him up into the air and sails him across the world, over continents and oceans, the tropics and polar regions. With each turn of the page the reader is invited into a new panoramic landscape with its unique mix of flora and fauna.

The illustrations have the liveliness and vigour of the gusty wind that propels the little dog over the Earth. Throughout, it's the character of the little dog that is the focus of the story. It is he who introduces the marvels of the world to the reader, just as he is a marvel to the creatures he discovers. His expressive face and his humorous predicaments are the narrative behind the detailed and beautiful illustrations.

The Authors

Ingrid and Dieter Schubert were born in Germany. Together they've created dozens of books for children which are available in 21 languages. They are among the most successful illustrators in The Netherlands and their work has been exhibited all over the world.



Themes

This story explores the themes of adventure and experience.

On a wild and windy day, a small, black dog finds a strange object propped up against a tree. He approaches it with curiosity, and in no time at all he is in the air on his way to great adventures. The highlights and dangers of adventure can be read in the illustrations through the expressions of the dog as he experiences confidence, anxiety, exhilaration, fear, surprise, and bravery.

The dog's adventures expand his experiences and knowledge of the world. On the final page he is back in his everyday life, facing the future with confidence and experience.

The story ends with the second character, the cat, taking up the challenge and opportunity of adventure.

Activities

Students in years 1 and 2 will enjoy this charming story.

Wordless books give young readers wonderful opportunities to develop and practise their oral language and their story telling skills.

Read the book with a small group or with the class. Suggest to the students that they look carefully at the illustrations throughout the first reading, saving their comments until they have read the story through to the end.

At the end of this reading, facilitate a brief discussion about the story. Ask:

Who are the characters in the story?

What happened to them?

Where did they go?

Reread the story, spending more time on each double-page spread. Encourage the students to talk about their interpretations of the illustrations. Ask:

Where in the world is black dog now? How can you tell?

How is black dog feeling? How do you know?

What do the creatures in this place think of black dog? How can you tell?



Telling black dog's story

Reread the story in small groups, encouraging individual students to tell the story of each page aloud. Students can read the story to each other in pairs or in buddy reading, or they can read to a favourite stuffed toy. Listen for, and prompt the students' use of descriptive and sequential vocabulary. For example, "*arid desert*," *encircling animals*," "*Not long after*," "*The next afternoon*", *Two days' later*".

Listening to children tell a wordless story allows teachers to assess a student's oral vocabulary, language fluency, and book language, in a natural setting.

Mapping black dog's adventure

You will need a large map of the world displayed on a notice board and some coloured push pins.

Model the activity by working as a class on the first two double-page illustrations in the book. Discuss where black dog might live. Throughout the discussion refer to the illustrations and list the information that the illustrations provide. This includes:

- the wind
- the house, the road, street lights, the umbrella
- the trees and the leaves
- the dog and the cat.

Based on the information the class has listed, have the students consider where in the world black dog lives. Given that there are many countries where the details in the illustration can be found, the students can then decide where they choose to place black dog's home. Stick a pin on that place in the world map.

There are an additional twelve panoramic scenes in *The Umbrella*. Group the students in pairs and have them choose a scene they would like to explore for more information.

Have them list the facts they can find in the illustration. These facts should include:

- climate
- features of the landscape
- plants
- animals.

After listing the facts they can then decide where in the world this scene might be set. Some illustrations will require more exploration than others and students can use the internet or books to narrow their search. When they have reached a decision, they can stick a pin in the world map to indicate the possible location of their illustration.



When the groups have completed their task, bring the students together as a class and trace black dog's journey over the world by tracking where the students have placed their pins on the map.

Writing about stripy-tailed cat's adventures

At the end of the story it is clear that cat is about to grasp the opportunity for adventure. Have the students write a story about one of stripy-tailed cat's adventures and illustrate it in the style of Ingrid and Dieter Schubert.

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