

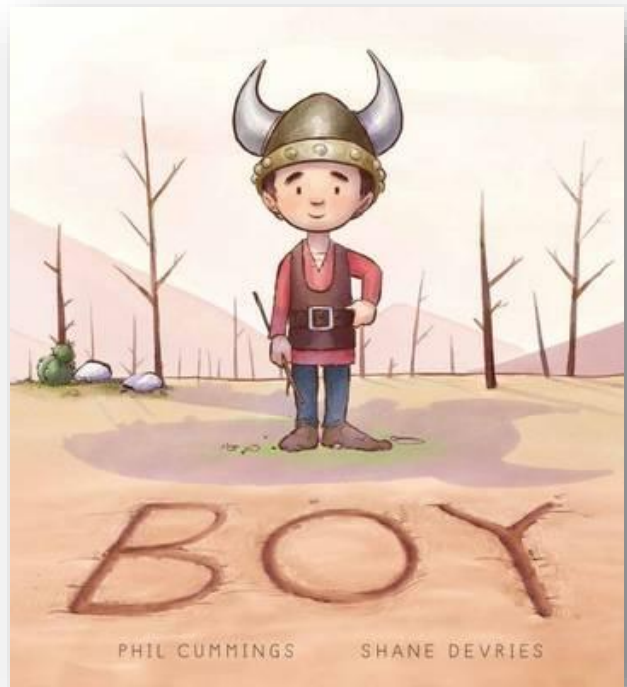
Boy

Author

Phil Cummings

Illustrator

Shane Devries



Boy couldn't hear, but he was happy. He spoke with dancing hands and he drew pictures for people in the sand.

A war between the king and the dragon is tearing the land apart.

Unknowingly, Boy runs into the middle of a fight. With a simple question, he makes them wonder why they are fighting, and helps them see how they could be much happier.

A new book from the CBCA Honour Award-winning team, Phil Cummings and Shane Devries, comes this tender tale of power and perception.

TEACHER NOTES

Writing Style

With few words, Phil Cummings says a lot. Not only does his text allow the illustrations to tell the story, but the incorporation of words into the illustrations make for a change in picture book style, where there is often a definitive line between text and image.

Illustrating Style

Shane Devries created the illustrations for this book digitally. He imitated water-colouring techniques with shades of pink, purple and browns. Loud onomatopoeia is incorporated into the illustrations, along with the more quiet text to translate the sign language.

Author motivation

BOY was inspired by a strong childhood memory. My cousin was deaf and one day, when I was about five years old, he came with his brother and sister to visit us. I am the youngest of eight children so there was quite a crowd. It was a cold day and five of us were playing noisily in the warm country kitchen. During the mayhem my sister began shouting to try and talk above the noise, she wanted to have her say but nobody would listen. I tried to join her chorus for silence and shouted with her but still no-one would listen.

And then, in a moment I have never forgotten, my cousin began moving his hands to sign and everyone fell silent. I was stunned because someone who I thought had no power in the politics of kitchen shouting had, through the power of silent, innocent gesture, more power than any of us. With this memory in the front of my mind, I sat to write BOY.

– Phil Cummings

Author Background

Phil Cummings was born in the small seaside town of Port Broughton in South Australia. He is the youngest of eight children with four brothers and three sisters. Life as a kid for Phil was a fabulous adventure. He was on a farm for the first eight or nine years of his life. When his family left the farm they moved to the mid north of South Australia to a railway town called Peterborough. His older brothers worked on the steam trains. The windows in his house would rattle constantly as the trains rumbled through the rail yards. When Phil left school he worked in a local garage, in the abattoirs and played sport constantly until he left to attend teachers' college.

Phil's interest in writing began with poetry and writing songs. With the beginning of teacher training, Phil was exposed to a great deal of children's literature, particularly picture books. Phil decided to sit down and write one! He soon learnt that writing for children was a lot harder than he ever imagined. Six or seven years after his first attempts, Phil had his first book published. He has since had dozens of much-loved books published, and has received great acclaim. Most recently his picture book *Ride Ricardo, Ride* (illustrated by Shane Devries) was named an Honour Book by the Children's Book Council of Australia.

Illustrator Background

Shane Devries is an illustrator from Adelaide, Australia. He creates visual development art for animation productions, illustrates books and loves riding his bike as often as he can. His picture book *Ride Ricardo, Ride* (written by Phil Cummings) was named an Honour Book by the Children's Book Council of Australia.

On illustrating BOY, Shane Devries notes:

'It was a great pleasure to illustrate BOY by Phil Cummings. His witty and touching story is a clever invitation to slow down and listen. So often the reason for conflict becomes lost amid the din of those who shout and clang the loudest. BOY demonstrates to me the power of listening to those quiet voices that ordinarily say little, however when heard, have much effect.'

Study Notes/Activities

- Before reading the book, look at the front cover. Have the students point out what they notice about the cover and list them on the board, (e.g. the bare trees, Boy standing in the shadow of the dragon's head, the stick in his hand etc). After you read the book, look at the list the students had written and see if those objects were involved in the story. Discuss foreshadowing.
- Explain what onomatopoeia is. Read the book a second time and have the students point out each time onomatopoeia is used.
- Australian Sign Language is called Auslan. Auslan is different to American Sign Language, New Zealand Sign Language and British Sign Language. Even though the speakers of all these languages can understand each other verbally, their signs are very

different. Research why sign languages are so different, and brainstorm as a class why the users of sign language would struggle to understand their foreign counterparts.

- Boy is deaf. This means he cannot hear anything. But he can still speak through his 'dancing hands'. Sign language is a real language that is complex and detailed. Use this YouTube tutorial to learn some of the basics of Auslan <http://bit.ly/2jVJow5> See if the students can talk to each other using just the sign language. If possible, get an Auslan instructor into class to teach the children.
- Drisana Levitzke-Gray is an Auslan advocate who is campaigning to have Auslan taught in schools as a language other than English. Watch her TEDx talk about deaf children and their access to Auslan <http://bit.ly/2cNcrgw>. Discuss the video with the class and explain anything they didn't understand.
- Imagine you were born without a language. As a class, brainstorm all the things you couldn't do if you didn't have a language. Discuss other ways of effective communication.
- Look at pp 21-22. Why are all the characters pointing at each other? What does the phrase 'pointing the finger' mean?
- The king and the dragon had been fighting because they did not talk to each other first. Each had jumped to a conclusion about the other. Have you ever jumped to a conclusion and assumed something? What did you learn from that experience?
- In the story, Boy acted as a mediator for the argument between the king and the dragon. Does your school have peer mediators? What is the role of a mediator?
- Boy provides a wonderful way to open discussion of conflict and effective communication. As a class, brainstorm how the king and dragon could have communicated better before fighting each other.
- No-one understands Boy's dancing hands except his parents. For everyone else, he draws pictures in the sand. Choose a well-known fairy tale, and draw it without using any words. As a class, see if you can guess which fairy tale each student has drawn. (Hint: look at pages 23-24 and how they use images inside the speech bubbles instead of text).
- Dragons are mythical creatures, which is why there are so many different interpretations of what they look like. Search different images of dragons and compare them to the one in the book. What are the differences and what effect do the differences have? Draw your own dragon and add whatever features you want (eg fire breathing, horns, scales, etc).