

KING OF THE
SKY

NICOLA
DAVIES

ILLUSTRATED BY
LAURA
CARLIN

For readers aged 4 + • 9781406348613 • Hardback • £12.99

Please visit the websites of the author and illustrator:

www.nicola-davies.com

www.lauracarlin.com



THE BIG QUESTION

(Keep the book inside a special bag or box to avoid showing the cover!)

Discuss:

- What does the title tell you about the book we're going to look at?
- What do you think might be inside the book? Why? (Helpful hint: always use the word *because*).
- Do you think it is fiction or non-fiction? (Always remember to back up your answer with a reason).



THE COVER

(Pull the book out.)

Discuss:

- Looking at the cover, would you change your answer?
- If you were the writer, what name would you give the man, the boy and the bird?
- Who do you think they are?
- What sort of bird is it?

Research:

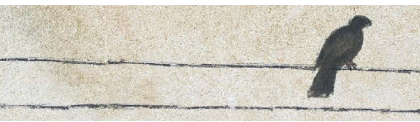
- Who are the author and illustrator? See what you can find out about them on the internet.



END PAPERS

Discuss:

- How many birds can you see?
- How has the artist illustrated these pigeons?
- Which is your favourite, and why?
- Find out about different types of pigeon, decide what media you would like to use to make your own sketches (pastel, pencil, paint, crayon, chalk, felt pen, ink). Choose names for them.



TITLE PAGE

Discuss:

- Find the dedication. Where is it written and what do you think it means?
- Can you add to/change your prediction of what this story may be about?



FIRST SPREAD

Discuss:

- Which person is the story written in and why do you think the author chose to do this?
- How do you think the character is feeling, and why?
- Why do you think '*No one spoke my language*'?

Create:

- Make a sketch of the scene the boy describes as you visualise it.
- What senses are involved in the description? What writing techniques can you spot?

Vocabulary:

- Find out what '*mutton*' means.



SECOND SPREAD

Discuss:

- Was your picture anything like Laura Carlin's illustration?
- What sort of media has she used, and what sort of feelings do you have, looking at the illustrations?
- When do you think this story might be set? Why?

Create:

- Write a haiku to depict the mood of the scene:

Line 1: 5 syllables

Line 2: 7 syllables

Line 3: 5 syllables

Brainstorm words, using a thesaurus and play around with the choice and order of the words until you are happy that they create the effect you want. Read it to a friend to see if they can suggest any improvements.

You might like to set it to music. Practise and perform!



THIRD SPREAD

Discuss:

- Why do you think there is a sign saying 'CLOSED'?
- What do you think the back story of this character might be?



FOURTH SPREAD

Discuss:

- What clues are given about where the boy is from?
- Why is the illustration of the building in outline only and all in one colour?

Vocabulary:

- Why are the pigeons in a '*loft*'?
- Compare the words used to describe where the boy used to live with the ones used to describe where he lives now.

Create:

- Try to capture where you live in five lines, with details that convey how you feel about it.

Research:

- Find out about St Peter's Square in Rome. Create an infographic or a one minute talk on Rome.



FIFTH SPREAD

Author technique:

- Spot the simile. Why do you think the author chose this image?

Discuss:

- Why does the boy say '*where the sky stretched all the way to Italy*'?



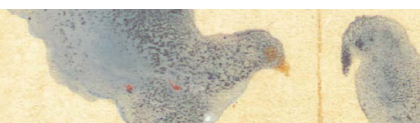
SIXTH SPREAD

Discuss:

- Look at this spread and enjoy it. Imagine the sounds and sights of a flock of pigeons in flight.

Create:

- Brainstorm words to describe the movement and noise. Play around with the words to create a poem to accompany the double spread of pigeons flying. (Helpful hint: you may want to use a thesaurus and think about rhythm and repetition).



SEVENTH SPREAD

Discuss:

- What does '*A lifetime down the mine had taken Mr Evans' breath away*' mean?
- Why do you think Mr Evans likes to see the pigeons fly?



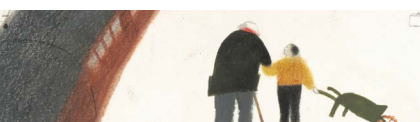
EIGHTH SPREAD

Vocabulary:

- Which words describe the pigeon?
- Why does the boy say '*Re del Cielo*'?

Discuss:

- How would you describe Mr Evans?
- How do you think the boy feels about the pigeon?



NINTH SPREAD

Discuss:

- Why do Mr Evans and the boy wheel the pigeon basket to the station on a barrow?
- How do you think pigeons find their way home?
- Why do you think they start by travelling a short distance away, gradually increasing the distance?

Investigate:

- Using an Ordnance Survey map of your area, locate a railway line and choose the nearest railway station as a starting point. Find out the names of stations further up the line and find out how far from the starting point they are, using the scale to help you.
- Draw a map and timetable to show where you will release your pigeon as you build up his/her skills in travelling further distances.



TENTH SPREAD

Create:

- Find a recipe for Welsh cakes, make a shopping list for ingredients and then make them. You could set up your own café, making your own menus.

Vocabulary:

- What does '*squinting*' mean?
- What does the idiom, '*Keep those young eyes of yours well peeled*' mean?
- Can you think of any other idioms with the word '*eyes*' in? (E.g. '*I've got my eyes on you.*' '*I've got eyes in the back of my head.*' '*Up to my eyes in it!*' '*An eyeful.*' '*You've got eyes bigger than your belly.*')
 - Spot the simile. Why has the author chosen this one?

Discuss:

- Why do you think Mr Evans believes King of the Sky will be a winner? What do you think?
- How is this double page spread different from the others?
- How many people can you see?

**ELEVENTH SPREAD****Discuss:**

- This double page spread also looks different. Why? Who is the character on the far left without a helmet?

Research:

- Find out about carrier pigeons used during the war. Why were they used? Would pigeons be used today in war zones? Don't forget to back up your answer with reasons.

**TWELFTH SPREAD****Discuss:**

- Why do the pigeons need race rings?
- How do you think the boy is feeling?
- What do you think the people over the fence are thinking? Add thought-bubble post-its with your ideas.
- What about the cat? What might be going through his head?

**THIRTEENTH SPREAD****Discuss:**

- What is special about the race that Mr Evans has on the entry form?
- Who does that cat belong to?
- Do you have any special hobbies or rosettes and certificates for something you have achieved?
- Prepare a one minute talk about something you are particularly interested in.

Helpful hints:

Think about:

- eye contact with the whole audience
- using gestures
- projecting your voice, speaking clearly and not too quickly
- not reading directly from notes
- not fading/rushing the end
- looking relaxed and confident, even if you're not!

**FOURTEENTH SPREAD****Discuss:**

- What do you think the boy means when he says, 'I wasn't sure it would come back'?

Research:

- Find pictures of trains painted by artists on art gallery websites. Decide which you like best and explain why.

Create:

- Make your own picture of a train journey. Think of who/what is on the train, where they are going and how they are feeling. Jot down ideas and write a short descriptive piece to go with your train picture. You could make accompanying music that suggests the movement of the train.



FIFTEENTH SPREAD

Discuss:

- What kind of homes does this double spread show?
- Where does Mr Evans live?
- If it's stormy, what do you think might happen?
- What clues are there in the picture that it is a stormy day?
- How do you think Mr Evans and the boy are feeling?



SIXTEENTH SPREAD

Discuss:

- Describe to a partner what is happening in the double spread.
- What clues are there to suggest where this scene is set?



SEVENTEENTH SPREAD

Discuss:

- Spot the difference. How is this double spread different from the similar one two pages before?

Create:

- In small groups, create a thought shower: gather words that could describe the weather, write them on post-its and try them out in different orders, reading them aloud and tasting the words. Which words work best and in which order. Use them to create a weather chant. Practise and perform to the class.



EIGHTEENTH SPREAD

Create:

- List all of the features you can see in the landscape. Think of adjectives and adjectival phrases to describe them in more detail.
- Writing from the point of view as the King of the Sky, describe your journey – it could be in poetry or prose. Think about how you might feel.

You could use a poetry pattern:

Soaring, I see

Gliding, I feel

Flying, I smell

Travelling, I know

Or:

Draw/create a 3D landscape – it could be a city/town/country or a mixture of these. Describe your flight above this landscape.

Or:

Create a scroll where the landscape and description unroll as your pigeon travels over it.



NINETEENTH SPREAD

Discuss:

- Spot the differences again!
- What do you think has happened to the pigeon?

Vocabulary:

- Collect a range of feeling words to describe how the boy is feeling over the passing days. Arrange them in order of intensity.



TWENTIETH SPREAD

Investigate:

- Consult an atlas to identify the body of water the pigeon is travelling over, if it is trying to return to Wales from Italy.
- How do you think a pigeon manages to navigate at night?

Create:

- Make your own night-time illustration. Consider first which media you want to use. You could try wax resist by using a combination of wax crayons, oil pastels and watercolour or inks or you could build up layers of collage using different types of paper and materials to create different effects.
- Think of a title for your work and create a class gallery.



TWENTY-FIRST SPREAD

Create:

- In pairs, write the dialogue between Mr Evans and the boy as a short play script. Add stage directions. Rehearse and perform, thinking carefully about accents, tone, volume, gesture and movement.
- Now imagine a different starting point for the pigeon's journey and write a short dialogue, detailing the sounds, sights and smells.

Discuss:

- Why do you think the old man's eyes '*blazed fire*'? What does this suggest about him?



TWENTY-SECOND SPREAD

Author technique:

- How does the writer build up the excitement when the boy goes outside to look for the King of the Sky?
- How does the illustrator echo this?



TWENTY-THIRD SPREAD

Discuss:

- What strategies does the pigeon use to find its way home?
- Why do you think the artist decided to show the bird flying past this particular window?

Create:

- Try to make a simple compass. Watch the video and have a go. You will need a needle, a magnet, a leaf and a pool of water. Have a go and test the accuracy with a manufactured compass. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HqW5m9yzgM&feature=youtu.be>



TWENTY-FOURTH SPREAD

Discuss:

- Why do you think the author has chosen not to give the boy a name?
- Why is the boy smiling and crying?

Create:

- Can you think of an occasion when you have smiled and cried? Tell your partner. Then write about it, remembering to add details to your writing to ensure the reader knows exactly how you feel, using the 'show, not tell' method. You might choose to write this as: a narrative recount; a poem; a comic strip; a play script.

Research:

- Find out more about Italians who settled in Wales. Make a time-line showing what you have discovered. Find old photos on the internet to illustrate your timeline. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/wales/entries/fdcff8e1-66dc-34e2-b279-a6e7280958cc>



END PAPERS

Create:

- Either:

Make an origami pigeon for a class display, suspending them from mobiles. You could write your own poems on them. An interesting site on the carrier pigeon which is now extinct has clear instructions: <http://foldtheflock.org/bird/>
<https://blogs.mhs.ox.ac.uk/innovatingincombat/files/2013/03/loC-Carrier-pigeon-origami-instructions.pdf>

Or:

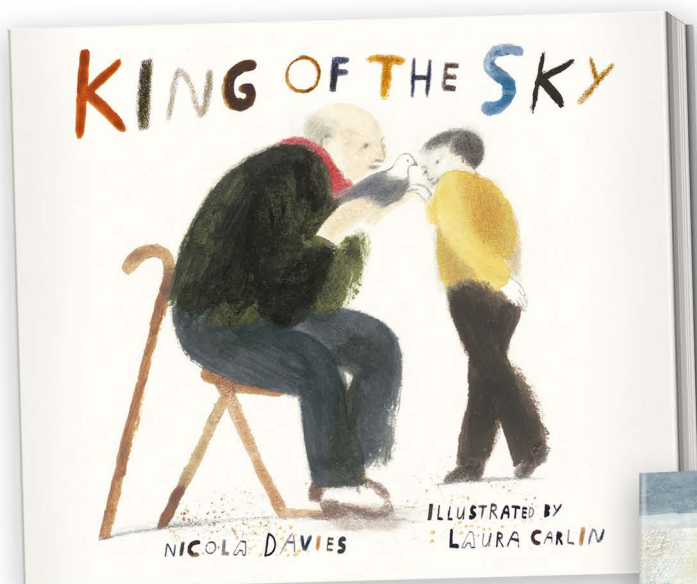
Design a pigeon puppet with wings that can flap.

Research:

- Find out about other people who have had to leave their homeland and the reasons why.
- Map their journeys out on a class world map and devise a key.
- Look at the author, Nicola Davies's blog for April 30th 2016 and read her thought poem: <http://nicola-davies.com/blog/?p=661> and visit: <https://witness.theguardian.com/assignment/5728a57fe4b0a2f120515071>

Create:

- Design your own chair and write your thoughts for refugees to add to the class world map display.



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THE PROMISE

Nicola Davies illustrated by Laura Carlin

For readers aged 5 +

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