



READ FOR AUSTRALIA

Part of National Literacy and Numeracy Week

29 July – 4 August 2013

Teacher Notes for Years 7-8

These notes are designed to support a group task to guide students' exploration of the text *Herman and Rosie* by Gus Gordon.

Have students work in small groups and allocate various sections of the text. Suggest students use the questions to guide their thinking as they read and interpret the pages in order to prepare to return to the group and discuss the book. Students are not expected to answer every question, rather the questions are provided to support students in considering a wide range of aspects related to author's craft.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

A student:

- **EN4-1A** responds to and composes texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure
- **EN4-3B** uses and describes language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts.
- **EN4-9E** uses, reflects on and assesses their individual and collaborative skills for learning

Guiding question: Are picture books just for little kids?

Visual

Read *Herman and Rosie* for enjoyment (at least once).

Reread more slowly and let the visual images and language enrich your reading as you observe the relationship between words and images.

As a critical study of *Herman and Rosie* as a visual text, consider the following questions.

- What do you see on the cover?

- What/ who are the protagonists?
- Anthropomorphism is attributing human qualities or traits to animals. How are the two characters like people? What do you think is the effect of doing this?
- What is Herman doing on the front cover? What is Rosie doing?
- Which way are they facing?
- What is in the background?
- There is a beige square on red, what can you see behind the beige square and protruding at the top? Might this suggest that the two characters are a duo and this is cover art?
- How does the back cover of the book suggest that Herman and Rosie are linked through music?

Inside cover

- What kind of patterns do you notice?
- How are we introduced to the main characters?
- How close do they live to each other? Do you think it is likely that they would know each other?
- What other information does the author add at this point?

Credits Page

On the credits page, we read a quote from Mark Twain: *I have at last after several months' experience, made up my mind that [New York] is a splendid desert – a domed and steeped solitude, where the stranger is LONELY in the midst of a million of his race.*

- Is Twain writing about a city or the countryside?
- How does Twain think people feel in New York? Does this seem unusual?
- Why do you think Gordon has incorporated this quote?
- There is a banner at the top of the building – what is the symbol on it? What significance do you think this might have?

Pages 1 and 2

- Can you identify a visual technique used that is similar to the one used on the inside cover?
- If the inside cover is the wide-angle view of the setting of the city of New York, what does this picture communicate about the setting?
- What can you see in the background?
- This is an example of Gordon taking real texts or artefacts and incorporating them into his visual representation of the setting. How does this item 'represent' the city?
- What is the effect of not adding detail to the buildings in the background?
- Do you imagine people living in this type of accommodation would have lots or few friends?
- The story starts, '*Once upon a time*'. This is commonly the first line in fairy tales. Comment on why the author has chosen this beginning? What expectations do you have of a text beginning in that way? Think about characters, the ending etc.
- Why do you think Gordon uses hand-written text as well as typed text?

Pages 3 and 4

- Are there any similarities in where Herman and Rosie live?
- Are there any similarities in their personal spaces and pastimes or activities?
- How does Gordon represent the sound in these pictures? What do you notice about the direction of the sounds?

Pages 5 and 6

- What visual cues does Gordon use to communicate the excitement of the city?
- What is the effect of having a black background?
- What is it reminiscent of? (What does it remind you of?)
- There is a stark contrast between the positive feelings of page 5 and those expressed on page 6. What can you say about the way all the figures relate to each other in the scene that supports the statement '*the city was a lonely place*'?
- What facial expressions communicate that feeling?

Page 7

- How has Herman personalised his workspace? Identify some objects that reveal who he is and what he likes?
- What is Herman supposed to be doing?
- What does he actually like about his job?

Page 8

- What visual techniques does Gordon use to depict (show) the atmosphere in the office environment?
- The coffee/tea stain at the bottom of the picture lets the reader see that this is, in fact, a picture that an author/artist has created. Why do you think Gordon does this?

Page 9

- What are the connotations (feelings) associated with 'uptown' and 'fine restaurant'?
- How are the ideas associated with this phrase about where Rosie works juxtaposed (contrasted) with the image of her actually working?
- How do you think she feels about her work? What visual clues make you think that?
- Compare size, colour and content of the picture depicting (showing) her 'day job' and that of her singing at the jazz club. What does Gordon communicate through this?
- Describe what Rosie is wearing. Why do you think she wears this?

Page 11

- As Herman walks past Schwarzmann's jazz academy what does he hear?
- He distinguishes this sound from what? How does Gordon emphasize the sounds that Herman hears?
- What is Herman's facial expression?
- How does Gordon use colour to communicate Herman's reaction to the sound?

Page 12

- What does the 'singing in his head' inspire Herman to do?
- How does Gordon convey (get across) the atmosphere/mood in the scene?
- How does Gordon use collage (sticking layers of texture or image) in this scene?
- Do you think this adds to or detracts (takes away) from the impression of the mood and setting? Why?
- How big is Herman in the picture compared with his surroundings? What is the significance of presenting him this way?

Pages 13 and 14

- What's Rosie doing and what does she hear?
- How does Gordon describe it?
- In the scene on page 14 how does the colour, layout and action give a sense of Rosie's positive demeanour after her 'toe-tingling' experience?
- What symbol of freedom is there in the background? Do you think this is significant? Why?

Page 15

- Why do you think Gordon has incorporated and adapted real postcards from different parts of the city?
- How has he shown the two characters in relation to each other? (How are they positioned on the card and which way are they facing?)
- What repeated visual symbol indicates the way the 'music was following them'?
- The text indicates a connection between them: 'Herman kept hearing that beautiful voice and Rosie kept hearing that groovy tune', but how does their gaze (the way they are positioned on the postcard pictures and the direction they look) create a sense of tension?
- Where do you think the tune comes from?

Page 17

- How does Gordon visually show the Boss' focus on sales figures? How does the Boss' workspace differ from the rest of the workers?
- What do you notice about the chairs in relation to the size and status of the two characters? How might this be a comment on who becomes boss?
- What do their facial expressions tell you?

Page 18

- The image of Rosie singing is either a flyer or a record cover and Gordon says she 'sang up a storm'. The next image shows the owner of the club. How is his body language different to Herman's boss?
- What is Rosie's reaction when she hears the club is shutting down?

Page 19

- What does Herman's body language communicate about how he is feeling?
- What's in the box that he carries?
- How is the reader meant to feel for Herman?
- How does Gordon show the sounds of the city are perceived as negative by Herman?
- How does Gordon show the buildings becoming something meaningless in the background?
- Why do you think Gordon inserts a map of the city onto the pavement under Herman's feet?

Page 20

- How do we know Rosie is walking the same street Herman was walking?
- What object makes the reader think the weather is stormy?
- It is called 'pathetic fallacy' when human emotions are attributed to inanimate objects. How does the description of the weather reflect the mood of a character? How might this image be an example of pathetic fallacy?
- What is the effect of this imagery?

- How does Gordon use colour to communicate mood in this scene?
- What might the colour and the way that it envelops the figure of Rosie symbolise (represent)?

Pages 21 and 22

- How is Herman feeling? What visual clues lead you to think this?
- Look at the image on Pages 21 and 22 – how are they similar?

Page 23 and 24

- How does Gordon communicate that ‘everything had fallen out of tune’?
- What do you think it means when it says that ‘Rosie lost her voice to the sounds of the city’?
- We see Rosie and Herman ‘waking up’ – this is sometimes used metaphorically. What does it mean in that sense?

Page 25 and 26

- We see a hand-drawn map of New York – the street names are not recognisable. What is the most crucial information on this map at this point in the story?
- The reader is privileged to see the paths of the two characters – how does this build tension?

Page 27

- The paths continue on the next page where the dotted lines end with Herman and Rosie at the same place. What do they do now?
- How do we see a connection in what they order?
- Do they walk away together? What visual clue tells the reader something in their state of mind has changed?

Page 28

- What does Herman do that indicates he is happier?
- How does Herman's state of mind affect the way the city sounds?
- When Rosie hears 'the familiar sounds of a groovy little jazz number', how does she react?
- What is the effect of making the images on this page small frames?
- We see Rosie silhouetted in the bottom row of three – how do these images communicate her sudden desperation to find the one playing the tune?

Page 29 and 30

- How does Gordon give the climax of the story visual impact?
- What object symbolises their common love of music?
- Why do you think the moon is the backdrop?
- How are the colours similar to page 5?
- On page 5, Gordon said Herman and Rosie felt 'anything was possible' – why might he use a similar colour scheme here?

Page 30

- In the final image, we return to the first line of the story, 'Once upon a time' and we see Herman and Rosie playing and singing together. Does this story have the typical fairy tale ending?
- How are Herman and Rosie positioned in relation to each other? Why do you think their eyes are closed?
- What do you think is the significance of the phrase, 'Rosie found Herman. And Herman found Rosie'?
- 'The city was never quite the same' for who? And why?

Optional Task

On the credits page, we read a quote from Mark Twain:

“I have at last after several months’ experience, made up my mind that [New York] is a splendid desert – a domed and steepled solitude, where the stranger is LONELY in the midst of a million of his race.’

Write an essay demonstrating how Gordon explores the issue of loneliness in the city with particular reference to his use of visual techniques.

Notes by Kier Perryman

Kier Perryman teaches in Ravensthorpe Western Australia. He left the cold shores of Scotland in 2007 to find warmth and sunshine down under. He is still teaching in country schools and enjoying running with the roos in the morning. He is often tempted by bright city lights, but wary of getting lost in the crowd.