



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

For readers 5 and up.  
Lower primary (K–2)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English; Creative Arts; Humanities & Social Science
- **General capabilities:** Ethical understanding; literacy; critical and creative thinking; personal and social capability; visual literacy

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- To discuss new vocabulary, respond to texts and share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts.
- To use and experiment with different materials, and create artworks to communicate ideas to an audience.
- To use the text as a springboard for general discussion and exploration of major themes.

## THEMES

- Creativity/imagination
- Identity
- Self-esteem
- Resilience
- Difference

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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## Blue Flower

Sonya Hartnett & Gabriel Evans

## PLOT SUMMARY

A young child describes her qualms about going to school and how hard she finds asking the teacher for help; how she feels shy about making friends, not being funny or a fast runner. But through her love of art, a conversation with her mother and her observations about nature she comes to see that being different might not be a bad thing after all.

A beautifully told picture book about self-esteem, resilience and the discovery that being different can be something wonderful. From award-winning author Sonya Hartnett, with stunning illustrations by Gabriel Evans.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Sonya Hartnett's** work has won numerous Australian and international literary prizes and has been published around the world. Uniquely, she is acclaimed for her stories for adults, young adults and children. Her accolades include the Commonwealth Writers' Prize (*Of A Boy*), The Age Book of the Year (*Of A Boy*), the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize (*Thursday's Child*), the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year for both Older and Younger Readers (*Forest*, *The Silver Donkey*, *The Ghost's Child*, *The Midnight Zoo* and *The Children of the King*), the Victorian Premier's Literary Award (*Surrender*), shortlistings for the Miles Franklin Award (for both *Of a Boy* and *Butterfly*) and the CILP Carnegie Medal (*The Midnight Zoo*). Hartnett is also the first Australian recipient of the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (2008).

*Golden Boys*, Sonya's third novel for adults, was shortlisted for the 2015 Miles Franklin Literary Award and she also published her third picture book, *The Wild One* in 2014.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Sonya says:

It always bothers me when I hear of children who are in any way different from their peers being encouraged to change their nature in order to fit in. Difference is something to be celebrated: those outside the norm contribute so much colour to the world. But individualism is not always valued, and it's definitely not easy to be different when you are a kid.

Standing apart from the crowd can be lonely, and fill a child with self-doubt. I wanted to write a story that spoke to these children – the loners, the shy ones, the awkward, the meek –and recognise the bravery with which they face each day.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



**Gabriel Evans** is a Western Australian children's book author and illustrator. Working primarily in watercolour and pencil, he creates books from a small studio near a river, surrounded by oak trees. His books are published internationally and translated in three languages. *Blue Flower* by Sonya Hartnett is his first picture book with Penguin Random House. Gabriel is an avid tea drinker and sketchbook scribbler.

## ILLUSTRATOR'S INSPIRATION

Gabriel says:

### Illustration/creative process

The illustrations were made using a combination of pencil, watercolour and gouache. I sketched out the entire illustrations using loose pencil work.



- Next, I lay down more refined lines – adding details and fine-tuning facial expressions and movement.



- I finish off by applying layers of watercolour with occasional highlights in gouache.



- I finish off by redrawing any areas that need further definition after the colour has been applied.



My technical approach changes between scenes at school and scenes where the main character is alone. When she's alone the artwork becomes softer, the colours brighter and the technique slightly more painterly.



### My thoughts



One of the most fascinating processes in illustrating a book is the first and second reading of the story. My mind explodes with images of characters, settings and scenarios. I jot many of these ideas in my sketchbook and they become the foundation stone for the final art. I can't overstate how important these first readings are to me.

When I first read the words, 'we watched them fly through the trees, singing their different songs. Most of the trees were tall and thin, but some were wide and narrow' I instinctively knew this spread would be a sweeping scene of billowing clouds, infused light and tree silhouettes. It was the one scene that stayed in my mind and became the anchor for how the last third of the book would look.

On first reading, 'we have art once a week, and I love art. When I draw pictures everyone gathers around,' my initial drawing showed just that, a scene of everyone standing around gazing at her painting. But it didn't feel right. Even though 'everyone gathers around' I felt that this was her moment to shine. Alone. Up until now we have seen a quiet, self-deprecating child weighed down by self-doubt and lost in the crowd. In this moment she blossoms into a confident 'blue flower' and this fills the page. This quickly became my favourite scene of the book.

This book was the perfect opportunity to combine my illustration style with my more 'gallery art' painting style. I am happy how the words and pictures combined have taken on a life of their own.

## THEMES

**'Children often need convincing that self-esteem is a choice, not something that you "get" once you are perfect. When children see characters in children's picture books on self-esteem choosing to love themselves for who they are, they are more likely to believe it and try it out themselves. This makes picture books a great tool for gently building self-esteem in children.'** <https://www.the-best-childrens-books.org/books-on-self-esteem.html>

- **Self-esteem, difference and resilience:** Using the language and events in the book children can learn about and discuss self-esteem, difference and resilience.
- **Our relationship to others and our identity:** Looking at the book's illustrations and text, students can identify how the main character relates to others and forms her own identity, realising what it is that makes her special. What things do students think make them special?

- **Creativity/imagination:** Using the illustrations in the book, children can identify parts of the story to link to their own experience. They can talk about the use of different colours, techniques and other things of interest in the art and also talk about the artist and his techniques.

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the front cover of the book. Read the title together. Can you see what the title *Blue Flower* is referring to? What do you think the story will be about?
2. Open the book flat and explore the front and back cover as one large image. How does the choice of colours and the scene that is illustrated make you feel?
3. Read the blurb at the back of the book. What do you feel about it? What kind of things are you now expecting to see inside the book? What questions do you have?
4. Just inside the cover, before the title pages and the start of the story, are some illustrated pages. These are called 'endpapers'. What do the endpapers in the front of the book show you? What do they add to what you've already guessed about the story?
5. Read the story aloud as a group, pausing to take in Gabriel Evans' delicate and beautiful artwork and observe all the detail and difference you can find on each page.

## KEY STUDY TOPICS

### Literacy, language and storytelling

#### Questions

1. How many characters are in this story? Do you think creatures other than people can be characters in a story? Can you think of other stories that have non-human characters?

#### Activity

1. **New Words:** Can you find three words in the book that are new to you? Try to work out what they mean from the context (the way they are used and what surrounds them).

### Self-esteem, difference and resilience

#### Questions

1. Has there been a time when you've felt uncertain?
2. What did you do to help you feel comfortable?
3. Did someone else help you?



4. What activities make you feel happy?
5. What activities make you feel confident?

### Activity

1. Memory drawing: Do a drawing about your own experience of feeling different or uncertain. Include something that helped you feel better.
2. Observing difference in the natural world: Gather a collection of leaves or flowers and notice all the many ways they are different.
3. Look at the many ways that people are different. Celebrate all of the differences that make you and your classmates special.

### Creativity and our imagination

The author used ink and watercolour paints with some collage for the artwork in this book.

### Questions

1. What do you notice about the very first page of the story? (Hint: what can you see?) What does it tell you about the character of this book?
2. What do you notice about the colours in some pages of the story compared to colours later in the story? How does it make you feel?

mural to show the beauty to be found in a collection of all that is different in nature.

2. Leaf Mural: Collect different shaped and coloured leaves and stick them onto paper, making patterns and admiring their differences. A lovely project for autumn!

### Activities

1. Paper Forest: Have the class make a paper forest together using simple collage. First, they could explore different plants – unusual plants, exotic plants, imaginary plants, interesting trees. Then individually or in groups ask them to create any kind of plant using coloured paper, tissue paper and any other collage items pasted on with glue. The individual plants could then be gathered into one large



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



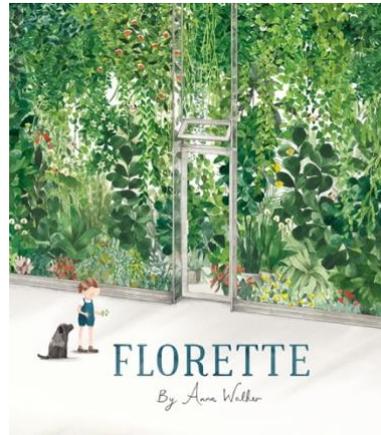
*The Wild One*  
by Sonya Hartnett & Lucia  
Masciullo

**Why this story?** Read another picture book by multi-award-winning author Sonya Hartnett that celebrates nature and difference, the wonder of the childhood and the importance of creativity.

Charlie met the wild one when he was young. Together they caught tadpoles, and watched spiders weaving webs. But as the sun rose and fell, and the moon circled the world, Charlie forgot the wild one's magic – until it was almost too late to remember . . .

From acclaimed picture-book partnership Sonya Hartnett and Lucia Masciullo comes a celebration of the wonders of childhood, the beauty of nature and the wild that lives in us all.

*Teachers' resources available.*



*Florette* by Anna Walker

**Why this story?** Read it as another example of finding beauty and difference in nature.

When Mae has to move house from the country to the city, she feels lonely and sad - until she discovers a beautiful place full of green in the centre of Paris. What she finds there sparks something special and beautiful that will make her feel much more at home.

*Teachers' resources available.*

# ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Blue Flower	Sonya Hartnett & Gabriel Evans	9781760894450	K-2	\$24.99		
The Wild One	Sonya Hartnett & Lucia Masciullo	9780670076970	K-2	\$24.99		
Florette	Anna Walker	9780670079414	Pre-1	\$24.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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