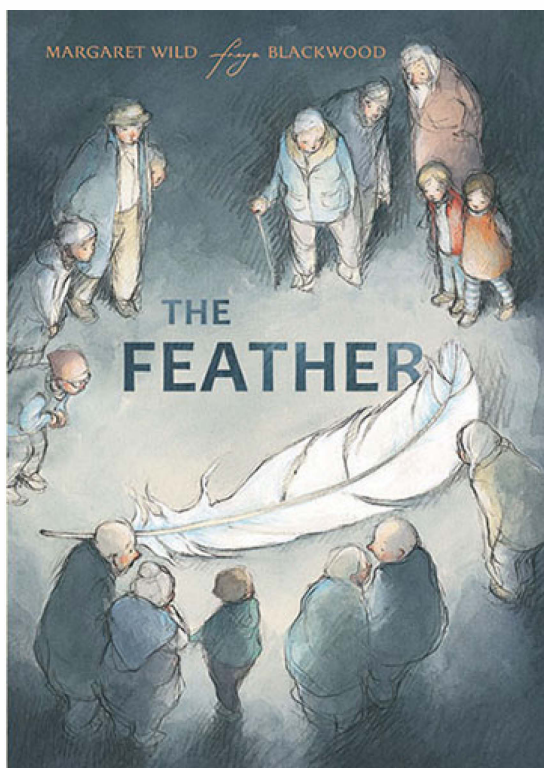


The Feather

Exploring the 2019 CBCA Short List: Picture Books



Parts in this unit

- [Field and context](#)
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Authors: [Freya Blackwood](#) and [Margaret Wild](#)

Publisher: [Hardie Grant Egmont](#)

Themes: Treasure, freedom, hope, potential.

Years: Australia Curriculum: English, Years 3 and 4. NSW Stage 2

From the publisher's synopsis: 'Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul'—Emily Dickinson

This is a story about hope, kindness and redemption set in a grey dystopian world. When a great feather drifts from the leaden sky, two children recognise its extraordinariness and take it to the village for its protection. The villagers, however, want to encase it, upon which the feather loses its radiance. The children take it home and care for it through the night. In the morning it is again radiant, and when they set it free it leaves behind the first signs of blue sky and colour. The ambiguous ending invites multiple interpretations about the effects of selflessness and kindness.

Unit writer: [Jennifer Asha](#)

Field and context

Building field knowledge

- Using large sheets of paper or [Wordle](#) ask students to brainstorm the denotative and connotative meanings of the words *treasure, belonging, freedom, hope, potential*, you might give one word to each small group of students. Then ask students to move around the room and add to the brainstorming of other groups, encouraging deeper and more creative thinking as more words are added. [ACELA1476 EN2-1A](#)
- Ask students to bring a treasure from home and share with class why it is a treasure, the special meaning it has for them and how they take care of it. The teacher may choose to model the type of talk, sentence structure and language choice required for such an oral explanation. [ACELA1475 ACELA1490 EN2-6B EN2-8B](#)

Exploring the context of the text

- The reader is prompted to ask many questions as they read and interpret the meaning of *The Feather*. Use 'thinking aloud' about the cover of the book and throughout subsequent reading aloud of the story to model and encourage higher order comprehension through posing questions that arise from the written and visual text of *The Feather*, such as *Why are the church and other buildings 'tumble down'? Where are Maria and Nico's parents? Why do the children live outside the town?* Ask students to write the questions that they have about the story and allow them to discuss the possible answers with a talking partner. Encourage the pairs to justify any answers to the posed questions with the evidence they see and read in the book. [ACELY1680 ACELY1692 EN2-4A](#)

Responding and exploring

Responding to the text

- What do Maria and Nico learn from their experience with the feather? Have you or your students learnt similar lessons in your life? Revisit the brainstorming products from the Building field knowledge activity. What message is Margaret Wild and Freya Blackwood possibly giving the reader? Ask students to give a written or oral response to the story providing the words from the brainstorming activity as stimulus and support for thinking and reflecting. [ACELT1596 EN2-8B](#)

Exploring plot character and setting

- Ask students to draw one of the characters from the story and annotate their drawing with the characteristics and personality traits shown in the story.
- Next, ask students to use their drawings to form groups of characters. Consider groupings according to various categories, for example; age, how Wild names them (the children are called by name but the adults are labelled according to their profession), their responses to the feather. Summarise the findings of the groupings to express how the protagonists and the antagonists are characterised. [ACELT1594 EN2-10C](#)

Creating texts

- Collect feathers from the playground or home. Look at them closely with magnifying glasses. Compare the textures of different feathers. Write jointly constructed and independent descriptions of the feathers

found and discuss what the feather in the story might symbolise, why Margaret Wild may have chosen a feather for her story. How may the impact of the story differed if she had chosen a leaf, a rock or some other aspect of nature? [ACELT1604 EN2-7B](#)

Examining

Examining text structure and organisation

- Conduct a close reading and viewing of *The Duck and the Darklings* by Glenda Millard and Stephen Michael King and compare the two books in terms of plot, character and setting. How are the themes of the two books similar? Though the illustrative techniques are very different are there any shared visual features? How are the central motifs (feather and duck) similar in what they represent in each text? Write some statements to express the central ideology of each or both books, for example; *The authors of these books are encouraging their readers to treasure things like love, friendship and kindness and not to take each other for granted.* [ACELT1602 EN2-10C](#)

Examining grammar

- Examine the written text closely and record the different verb groups used. Make note of the action verbs and adverbs associated with the feather. Take some of the feathers collected earlier and experiment with dropping them from a height, blowing them off your hand etc. Come up with more interesting verbs that could be used to express the movements you see. [ACELA1495 EN2-9B](#)
- Make note of the different adjectivals used to describe the feather throughout the book. Discuss the effect of the descriptions and keep this discussion in mind as you edit the descriptions of feathers from the Creating texts activity. [ACELA1493 EN2-9B](#)

Examining visual and multimodal features

- The front cover shows the feather and the story's characters as 'shot from above' with the reader positioned looking down on the scene. Find the other images in the text that are positioning the reader in a similar way and discuss *what point in the plot do these occur? How do they make the reader feel? Why might Freya Blackwood have made these illustrative choices?* [ACELT1605 ACELA1496 EN2-11D](#)

Additional and related resources and links to other texts: Find [teachers notes](#) (.pdf 528 kB) from the publisher.

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