

Teaching Notes: ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

Written by Vikki Conley
Illustrated by Lucia Masciullo
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SYNOPSIS

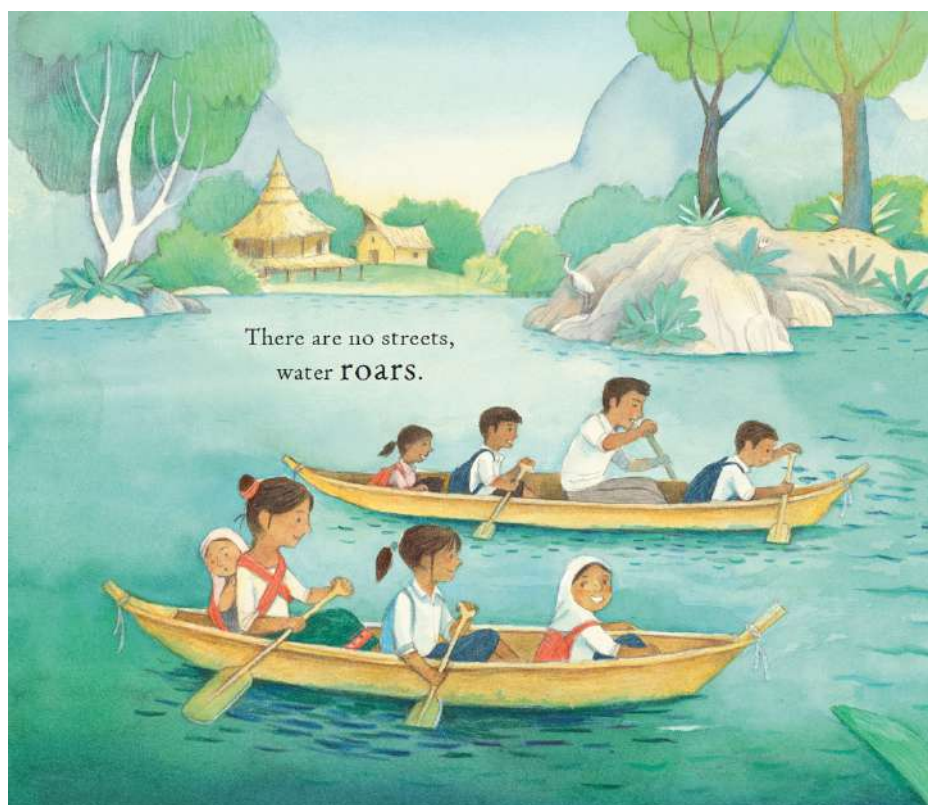
Every day, children all over the world are travelling to school – by bus, by canoe, through valleys, over mountains and snow. How do you get to school? With themes of diversity and culture, *On the Way to School* celebrates the joy and challenges of travelling to school.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vikki is an award-winning author with multiple internationally published picture books. She has worked as a professional writer with diverse communities in Africa, Asia and Australia for over 20 years. She is an intrepid traveller, nature lover and creative all-rounder. Vikki writes and shares stories that celebrate the spirit of wonder, freedom and adventure that she wishes every child could enjoy. Her title *Amira's Suitcase* became a CBCA Honour book in 2022, and *Little Puggle's Song* became a CBCA Notable book in 2020.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Lucia is an award-winning illustrator who loves to create whimsical characters and colouring with traditional techniques; mixing watercolour, pencil and collage. Born in Italy, she moved to Australia in 2002 and since then has illustrated more than thirty books. She currently lives on the Gold Coast.



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EDUCATIONAL APPLICABILITY

On the Way to School is an interesting and fun picture book exploring all the diverse ways that children journey to school across the globe. It's a celebration of the universal joy of childhood, friendship and learning – something that is relatable for children everywhere. The book provides a wonderful starting point for discussions about other cultures and lifestyles.

BOOK MOTIVATION BY THE AUTHOR

During my 10 years working for the international aid agency, World Vision, I met many children with extraordinary stories. I delivered readers to children in Somalia who had never seen a book, their classroom had holes in the walls and everything was broken from war. The children were sitting on a rocky floor and writing on stone, not pieces of paper. I saw children who walked, with no shoes, for hours to get to school along dusty roads in Africa. In Sri Lanka, I rode in a little tuk-tuk (motorcycle rickshaw) next to children who were doing the same, on their way to school. When my dad was little, he walked across paddocks to school with his mate, a dog and a pet magpie who rode on the dog's back!

I wrote this story to celebrate the diversity that our world presents for our children. We all have different ways to journey to school, and some of these are not easy. In places like Australia, America, Canada, New Zealand and the UK, we are fortunate to have many schools to arrive at and learn in, often with multiple classrooms and pencils and books. Many children, in poor and remote regions of Africa and Asia may not even have a classroom, they learn under a tree. But the joy of learning and being surrounded by friends is something that is shared universally – something that connects us all.

Written in rhyme, the sing-song text skips along like a child does on their way to school. I wanted to reflect the joy and movement, sometimes even the rush and intrepid adventure, of how children travel to school. I love using lots of figurative language, and onomatopoeia works well for expressing movement, emotion and joy! I also deliberately used lots of verbs to show all the many actions that children do on their way to school.



DISCUSSION TOPICS

Before, during and after reading the book



1. Introduce *On the Way to School* to the children and ask them what they think the story might be about.
2. Where do they think the children on the cover of the book live?
3. Ask the children how they get to school? Before they read the book, ask them to talk about the different ways of getting to school.
4. Which ways of getting to school seem the most difficult? Which are the easiest? Which are most surprising?
5. This book provides a great opportunity to talk about different cultures and physical and human geography. For example, in very hot countries, school is from 7am to 12pm because it gets too hot in the afternoon. In some countries, they have uniform and others, they don't, etc.
6. Have a look at the map at the end of the book. Can they place the children from the story to the correct area on the map? Can they name the continents and some of the countries?
7. After reading the book, ask them what did they think of the story? Which was their favourite part and why?



EXTRA CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ENGLISH

Grammar

Search for the verbs (action words) and adjectives (describing words) within the story of *On the Way to School*. Then write the **nouns**, **verbs** and **adjectives** in different colours for two sentences in the book.

Figurative language

There are lots of examples of onomatopoeia in the story. Try and find them all! Then use them in your own sentences.

Narrative writing

Make up a story about what happened on the way to school. It could be based on a real story that has happened to you, or you could make it up entirely.

GEOGRAPHY

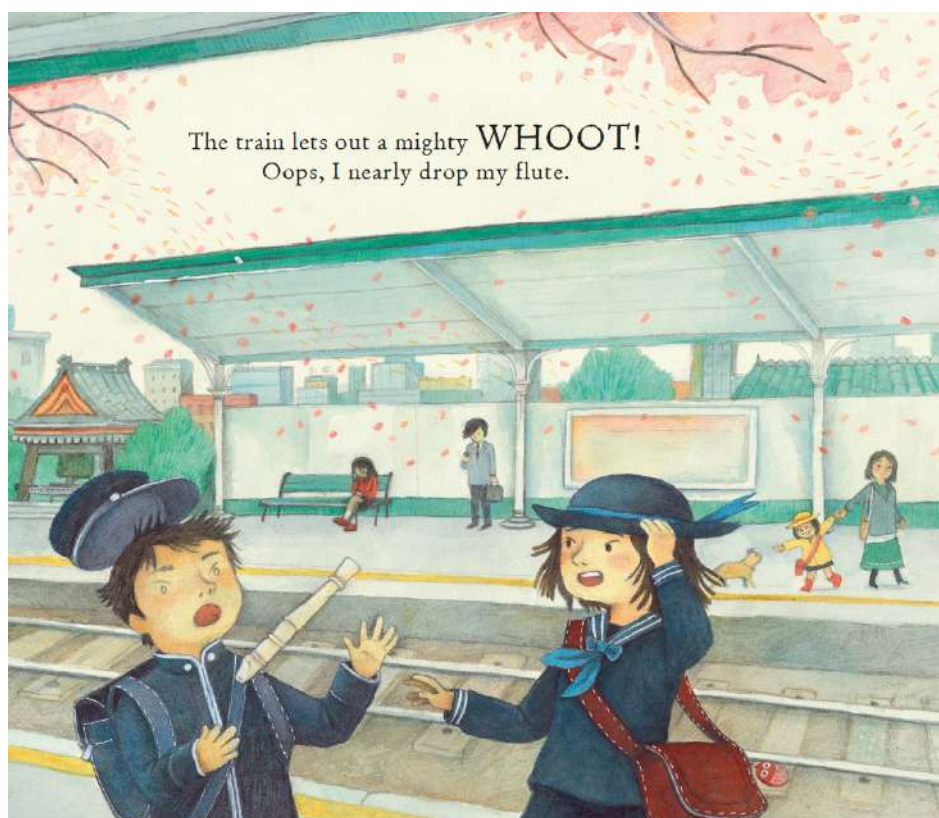
Pick a country/region from the story, for example, countries in Africa, India, Latin America and Asia. Research how children go to school, what their classroom is like and what are some of the challenges for them to get to school.

ART

Design a school uniform.

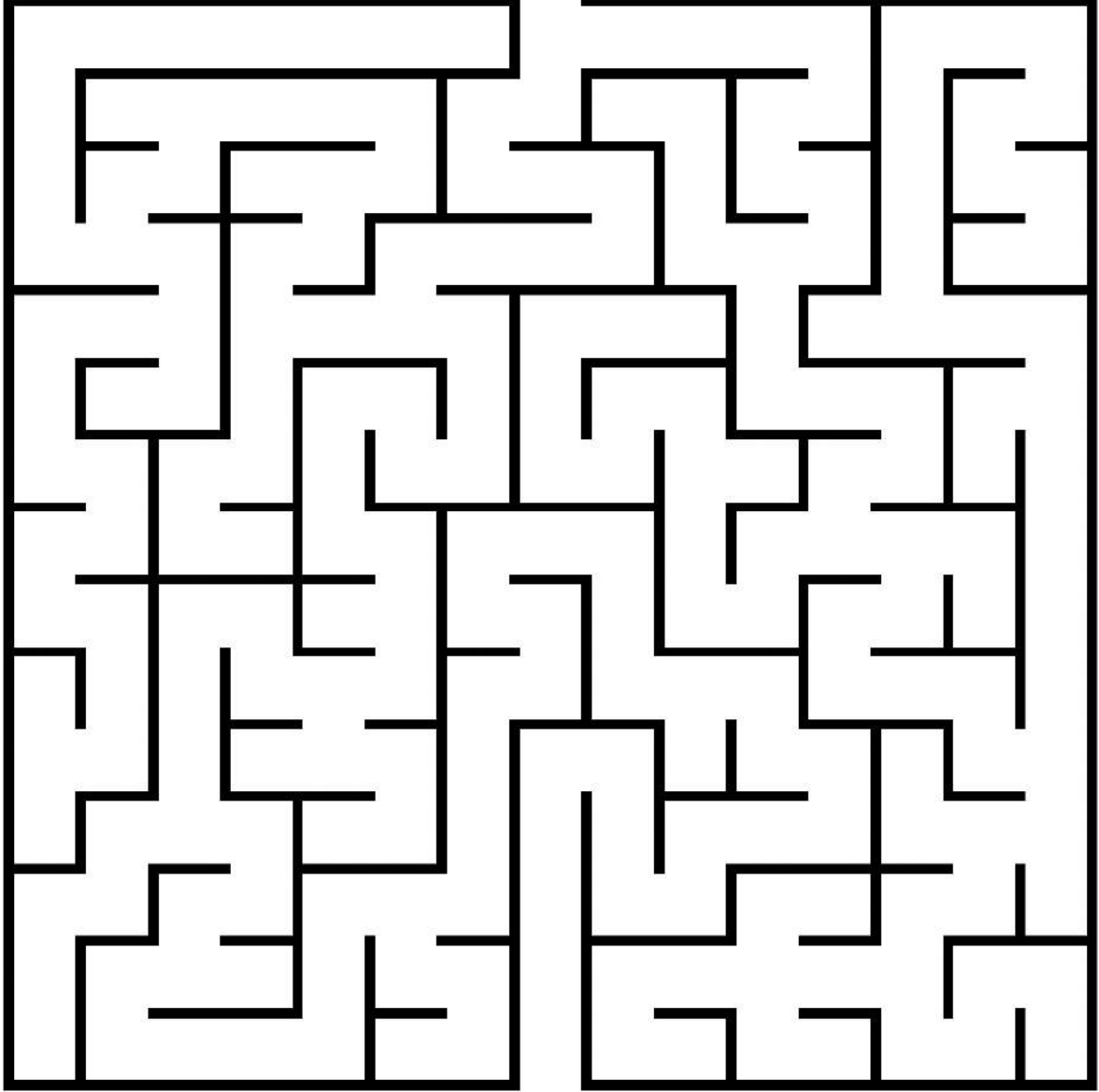
PERFORMING ARTS AND FOOD TECH

Listen to some music or learn a dance from one of the countries/regions from the story. You could also cook a meal from one of the regions.



A-MAZE-ING JOURNEY

Help the children find their way to school.



FUN
ACTIVITY!

HOW I GET TO SCHOOL

Draw a map of how you get to school. Include your house, your school and any important things you pass on the way. Remember to draw what transport you use, too.



A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a child to draw a map of their route to school.



IT MAKES SENSE

Think about the things you can SEE, SMELL, TASTE, HEAR and FEEL on the way to school. Write them in the boxes below.

SEE

SMELL

TASTE

HEAR

FEEL

DRAWING ACTIVITY

Draw a picture of another way you might travel to school. It could be something you actually do, or it could be inspired by something you saw in the book. Or you could use your imagination to come up with a make-believe way to arrive to school. Helicopter? Jet pack? Riding a cow?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing activity. It occupies most of the page's width and height.

Mooo

