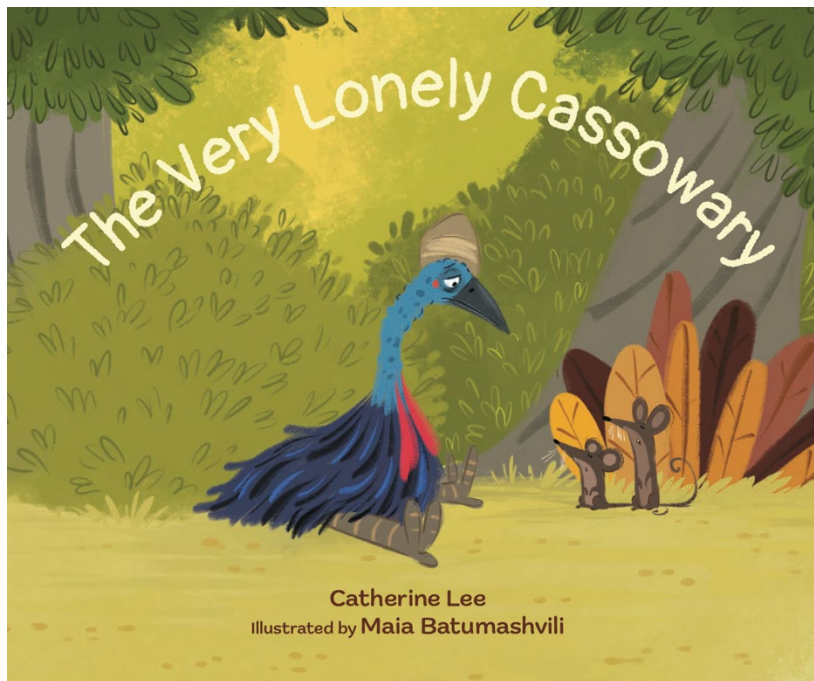


The Very Lonely Cassowary

Teaching Notes

Author: Catherine Lee
Illustrator: Maia Batumashvili



Synopsis:

Connie is a cassowary living on Australia's Gold Coast. Unable to fly, she feels different to the birds around her. But when Connie discovers that cassowaries can be found living in the tropical far north of Queensland, she embarks on a determined journey to meet her kin, making friends and enjoying new experiences along the way. The Very Lonely Cassowary is a touching story that encourages readers to celebrate their individuality and the qualities that make us special. The story also features striking artwork that compliments the themes, characters, and setting.

About the author:

Catherine Lee lives in Australia with her husband and two little girls. She stumbled into children's writing after many hours of imaginary play with her eldest daughter. With a Masters in Business and a degree and career in communications, Catherine has always had a passion for writing. When she's not playing or reading with her girls, she loves to explore the great outdoors and go on adventures to far-flung places.

About the illustrator:

Maia Batumashvili was born in Tbilisi, Georgia in 1978. Since a young age, Maia has loved to draw and is inspired by the children's books and cartoons she grew up with. After graduating from two art institutes, Maia worked on an animation project before finally realising her dream of illustrating children's books. When Maia is not creating imaginative worlds, she enjoys spending time with her three beautiful children and her dog, Tayo.

Teaching Notes			
Responding to the text			
<u>Discussion</u>			
Why do you think Connie feels lonely? How do the other birds make Connie feel?			
How do you think Connie feels by the end of the book? Why?			
Take time to think about the story. What do you think Connie learns about herself? How does she learn?			
<i>Author note - Connie learns that being different and having unique abilities can be what makes you great.</i>			
<i>Themes explored - loneliness, self-belief, and celebrating our uniqueness.</i>			
Responding to the text: Year Level Ideas			
Foundation: respond orally to each question using simple statements.	Year 1 – 2: respond orally with a complex sentence using ‘because’. These can then be written down.	Year 3 – 4: respond by writing a discussion piece. Start with an opening statement, give two evidence statements, and finish with a closing statement (one paragraph).	Year 5 – 6: At the end of the book Connie uses her unique abilities to rescue a cassowary chick. Consider something you do well and how you’ve used that skill to help someone or something. How did it make you feel? (two paragraphs)
Improvising on text			
<u>Discussion</u>			
Think of an animal that is a little different or has a unique ability. Students improvise with the text using their own animal example.			
Improvising on text: Year Level Ideas			
Foundation: Complete as a class. Teachers can rewrite, replacing the sentences from the text with different problems/scenarios. Students can illustrate.	Year 1 – 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can work in small groups or individually to search for unfamiliar words in the book, create word walls from them and try to use them in their own writing. Students can use their voices to bring the stories to life – should they read faster or slower, louder or softer? Or use different voices for different characters? 	Year 3 – 6: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can experiment with different characters, write from a different perspective or write a different ending. Students can use a variety of creative writing skills, i.e. poetry, play writing or writing in first person narratives like diary entries. Students can use their voices to bring the stories to life – should they read faster or 	

slower, louder or softer? Or try an accent or different voices for different characters?

Questioning

Foundation – Year 6: Here are some suggested questions you might like to ask as you read the text. These are to promote discussion and as a result may have multiple answers.

Before Reading

- Looking at the front cover, how can you tell the cassowary is lonely?
- Have you read any other books recently that have a character who is lonely? Why was this character lonely?

During Reading

Literal Questions

- Why was Connie lonely?
- What are Connie's unique abilities?
- Why do the birds tease Connie?
- Why do you think the other cassowaries Connie meets don't seem to be lonely?

Inferential Questions

- Have you ever felt like going to a new place (i.e. a holiday or outside in nature) has helped you see things differently? Explain your answer.

By Myself Questions

- How do you overcome feeling alone?
- What are some of your unique abilities?

After Reading

- What do you like/dislike about this book?
- Do you think Connie will return to the Gold Coast or stay in Far North Queensland (FNQ)? Why?
- Do you think Connie would have been able to realise her unique abilities without going to FNQ? Discuss as a classroom.
- How do the illustrations add to the story?
- Why do you think it's important to have lots of different types of birds and animals in the world?
- What will happen if we don't look after the birds and animals?

Reader's Art & Theatre

Foundation – Year 6:

- Theatre- In small groups, students take on the role of the characters/narrator and practice/perform the story. Then present to their class. Students can also present any improvised story as a reader's theatre.
- Art piece/ mural – paint, draw, design scenes from the book that evoke emotion or a perspective of the story.
- Music – put the story to music. How is the story emotion enhanced with music/sound effects?