



TEACHER'S NOTES

TITLE

This Small Blue Dot

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Zeno Swords

OUTLINE/OVERVIEW

With a strong message of interconnectedness, hope and empowerment, *This Small Blue Dot* follows a little girl exploring the big and small things in life. From contemplating our place on this 'blue dot' to the best Italian, Chinese and Indian desserts, the book provides a broader, more inclusive view of who we are, where we come from and where our dreams may take us.

Delivering big lessons with playful humour, the precocious young narrator shares her take on nature and environment, wisdom from elders, broccoli, embracing difference and the power of imagination. *This Small Blue Dot* captures not only lessons on life but also the sense of fun and strangeness that comes with being a member of the human family on planet Earth.

TARGET AGE GROUP

5 – 7 years old.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Zeno Swords holds a combined Bachelor Degree in Arts/Media and Communications (Creative Writing Major) from the University of Melbourne and a Graduate Certificate in Migration Law from The Australian National University. He has worked as a freelance feature writer for The Age and has contributed short comics work to Top Shelf Productions alongside being a contributing writer and artist for Meanjin Quarterly. While working for the

Australian Consulate General in Shanghai, he volunteered as a Cultural Affairs Officer and was awarded a writing grant from the Australia Council of the Arts in 2003. He is a member of the Society of Children's Books Writers and Illustrators.

This *Small Blue Dot* is inspired by Zeno's previous work experience as an advocate for refugees and other migrants at the Migration Review Tribunal and as a Volunteer Telephone Counsellor at Lifeline.

THEMES TO EXPLORE

- Multiculturalism
- Nature and the natural world
- Family
- Friendship
- Likes and dislikes

LINKS TO CURRICULUM

English, Critical and creative thinking, Art and craft.

APPLICATION IN THE CLASSROOM

- Interaction during reading:

This Small Blue Dot uses a delightful combination of colour, movement and emphasis to allow for an engaged reading. Words are stressed by underlining, size and placement on the page, encouraging the reader to be animated.

Direct the children to notice how the narrator is drawn in black and white and how her interaction with the world and her own imagination are expressed through colour and movement. What happens at the end of the book when she shares her joy and amazement about the world with her younger sibling?

- Brainstorm
 - Ask the children to identify what is special/unique about the narrator. What is she interested in? What is she good at?
 - Ask the children to get into pairs; they should select someone they don't know very well. Have the children tell each other something that they are good at or something that makes them special. Have the

children share their responses with the class and create a mind map of all the things that the class contributes to the world with their uniqueness.

- Outside activities
 - Take the children outside. Ask the children to explore their surroundings. What has Mother Nature created? Look under rocks and up the trees? What about the sky? Are there clouds? Is there a garden at your school? What is growing there? Have the children show each other what they have found.
- Movement activity
 - The narrator uses her imagination to create silly dances. Prior to the class, create some cue cards with various motion lines (see pg 12). Play some music for the children and hold up the different cue cards and have the children make up a dance move based on what they see.
- Language and storytelling
 - Ask the children to reflect on who makes up their family. Do you have younger siblings? Older siblings? Do you live with a grandparent? What do you do together on a Sunday? What foods do you eat? Do you have a favourite dessert like the narrator?
 - Create a story about a time your family did something special together. You may ask the children to share this story with the class.
- Arts/craft activities
 - The narrator likes pears and butterflies but doesn't like broccoli. Allocate the children some paper and crayons. Ask them to create a whole new world and populate it with all the things they love.