

## Teacher notes: *Not Just a Book*, by Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross

### SYNOPSIS

A book is never just a book.

From the dream team that is Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross comes this delightful story about one of the world's most wonderful objects – the book. This beautiful book about books celebrates reading and the physical enjoyment of holding on to a well-loved favourite. It follows a young girl as she discovers that a book can be for reading, playing and imagining. She learns that a book could be a hat, a building block or even a flower press – the only limit is imagination. And, of course, there's one magical thing all books can do.

### THEMES IN THE BOOK

*Not Just a Book* celebrates, encourages and invites a love of books and reading for all ages. By exploring the many joys of reading – from a sleeping aid to a method of escape – this gorgeous picture book highlights the positive impact a life-long relationship with reading can provide.

This book is also a delightful exploration of imagination, and the way an ordinary object can be transformed. The character in this book and her lovely cat find many uses for a book other than reading, like catching fairies, shooing away bears and using as a prop for games of make-believe. It shows students the importance of imagination and creates a link between being a reader and being a dreamer.

*Not Just a Book* takes care to show that reading is both fun and informative. Students can experience this celebration of knowledge and discover that learning doesn't have to be a chore. It encourages readers discover on their own through the pages of a book.

### STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the book, ask students to guess what it might be about. If this book isn't just a book, what else could it be?
- As a class, discuss what students love about reading or being read to. Do they find it fun, or boring, and why?
- Ask students to bring in the favourite book for a show-and-tell session. They can tell the other students what they love about this book and why.
- Have the students draw a new cover for their favourite book, and explain why they've used the design they chose. Discuss the elements that are on the cover of every book, like the title and the author and illustrator names.
- What other things could you do with a book? Is there anything this character has missed? As a class, create a list of all the other things you can do with a book and ask students to illustrate these ideas.

- Where do you like to read? Who reads to you? Ask students to draw a picture of their perfect way to settle in with a book.
- What other everyday objects have many uses? Pick an item and encourage the class to discuss and draw the extraordinary things they could do.
- The character in this book presses flowers between the pages of a book to preserve them. Take the students on a walk to collect flowers and press them between the pages of books, making sure to place something heavy on top. Two weeks later these flowers will be dried and pressed, perfect for using to make bookmarks!
- At one point the main character in this story gets quite shy and hides behind a book at a party. Ask students to share a time they have felt shy, and how they cope with that feeling.
- The character in this book learns a lot from reading. How can books make you smarter? What topics would students like to read about? Discuss as a class how books help you to learn and how information books are different to story books.
- Keep a list of the books you read as a class so students can look back on them at the end of the year. Discuss which books were the favourites, and why. Did everyone agree, or were there a lot of different opinions?

### **JEANNE WILLIS' BIO**

**Jeanne Willis** was born in St Albans and trained as an advertising copywriter at Watford College. She worked for various agencies creating press adverts and TV, cinema and radio commercials. She is now a full-time writer. Her hobbies include gardening, reading (non-fiction), natural history and collecting caterpillars. She lives in North London with her husband and two children.

### **TONY ROSS' BIO**

**Tony Ross** has illustrated over 800 books, which are published all over the world. *Dr Xargle's Book of Earth Tiggers* was shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway Medal and *Tadpole's Promise* won the Silver Medal in the Smarties Prize 2003. He was the British choice for the Andersen Medal 2004. *The Nanny Goat's Kid* was shortlisted for the Roald Dahl Funny Prize 2010. He lives in Rutland.

### **MARKETING & PROMOTION**

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