

The Flying Optometrist

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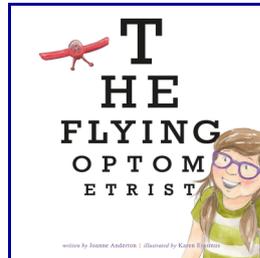
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**PICTURE BOOK OF
THE MONTH**

The Flying Optometrist travels in his little red aeroplane from his practice in the city to a remote outback town. Lots of people are waiting for him! Aunty can't see well enough to carve her emu eggs and Bill the plumber has a splinter in his eye. Young Stephanie can't wait for him to arrive as she has broken her glasses and can't join in games of cricket and have fun with her friends — she can't see the ball! Hurry up Flying Optometrist! Where is he? Is he lost? The townsfolk wait with bated breath until finally the Flying Optometrist's little red plane appears, having only just missed a bad storm. A big meal waits for him in the local hotel. Then he gets to work checking eyesight. The Flying Optometrist doesn't have long, but he helps as many people as he can. He returns to the city, but Stephanie has to wait a little longer for an exciting package to come — her own new glasses! This whimsically fun picture book features lively non-fiction sections about the 'real' flying optometrist and the history of aerial rural services in Australia, including the Royal Flying Doctor Service.



Teacher Notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher. A full version is available on our website.

Themes:

- Optometrists
- Rural Living
- Royal Flying Doctor Service

Discussion Questions & Activities:

- The cover of the book is inspired by an eye chart. Have you seen one of these before? Where? Using cardboard and a texta, make your own eye chart. If you stick it up on the wall, can you read the small letters at the bottom?
- Look at a map of Australia. In this story, the Flying Optometrist flew from Newcastle on the coast of New South Wales to Wanaaring, more than 900 kilometres inland. What would he have seen along the way? Wanaaring is a tiny town. Do you think living in a tiny town is different from living in a big town or city? How?
- What would it be like to go to school in a tiny town? Sometimes in the outback there is no school, so children there have 'the school of the air' instead. What do you think 'the school of the air' is? The school of the air uses radios and computers to connect children and teachers across the country. What do you think it would be like to go to school that way?
- Why does the Flying Optometrist visit Stephanie's town?
- Why does Stephanie need to see him?
- What other characters in the book also need his help? Why?
- Why didn't the other children choose Stephanie for their cricket team? How do you think she felt when they didn't choose her? Do you think the children should have asked Stephanie to play on their team?
- When Stephanie has her new glasses, how do her friends treat her? How do you think that makes her feel?
- In The Flying Optometrist, what is the weather like? Is it hot or cold, dry or wet? How do you know?
- Do you think the weather in the outback is different from the weather on the coast?
- If you visited the outback and it was hot, what sort of clothes would you take? What about if it were cold or wet?
- Optics is the science of light and includes the study of sight. Optometrists use optics to help people to see better. They find out what kinds of lenses people need in their glasses. We also have lenses in our eyes. A lens is a piece of transparent material. Have students try these simple experiments:
 - * Find out what happens when you look through different transparent materials. Dip a straw or a pen in a glass of water. Look through the side of the glass. What do you notice about the straw or pen? (The straw looks broken. This is called refraction, and it's what the optometrist uses to test and correct your eyesight)
 - * Look at something. Now look at the same thing through a piece of plastic. How does that change what you see?
 - * Now, try this with a piece of cellophane. How does that change what you see?
 - * Place a piece of paper on your desk and hold a magnifying glass up to the window. See the way it casts sunlight on the paper? Move the magnifying glass up and down until the light is a small, bright spot. This is called a focal point.