

Lamont Books Standing Order

September 2012

Teacher Notes and Activities

Coming Home

By Sharon McGuinness & Illustrated by Shannon Melville

ISBN 9781921633775

\$24.95

'I wonder if it's dark and lonely in that other place ...'

Gemma watches her dad as he sits alone in his tangled garden. She doesn't understand why he seems so sad.

Can she help her dad find his way home?



Teacher Notes taken from those prepared by the publisher, Wombat Books. A full version is available at www.wombatbooks.com.au/teachers.html

Due to the theme of this book, it is designed for upper primary and lower secondary students.

Themes:

- Depression
- Family Relationships

Discussion Points:

- After reading the first few pages of *Coming Home*, what were your first thoughts about Gemma's dad?
- What do you think Gemma was feeling when she looked at her Dad sitting in the garden?
- What did Gemma's mum mean when she explained the father's illness as 'something you can't see'?
- Can depression be visible? How do you know Gemma's dad is depressed by reading the text?
- Gemma refers to her dad being in 'that other place'. What does she mean by this?
- What is the significance of the title *Coming Home*?
- Why do you think the author used symbols of plants and a garden extensively throughout the book?
- What feelings do the author and illustrator leave you with at the end of the story?
- What things make your students happy? Students may even draw their responses. Ask them what they think has helped Gemma's dad begin to feel happier.
- Look at the beginning and final endpapers. How do these symbolise the beginning and ending of the story?
- Look at the illustration featuring the father reaching out to the warm sunshine. What does this represent?

Activities:

- Students could develop a Reader's Theatre script and perform in front of the class.
- Design a postcard and send it to someone the students care about. In it, instead of asking "How are you?", use "Are U OK?" instead. The Black Dog site (www.blackdoginstitute.org.au), has a page with a selection of eCards teachers could use as an example.
- As an art activity, students could use the endpapers as inspiration and create their own version. These could also be scanned and used in book trailers.
- Colour plays a key role in the illustrations of *Coming Home*. It also has a role in the two key organisations that assist people who experience depression—Black Dog and Beyond Blue. Ask students what is 'blue' to them? This could lend itself to an art activity.