

# Lamont Books Standing Order

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*Teacher Notes and Activities*

## Rules of Summer

By Shaun Tan

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*Rules of Summer* is a deceptively simple story about two boys, one older and one younger, and the kind of rules that might govern any relationship between close friends or siblings. Rules that are often so strange or arbitrary, they seem impossible to understand from the outside. Yet through each exquisite illustration of this nearly wordless narrative, we can enjoy wandering around an emotional landscape that is oddly familiar to us all.



Teacher Notes have been adapted from those supplied by the publisher, and prepared by Robyn Sheahan-Bright.

### Themes:

- Rules
- Friendship & Companionship
- Disagreements/Rivalry
- Suburbia and the Urban

### Discussion Points & Activities:

- This book begins with the line: '*This is what I learned last summer*' and then each page contains a rule that begins with '*Never*' until the last few rules, which begin with the word '*Always*'. Some of these rules seem a bit strange - for example, '*Never leave a red sock on the clothesline.*'

To children, some adult rules might also seem a bit strange - for example, why must we never leave our knife and fork on the table but rather leave them neatly together on a plate when we've finished eating? Why should we wear a uniform at school?

Discuss rules with students. Are there rules that they feel are necessary or unnecessary? Are there rules that they think are silly? Are there rules that they really don't understand at all?

If you have older students, discuss whether they think the author might be making a point about rules in the story? What point do you think the author might be making?

- Invite students to come up with a rule beginning 'Never' or 'Always' and then to paint a picture that illustrates the possibilities suggested by that rule. Encourage them to either create a rule that is important to them, or to come up with a rule that might be silly.
- Friendship is often governed by rules as well. We learn to expect certain things from a friend and to act in a certain way with them. Examine the pictures and see if you can observe the rules that govern the relationship between these two boys.
- The two friends (or perhaps brothers?) play together and yet there is always a sense that they are rivals too. One is bigger than the other. What other signs of rivalry do you observe in this book? What happens when the boys fight?
- Invite students to paint a picture of their suburb, then to place themselves in that painting with a friend, a pet or an imaginary creature. Give a title to the painting.
- Create a model of one of the strange creatures in this visual text.