Ruben

By Bruce Whatley
Publisher: Scholastic
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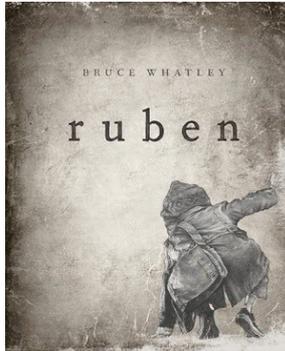$29.99

Ruben's dreams were of places that made no sense to him.

Places that didn't exist. At least not anymore.

Ruben lives in a safe place in a city that takes everything and gives nothing back. He begins to feel that he is in danger and ventures to Block City where he meets Koji. She too has been hiding from the dangers of the industrial city and its excesses. Ruben and Koji realise that if they combine their knowledge of how the city works they can find a way to escape . . . together.

Ruben is a triumph of Bruce Whatley's imaginative and technical skills.

Teacher notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher, Scholastic. A full version is available from our website.

Themes:

- Dystopian
- Monochrome
- Industrial
- Friendship
- Loneliness

Discussion Questions & Activities:

- Think about when Ruben meets Koji. How do you think Ruben was feeling before he met Koji? Do you think they were afraid? What did Ruben do that might have made Koji feel safe to meet him?
- Ruben has a journal of scribbles and drawings from his dreams. Over the course of a week write a dream journal. As soon as you wake in the morning, write something down. See the similarities and differences of your dreams throughout the week, and if they relate to your feelings when you're awake. Using the details and ideas from the dream journal, write a short story.
- There is no speech in the book. Why do you think that is? What effect does that have?
- Why do you think all the illustrations are in black and white? What effect does that have?
- Look at the map Ruben drew of the city and look at Koji's map of the city. Can you spot the differences and similarities? Draw your own abstract map of where you live.
- In the epilogue, when we see Ruben and Koji on the train, we see a copy of Gulliver's Travels in Ruben's bag. Why do you think the author chose Gulliver's Travels as the book that Ruben found? Look at the story of Gulliver's Travels and see how that may impact Ruben and encourage him to escape Block City.
- Ruben has a routine. Every day he dresses in the same outfit and wanders into Block City. Do you have a routine? What does it consist of? Why do people have routines?
- After realising that the monolith's cargo are books, read Part Three again. What do you think the Controllers are doing with the books? Why?
- Choose between the three characters of Ruben, Koji and the Controller. Write a description of that character, including their personality. Imagine that you are describing that character to someone who has never seen or read the book.
- As a class, choose a scene and try to describe what Ruben is feeling, such as the scene in which he remembers being almost crushed by the train bumpers. Brainstorm all his different emotions.