

HARK, IT'S ME, RUBY LEE!



LISA SHANAHAN & BINNY

 Teachers Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright 

Introduction

Themes & Curriculum Topics

Studies of Society & History (SOSE)

English Language & Literacy

Literary Devices & Word Play

Humour

Structure of Fable or Folk Tale

Setting

Characters

Sequels

Visual Literacy

Creative Activities

Conclusion

About the Author

About the Illustrator

Bibliography

About the Author of the Notes

Worksheets

INTRODUCTION

‘Hark, it’s me, Ruby Lee!’ she says. ‘Fear not! I am the bearer of good news.’

Ruby Lee is an irrepressible helper. She just loves to help her classroom teacher Mrs Majestic-Jones with any of the myriad tasks which require her assistance. Ruby Lee’s best friend George Papadopoulos advises her to be content with the tasks she’s been offered – but no – Ruby Lee is desperate to become the class messenger.

The trouble is that although Ruby Lee is very good at hopping and handstands and imagining things, she is not so good at being one of the ‘quiet and still-as-statue people’ like Siena and Vienna.

When she does become the messenger her imagination gets away from her and the messages are not very successfully delivered. But there are some other things Ruby Lee is particularly good at. And so she eventually discovers her very best – her perfect role – as an emergency officer!

Lisa Shanahan is a versatile and dramatic writer whose texts leap off the page with their language play and astute observation of children’s behaviour and interests.

Binny is an artist whose gorgeously expressive style has an endearing charm with a retro aesthetic that will appeal to all ages.

Together, these two creators have imagined an endearing and very special heroine in a book which promises to be a huge hit with young and older readers alike.



THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Several themes relevant to curriculum topics (Studies of Society & History, English Language and Literacy, and Visual Literacy) might be identified in this picture book:

STUDIES OF SOCIETY & HISTORY (SOSE)













- *Helping*

Activity: List the many tasks involved in your classroom. Write a list of them.

Discussion Point: What tasks have you been asked to assist with in your classroom or at home? Write a list. What is your favourite role?

Activity: Create a classroom display of picture books about helping. [See **Bibliography.**]

Activity: Ruby Lee loves to be helpful. Brainstorm other words which mean that a person likes to help, eg. useful. Then, using the table below, write the opposite/antonym in the second column. For example:

WORD		OPPOSITE/ANTONYM
useful		useless
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		

- *Love & Friendship*

Discussion Point: George obviously loves his best friend Ruby Lee but is also able to recognise her faults. His caring advice to Ruby Lee to try to be ‘quieter’ is gorgeously understated. Should a good friend tell someone how to improve their behaviour?

- *Imagination*

Activity: Ruby Lee imagines all sorts of creatures lurking on her journey to the office. [See also **English Language & Literacy** below.] Do you imagine scenarios when you are walking to school, or to the shops, or to visit friends? What do you imagine?



ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERACY



Study the writing style employed in this picture book, and examine the following sub-topics:

- *Literary Devices & Word Play*

Activity: Find examples of the use of literary devices in this book. For example, it contains many examples of alliteration, eg. ‘pockets, peaches, puddles and polka dots.’ Write a piece of alliterative language like this.

Activity: Ruby Lee is good at hopping and handstands. What are you good at? Make a list.

Activity: On her attempts to deliver a message to the Principal, Ruby Lee encounters a number of scary creatures called: Spockled Frocklewockle, Squinker, Shlurgle. Make up your own scary creature names.

Activity: Adjectives used to describe Ruby Lee are: ‘intrepid, valiant, ingenious’. Use one of these words in a sentence, to demonstrate that you understand its meaning.

Activity: Siena and Vienna’s names rhyme. Think of other rhyming names. [See also **Worksheet 3 Rhyming Names.**]

Activity: Make up a rhyming poem about Ruby Lee.

Activity: In one double page spread (pp 20–21) there are posters on the wall saying: ‘Be a SMART Cookie’ and ‘Good Listening is a Skill for Life’. Make up a slogan to describe learning at school and design a poster to go with it.

- *Humour*

Discussion Point: There are some very humorous and witty details in this book. What did you find amusing?

- *Structure of Fable or Folk Tale*

Discussion Point: The structure of this story has, like any traditional fable or folk tale, key narrative features such as a strong idea or concept, a journey (to take the message to the office), with a series of failed tasks, a turning point in the predicted action (the bird flying into the classroom), and a resolution. What alternative turning point might have occurred in this story?

Discussion Point: What does the resolution suggest?

- *Setting*

Discussion Point: This story is set entirely in a school, indoors and outdoors. What details of either the classroom or the playground did you notice?

- *Characters*

Activity: Describe Ruby Lee's character.

Activity: This story focuses on Ruby Lee and her best friend George. Which other character was intriguing, and why? Which character would you like to have heard more about?

- *Sequels*

Activity: Would you like to read a sequel to this book? What might happen in it? Write a synopsis of the plot.

VISUAL LITERACY



- *Covers*

Activity: Look closely at this cover and see who may be lurking in the foliage surrounding Ruby Lee. Make a list of all the creatures you spy there. Then design a different **cover** for this book.

Activity: The storyboard of this book consists of 32 pages beginning with a half-title page, imprint page, and title page. Design a storyboard for the story you wrote above under **Sequels**.

- *Critical Literacy*

Activity: Examine the pictures carefully. What sort of books does George like to borrow from the library?

Activity: What other funny or intriguing things did you notice in the images? [See also **Worksheets 3. & 4.**]

- *Drawing*

Activity: Draw a picture of the scary creature name you created under **English Language and Literacy** above. [See also **Worksheet 1.**]

Activity: Draw a picture of Ruby Lee and George on an outing to somewhere other than their school enjoying an event together.

Activity: Draw a picture of Mrs Majestic-Jones.



CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

1. Write a script for Ruby Lee's adventures in this book and then act out the scene for your classmates.
2. Design a poster to advertise this book. [See **Bibliography** for resources.]
3. The **title** of any book is important. What other title might this one have had?
4. Create a **book trailer** for this book. [See **Bibliography** for resources.]
5. **Make a Ruby Lee Paper Plate Mask.** Draw her face as she is depicted in this book. Then glue strands of red wool onto the top of the plate and gather them together as two high buns of hair. Draw a sprig of blue leaves as decorations for her hair (see image on the cover); cut them out and glue onto the wool.
6. Write a song about Ruby Lee.
7. Create a **comic strip** of three images based on one of the incidents described in this book, using speech bubbles.
8. Look at the **endpapers** of this book which depict multiple images of birds with a single image of a ladybird on each page. Choose a pair of gumboots, a bird or a ladybird as a pattern for a **wallpaper design**. Draw and then photocopy it to achieve uniformity in each image, copied multiple times; then colour the images in bright colours to create a vibrant patterned paper to cover one of your school books.
9. **Observe all the things on one double page spread of this book.** Then close the book and write a list of everything you've seen on that spread. Compare your list with that created by other members of your class.
10. Create a **display** of all the books you've read, and the writing and drawing you have done for this unit.



CONCLUSION

Ruby Lee is a captivating character in the spirit of such erstwhile series heroines as Sally Rippin's Billie B. Brown, Lauren Child's Clarice Bean or Lola, Kate de Goldi's Lolly Leopold and Anna Branford's Violet Mackerel. Young readers are sure to fall in love with her, and adults, too, will find her completely endearing.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Shanahan studied at UTS and trained as an actor at Theatre Nepean before discovering her true passion was not just writing, but writing for young people. Some of her well-loved picture books included *Bear and Chook* and *Daddy's Having a Horse*, illustrated by Emma Quay, both of which were shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year for Early Childhood; *Bear and Chook by the Sea* was a winner of the CBCA Book of the Year for Early Childhood. Her first book for teenagers, *My Big Birkett*, was published to acclaim and shortlisted for the CBCA Book of the Year for Older Readers in 2007. Her picture book *Big Pet Day*, illustrated by Gus Gordon, was published by Hachette in 2014. Lisa lives in Sydney.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Binny Talib ('Binny') is an award winning strategic creative consultant who has worked across a large range of mediums to create unique and inspiring branding campaigns. She is also an award winning illustrator.

Her illustration, and textile and surface pattern design can be found across a vast range of applications including: Restaurants, Packaging, Advertising campaigns, Wallpaper, Books and Magazine Editorial.

With a touch of whimsy and a feel for the surreal, Binny's work transports her audience into a magical journey of childhood dreams. At the heart of her illustrations is a youthful freshness and naivety that creates childhood memories that will linger for a lifetime.

Binny's hand-drawn and playful images and designs have secured licensing deals across major Australian and international children's clothing brands, children's toys, interior design, books, album covers and greeting cards. Her personal collections continue to grow, from developing her own children's clothing label to an expanding collection of interior and fashion textiles.

Her warm Australian spirit is embraced internationally and she is currently working with brands and publishers in New York. Previously her work has appeared widely across the US, UK, Japan and Australia. Binny's illustration career has flowed from a design background as an agency Art Director and Creative Director and an honours degree in Visual Communications.

Her first picture book *Origami Heart* won a Contemporary Picture Book Illustration award in the 3 x 3 Show, New York and was also a Silver Category Winner in the Illustrator Australia Awards 2015. See Binny's website: <<http://www.binny.com.au/>>



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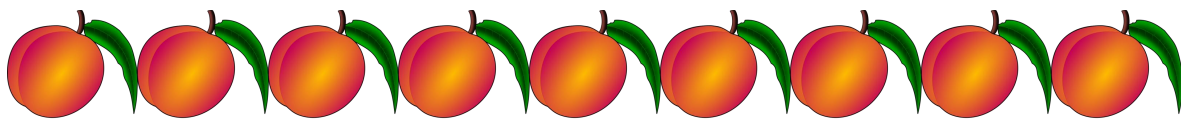
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates *justified text* writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011, she was recipient of the CBCA (Qld) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award, in 2012, of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award.



WORKSHEET 1 CREATE A SCARY MONSTER!

Draw the rest of this monster's body and colour it in. Then give it a name like some of the scary creatures Ruby Lee encounters on her journey to her school's office. Make a display of the images in your classroom to see how very differently each student has illustrated the monster.



WORKSHEET 2 RHYMING NAMES

Think of a name which rhymes with the following names:

eg. SIENA	VIENNA
ANNA	
HATTIE	
AIDAN	
RHETT	
BLAKE	
MINNIE	
HOLLY	
JACK	
CHLOE	
EDDIE	

Now make up a poem using a pair of rhyming names.



WORKSHEET 3 RUBY LEE'S OBSERVATION QUIZ

1. How many birds are in the row below?

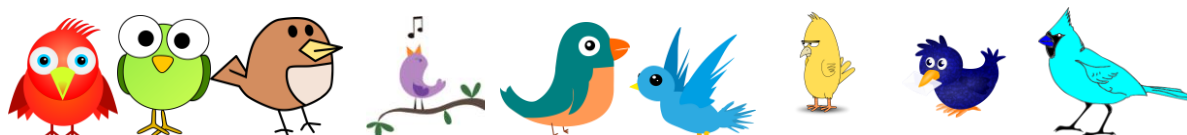


2. If you take five birds away from the row above, how many would you have?

3. How many ladybirds appear in the two rows below?



4. Which of the nine birds is the odd one out in the row below, and why?



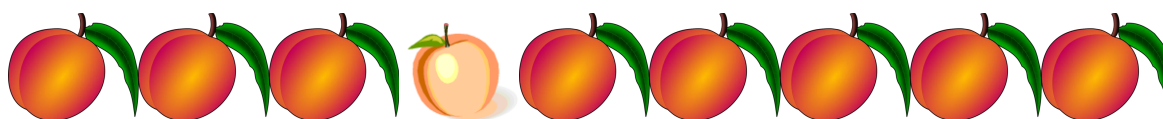
5. How many pumpkins are in the following row?



6. How many ladybirds and how many pumpkins are in the following row?



7. Which peach is the odd one out?



8. If you multiply the number of peaches above, by two, how many would you have?

9. What pattern is this:



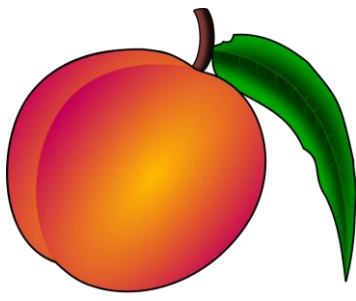

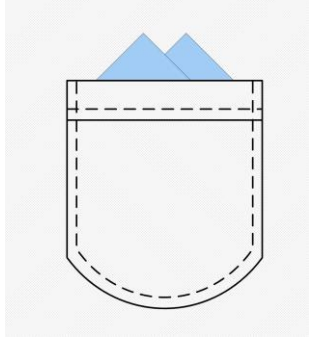


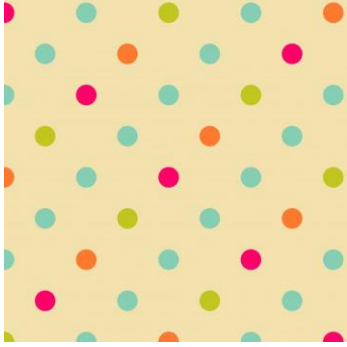
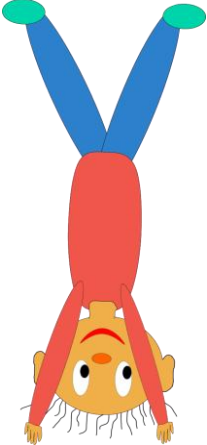


10. How many pencils are in this cup?



ANSWERS: 1. Thirteen. 2. Eight. 3. Twenty-two. 4. The mauve-coloured bird is the only one singing and the only one standing on a branch. 5. Ten. 6. Five of each. 7. The fourth peach has the leaf on the opposite side to the others and is lighter in colour. 8. Eighteen. (There are nine peaches in that row.) 9. Polka Dots. 10. Four.

WORKSHEET 4 A FEW OF RUBY LEE'S FAVOURITE THINGS

Write the relevant word below each of these images.

		
1.	2.	3.
		
4.	5.	6.
		
7.	8.	9.

Answers: 1. Peaches. 2. Gumboots. 3. Pockets. 4. Puddles. 5. Tadpoles. 6. Polka Dots. 7. Handstands. 8. Birds. 9. Hopping.