

The Lost Thing by Shaun Tan

The Story

The Lost Thing by Shaun Tan is a picture book about a boy who finds a bizarre, red, tentacled creature while collecting bottle tops on a beach. Ignoring the indifferent, bureaucratic society around him, the boy tries to find where the creature belongs, eventually discovering a utopia for lost things.

This can be read as the original picture book or watched as a short, animated film of the book.

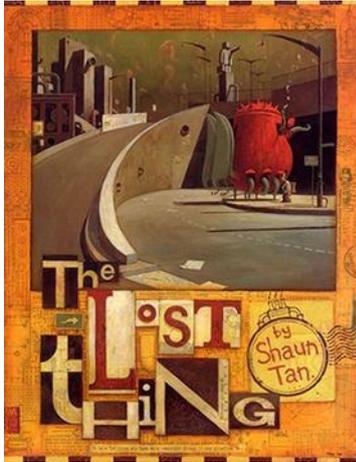
Thinking About Community

The following series of questions and possible responses is a dialogue plan that you can use after sharing *The Lost Thing*. It begins with a focus on individuality and how we all have ways we don't fit in the world and feel a bit lost. It then moves to encouraging empathy to consider the differences of others and their experiences. The dialogue finishes with a challenge for us to consider what community is and how we want it to be.

When asking questions, it is important to stay **neutral** and **curious** about the responses. Students can often look to you for hints about what to say and it's important that they are not influenced in their responses and that they share genuinely felt ideas. Always be sure to ask why students think something and gently ask follow up questions that elicit more thinking. Try to think about their responses from different perspectives and ask, "*what if ...?*" kinds of questions.

Dialogue is a vital part of young people developing and learning to express their deeper ideas about their life and its meaning. They build on their critical thinking skills and testing them in a meaningful setting. They also build confidence in speaking and expression.

These questions challenge them to listen deeply, consider, reason and analyse their thinking. They are also required to give reasons and example to support their thinking.



A Dialogue

What are lost things? *Things that don't fit...*

Can you think of some examples of lost things?

Do you ever feel like a lost thing? How? Is it because we are all different?

Is it okay to be different or unique?

Is difference important? *We are inherently different, so this just allows us to be ourselves.*

What would happen if we embraced difference in the world?

Can we always help? Or are we too busy? Do we prioritise? Is it important to try?

What kind of difference should we embrace? What would that look like?

Should we make time for lost things?

Should we make room for people who don't 'fit'?

Should we care for outsiders?

What would the world be like if it was okay to be different?

Reflection

After the dialogue take time to undertake a metacognitive reflection.

In a class group encourage them to respond to the following questions. You may also have them follow-up by taking their own notes about the dialogue.

Do you think you listened well to others? Did you come up with good ideas? Did you get a chance to share? Do you think you will share more next time? Were the ideas hard to think about? Do you think others had good ideas? Did this make you think about examples in your life? Did you change your ideas about anything?

– ask for any final thoughts....

Resources

Tan, S. 2000 *The Lost Thing*, Lothian Books

Tan, S. and Ruhemann, A. (Directors) 2010 *The Lost Thing* [animated short film], Passion Pictures Australia.