



David Macaulay

Discussion & Activity Guide: Creative Suggestions for Sharing TeachingBooks Author Programs with Children

This guide includes activities for students of all ages. All suggested activities and discussions should be adapted to fit your particular classroom dynamic.

Pictures Telling Stories

David Macaulay says in the movie, “I want people to read the pictures. I want them to really look at the pictures, which is why I will sometimes write something that is not shown, or I will show something with pictures that’s not said with words.” Break into groups and assign to each group one of the four stories in *Black and White*. Have each group review its assigned story and carefully notice both the words and the pictures. Have them each write out a summary of the story the pictures tell, and then compare that story to the one told in words. After sharing their findings, ask how the story in pictures differs from the story in words. Discuss how the four stories are interrelated.

Read *Shortcut* and look closely at the pictures. As Albert and June journey to town, there are many connections and funny twists in the story told in pictures. As one reviewer wrote, David Macaulay “continues to explore the relationship between cause and effect and the nonlinear possibilities of narrative.” Discuss as a group what this reviewer’s comments mean. What are non-linear narratives and how do they play out in this story? With younger children, it is fun to create a chart depicting how each of Albert and June’s actions affect a different character. Review each page and write on the board what Albert and June did that ultimately affects someone else in the book. Discuss with the class cause and effect, and have each member write or tell how someone else’s actions have affected them.

Looking Inside

David Macaulay wants his readers to understand the inner workings of things. He does not want any of us to take for granted all the intricate, amazing systems around us. *Underground* reveals many of the vital support systems that exist beneath the streets of a busy city. Show your class pages 6 and 7 – a double-page spread of an intersection. This drawing shows what we see from the surface – storm drains, manhole covers, ventilation grates, traffic lights, and so forth. Yet the book uses this visual table of contents to reveal what is beneath each of the specific systems and how they work. Have your students investigate the inner-workings of something familiar to them. Ask them to pick a room or a house and then to draw a map that shows what systems they want to explore, such as a heating vent, air conditioner, window, wall, floor, etc. Then ask them to research how these familiar systems work. For example, if they are looking at a room, how does a wall work? Why doesn’t it fall down? They can share their findings by drawing, writing, or discussing them in small groups.

Book Making

Building the Book Cathedral (published in 1999) reveals many lessons David Macaulay has learned about book making and design since his first book, *Cathedral*, was published in 1973. Share this new version of his first book with your class, and notice the design issues that David discusses and has chosen to change. Make a list of differences and other issues that David mentions, and discuss the areas of revision that interest you. What have you learned about creating books, and what intrigues you about the process?

The Way Things Work

The Way Things Work explains in pictures and words how machines do what they do by illustrating the scientific principles involved. Break into small groups and thoroughly examine how David Macaulay explains how a particular thing works. Then take an object familiar to you and research how it works. Share your findings by using words and pictures. How would you feel about tackling a project as extensive as *The Way Things Work*? Explain.

Seeing Things Differently

Motel of the Mysteries is an unusual and fun book. Howard Carson, an amateur archeologist in 4022, unearths items that today we find most familiar, and he erroneously concludes what they are and how they must have been used – a toilet seat as an elaborate necklace, for example. Using objects we take for granted, explain their functions as might someone finding them thousands of years from now. Have each student bring in an item and have these amateur archeologists stage a show-and-tell.

Curiosity and Questions

David Macaulay's information books (*Cathedral, Castle, Mill, Pyramids, City, Unbuilding, Ship* and others) all attest to his curiosity. He says in the movie, "The key behind all of the books I do, particularly with the information books, is a sense of curiosity. I've always been interested and willing to keep asking questions until I understood the larger picture." As a class or in small groups, review one of these books and come up with a list of questions that are answered in the book. Then ask each student to pick something of interest and make a list of at least 20 questions related to it that he or she would want answered. Does one question lead to another? Would the thing be fully described were all these questions answered?

Mapping

In *Rome Antics*, the heartfelt journey of the pigeons concludes with a birds-eye map of the city of Rome (pages 74–75). This map depicts every place the pigeons went in the story. Make a map of your city, neighborhood, school, or home. Highlight three spots on your map where you would stop, and describe, using words and/or pictures, what happens at each of these places. At the end of this activity, you should have a small story that details a part of your community.

David Macaulay was interviewed in his studio in Rhode Island on August 14, 2001.

Multimedia program available at www.TeachingBooks.net beginning October, 2001

Books by David Macaulay

- ANGELO, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002
- BUILDING BIG, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000
- BUILDING THE BOOK CATHEDRAL, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999
- NEW WAY THINGS WORK: REVISED EDITION, THE, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998
- ROME ANTICS, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997
- SHORTCUT, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995
- SHIP, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993
- BLACK AND WHITE, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990
- WAY THINGS WORK, THE, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988
- WHY THE CHICKEN CROSSED THE ROAD, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987
- BAA, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985
- AMAZING BRAIN, THE (written by R. Ornstein & R. Thompson), Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984
- MILL, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983
- HELP! LET ME OUT (written by David Lord Porter), Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982
- UNBUILDING, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980
- MOTEL OF THE MYSTERIES, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979
- GREAT MOMENTS IN ARCHITECTURE, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978
- CASTLE, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977
- UNDERGROUND, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976
- PYRAMID, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975
- CITY: A STORY OF ROMAN PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974
- CATHEDRAL: THE STORY OF ITS CONSTRUCTION, Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973

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