

## These notes are for:

- This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Art
- Humanities
- Science

## Example of:

- Picture Book
- Wordless Text
- Parallel Narrative
- Dual-format
- Arabic / English

## Experience of:

- Reflecting on text
- Shared reading/viewing
- Reading & Writing
- Speaking & Listening
- Viewing & Creating
- Research

## Values addressed:

- Intercultural Understanding
- Care & Compassion
- Respect

## Themes:

- Place
- Belonging
- Identity
- Environment
- Understanding Each Other
- Tradition and Heritage

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

Walker Books Australia Ph +61 2 9517 9577  
 Locked Bag 22 Fax +61 2 9517 9997  
 Newtown, N.S.W., 2042

For enquiries please contact Melissa Hamilton:  
[mhamilton@walkerbooks.com.au](mailto:mhamilton@walkerbooks.com.au)

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## Mirror - by Jeannie Baker



### Mirror

By: Jeannie Baker  
 ISBN: 9781406309140  
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ARRP: \$39.95  
 NZRRP: \$44.99  
 No. of Pages: 48

## Outline:

This innovative picture book is comprised of two parts, designed to be read simultaneously – one from the left, the other from the right. Page by page, we experience a day in the lives of two boys and their families – one from inner city Sydney, Australia and the other from a small, remote village in Morocco, North Africa. These worlds couldn't be further apart, yet with the showing of the parallel lives of the two families, we see a simple truth. We see that in the context of strikingly different lifestyles, remotely different countries, landscapes, differences of clothing and all, the families are essentially the same. They care for each other, they need to belong, to be loved by their loved ones and be a part of their community. The simple truth is that even with all these differences, in the ways that really matter, we are all the same. We are the mirror of each other.

This innovative dual-book format, effectively communicates the way people's experiences and values are shared, despite geographical and cultural differences. The essential story is conveyed wordlessly, while the short introduction and author's note appear in both English and Arabic.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

**Jeannie Baker** is the author and illustrator of a number of children's picture books, including the award-winning *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*. Her characteristic use of mixed media to create detailed and elaborate collages is stunning and unique. She lives in Australia.

## These notes were prepared by:

The activities in these Classroom Ideas were coordinated by Jeannie Baker and the Western Sydney Young People's Literature Project. Contributors for these activities are as follows: Anna Bazzi Backhouse (Cultural Studies content), Steve Meredith – Education Officer, Botanical Gardens Adelaide (Environmental content), Liz Suda Education Unit - Program Manager, Humanities, Melbourne Museum (Humanities content), Jenni Trezise Creative Arts Consultant, Western Sydney Region, NSW Department of Education and Training (Creative Arts content), Judith Ridge Western Sydney Young People's Literature Officer (Literature content).

**Classroom Ideas for *Mirror*:****BEFORE READING *MIRROR*:**

- View the front and back cover. Ask students to write a description of the boys on either side. Speculate and include information about personality, age and where they might live.
- Using only the cover, ask students to discuss what they think this story is about. Why might it be called *Mirror*? What age do they think the intended audience is? What can you already understand from the cover of this book?

**ENGLISH ACTIVITIES**

- Choose one of your favourite pictures from *Mirror*. Make a list of as many of the things in the picture that you can name. Draw a picture of the item beside its name, or noun.
- Tell a friend or your teacher the story of *Mirror*. Make sure you use lots of descriptive words (nouns and adjectives) as well as action words (verbs) for explaining what is happening in the pictures.
- Think of a trip or a journey you have taken with a member of your family. It might be a short trip to the shops or to school, or it might be a longer journey you took, going on holidays or perhaps even overseas. Tell the story of your trip in pictures, and show the picture-story to your classmates, explaining to them what is happening.
- In a picture book, illustrators use their skill as artists to depict the setting of the story. There are two settings in *Mirror*; Morocco and Sydney, Australia. Can you be as clever and descriptive with words as Jeannie Baker is with her collages? Write a description of each of the settings in *Mirror*, being careful to evoke the feelings the artwork suggests about each place, which may be both positive and negative.
- Make a character poster for the Australian boy and the Moroccan boy. Draw a poster-sized outline of each boy, based on the illustrations in *Mirror*. Write words and phrases to describe the boy, based on the information contained in the pictures. Think about the things each boy likes, his place in his family, and anything about his personality that is suggested by the pictures. You might also like to decorate the poster with images from *Mirror* which relate to each boy.
- The artist who created *Mirror*, Jeannie Baker, uses visual images to make connections between the lives of the two boys. Make a list in two columns of all the things you can see that are the same or similar in each boy's story, for example, the stars in the sky each boy looks at from his bedroom window.
- Create a book box. Get a box and decorate it with images from *Mirror*. Fill the box with things that relate to the book: you might find some spices, such as you see in the marketplace, or a rose, or some of the materials Jeannie Baker used to create the illustrations. Explain each of the items you've collected to a partner or your teacher.
- Imagine the two boys in *Mirror* are penpals. They became penpals before the family in Morocco bought their computer, and so sent each other letters the old-fashioned way: through the post, or by "snail mail". Write the first letter each boy sends to each other, telling his new penpal about his everyday life. Then, write the first email the boy in Morocco sends his Australian penpal, and the email the Australian boy sends in reply.
- The stories in *Mirror* are parallel stories, meant to be read side-by-side. Each boy's story reflects the other boy's story – like a mirror – showing how their lives are different, and how their lives are the same. Using the stories in *Mirror* as your model, tell the story of your life in Australia and the story of a child who lives in a different country and culture to yours. You can tell the story in pictures, or in words, or both.
- Is *Mirror* one story or two? Have a class discussion or debate. Make sure you come up with reasons and examples from *Mirror* to support your opinion.
- Write parallel or "mirror" stories about two characters who at first don't seem to have much in common. Some ideas include: a small child and a monster; an animal and an alien; a cat and a dog; a toy truck and a real truck, a rubber duck and a real duck. You could illustrate the book and present it as a children's picture book. Make a "book trailer" to promote your picture book. Book trailers are like movie trailers: they are short films that use words and images to advertise a book to people who might be interested in reading it. There are many book trailers online which you can look at to get ideas for making your own.
- In *Mirror*, the "magic carpet" helps to bring two boys from different sides of the world together, even though they have never met. Write (and illustrate, if you like) a story about a magic carpet that brings two people together in some way.
- Do some research into stories that contain magic carpets and create an entertaining and imaginative presentation using PowerPoint or a similar computer program.
- Part of the story of *Mirror* is told in traditional Arabic fashion: from right to left, and from back to front, and the book title and author's note in that part of the story are written in Arabic. Do some research into the Arabic alphabet and language and present your findings on a poster.

## Classroom Ideas for *Mirror*:

### ENVIRONMENT

- On the cover images, you can see the views outside the bedroom windows in Sydney and Morocco. Draw up a table, and list all the things that are natural and all the things that are made by people that can be seen from each window. How do the different places compare? What do they share in common? What is different? Discuss.

What can you see from your bedroom window? Describe what you see in words, and then draw it. Use your imagination to sketch your perfect bedroom window view. Write a brief explanation of your “dream view”.

- Mirror* is set in the Valley of Roses, Morocco and the inner-city suburbs of Sydney, Australia.

Use *Google Earth* as a magic carpet to explore the satellite view of the Valley of the Roses in Morocco (coordinates 31.191364,-6.084023). Research how this landscape was formed, where people, animals and plants live, where water comes from, where water goes to, where plants grow, what the weather is like and what it might be like to live there.

Use *Google Earth* as a magic carpet to investigate the satellite view of Sydney, Australia. One of the suburbs which inspired the Sydney scenes in *Mirror* is named Rozelle. Compare views of Rozelle on *Google Earth* with the view of the Valley of Roses in Morocco. How are the two landscapes the same? How are they different?

Talk to people in your community and find out why the city or town or suburb near where you live was built and what impact that has had on the original environment and people. Present your findings as an illustrated talk to your class.

- Look for animals in both parts of *Mirror*. Talk about what they are doing, where they might live and how they get the things they need to live. Look for animals that live outside your bedroom window. Share with others what you discover.
- Find different foods in *Mirror* and discuss how each family and community gets their food.
- List all the types of energy used by each of the communities in *Mirror*.

- There are a number of different kinds of plants and animals that live in the two *Mirror* communities. Talk about the different ways these living things are used in each community. How are these uses the same and how are they different? What role do plants and animals have in your community?

- Find the pages in *Mirror* that show roses growing and the pages that show a single rose. Imagine you are a rose and tell your story of being a rose in Sydney and a rose in Morocco.

- Cars and donkeys are the two main means of people transport for the communities in *Mirror*. Compare the advantages and disadvantages of each type of transport and the impact of each on the environment.

- Imagine you owned and cared for a donkey and had to ride it to school or the local shops. How would it change your daily routine? Write a story about you and your donkey.

- Compare the houses and buildings in the Valley of Roses and Sydney. How are they different? How are they the same? Is there a pattern to where they are built? For each place talk about where the building materials come from and how well suited the buildings are to the environment that surrounds them.

- Imagine you have a magic carpet that can fly from Sydney to the Valley of Roses. Use a world atlas or *Google Earth* to plan a route that includes travel over mountains, deserts, rainforests, volcanoes and oceans. Write an imaginary journey describing the different countries you pass over and the natural wonders of the landscapes you see. Turn your journal into a travel brochure that promotes special ‘Magic Carpet’ tours.

- Write two separate timelines – one for the daily events in Morocco and one for the daily events in Sydney. You can use drawings and pictures to divide up the day.

### VALUES

- Divide the room into four quarters labelled “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree”.

Have students move to the appropriate corner whenever the following statements are made:

- Morocco looks like a great place to live
- Sydney looks like a great place to live
- Morocco looks like a dangerous place to live
- Sydney looks like a dangerous place to live
- Magic carpets come from Morocco
- You can buy magic carpets in Sydney
- Children don’t have to attend school in Morocco
- Families don’t cook meals in Sydney

Ask students to explain their opinions.

- What is important in your family – what values do your family have? How are family life and the values and beliefs of people expressed in the material objects a family owns? Using a digital camera take photographs of objects that you think reflect your family’s values and create a poster or computer presentation to share with your classmates.

- Which objects do you think reflect the values of the family in Morocco? How are the objects, and the family’s values, similar to your family’s, and how are they different? Prepare a speech to explain your findings.

## Classroom Ideas for *Mirror*:

### CULTURAL STUDIES

- In *Mirror*, located in an outdoor souk amongst the animals and vegetables, is a bright and colourful arrangement of sacks full of what appears to be powdery-like, fragrant substances inside. These are spices and are made of dried seeds, fruits, roots, barks, leaves, and other parts of plants. Research the origins of spices and prepare a report for your class on how spices are used to enhance common cake recipes, meat roasts and other dishes.
- The word calligraphy comes from the Greek *kallos*, meaning beautiful, and *graphie*, meaning to write, and literally means beautiful writing. In many cultures around the world calligraphy is regarded as not only a written style of communication but as a highly practiced art form. In the Middle East, Asia and other parts of the world Islamic calligraphy, also known as Arabic calligraphy, is based on the art of artistic handwriting. Research the origins of calligraphy. Notice how calligraphy is used by many cultures around the world. Can you write your name, a greeting and the word *Mirror* in a language other than English using a calligraphic style of writing?
- Carpet making is an ancient craft that is found all over the world and covers a variety of techniques and methods. In *Mirror* you will notice how a particular handmade Berber carpet with multiple colours and patterns made its way from the deserts of North Africa to a family living in Sydney, Australia. If you could send an object to someone in a place very different to your own, what would that be? Would that object say something about how you lived and how different that might be from someone living in a place or community unlike your own? Write the story of this object and its journey from Australia to another family faraway.
- Can you name the region, territories, countries, cities or places that your ancestors came from? Do you know what languages they spoke? What kinds of foods they may have eaten? What religious practices or belief systems they may have held? Can you name the places that your grandparents and parents were born? Where were you born? What languages or language do you speak? What are your favourite hobbies and interests?
- On a big piece of butcher's paper and working in pairs, draw an outline of your partner and begin to ask them some of the questions that are shown in the examples provided above. Write those responses inside the outline of their body, then repeat the exercise using your outline and responses to the very same questions. Place these outlines on a wall around the room. Talk about the differences and similarities between you and your classmates and your various family histories and cultures.
- People dress in different ways depending on their belief systems, habits, age, and the latest trends and influences. In *Mirror* you will see that women living in North Africa wear long gowns and headscarves, particularly when found in the company of men. In Australia, women who have come from these cultural backgrounds or share their belief system also wear long gowns, headscarves and other very different articles of clothing. Can you name some of these items of clothing? Have a class mufti day, where everyone wears clothes that say something about themselves, their family and community. Draw a poster of yourself in your favourite clothes, and label each item, explaining what it reveals about you.

### HUMANITIES

- How many people live in the Moroccan family in this story? Who do you think they are? What sorts of things do they do together?  
  
In pairs discuss the following:
  - What's something you have done with your family recently?
  - Where does your family eat meals? Do they eat them together?
  - Is your family like the Moroccan family? List ways it is different and ways it is the same
  - Is your family like the Sydney family? List ways it is different and ways it is the same
  - Create a presentation – collage, picture, story or talk – to describe a favourite activity you do with your family
- Look closely at the pictures and find the objects that people use in their daily life in Australia and Morocco.
  - What sorts of tools and utensils do they use?
  - What types of transport do they use?
  - What sorts of things do they buy?
  - What sort of houses do they live in?
 Make a list of these objects in words or pictures under the headings Morocco and Australia. Draw a line connecting the objects that are the same in each country.
- Use an encyclopaedia or the internet to find out answers to these questions:
  - What sorts of things are made in Morocco?
  - What sorts of things are made in Australia?
  - What is the main industry in the area you live in?
 Collect images of things that you have found that are made in Australia and Morocco. Create a poster or slideshow explaining what you have found.
- Look carefully at each picture and see if you can tell what time it is in each country. How do you know?
  - What is loaded onto the donkey?
  - What is loaded into the car?
  - Do they see many people along the way? In Morocco? In Sydney?
  - How long does it take them to get to the market place?
  - How long does it take to get to Hardware Planet?
 Write two separate timelines – one for the daily events in Morocco and one for the daily events in Sydney. You can use drawings and pictures to divide up the day.
- Do a role-play with your partner. Imagine that each of you is either the boy from Morocco or the boy from Sydney. Have a conversation about how your mother and father bought you (a) a carpet (b) a new computer. Construct a short script of one part of that conversation and deliver it to the class.

## Classroom Ideas for *Mirror*:

### CREATIVE ARTS

- Jeannie Baker's covers and artworks for the book *Mirror* use a combination of natural and artificial materials such as sand, earth, clay, paints, vegetation, paper, fabric, wool, tin and plastic to express her response to the contrast between the landscape and the lifestyles of Sydney, Australia and the Valley of Roses, Morocco. The collaged images are rich tapestries of everyday family life. In these works, the artist is celebrating the unique qualities of landscapes that she knows well because she has experienced them first hand. She contrasts them using the metaphor of a mirror to 'see into' the lives of the little boys and also reflect, compare, contrast and connect the unique facets of the lives of their families.


Describe what you see in the artworks which make up the two covers for *Mirror*.

Discuss what the images and objects in each artwork are showing you and compare and contrast aspects of both landscapes.

Look carefully and observe how some of the forms appear to project out from the surface. Discuss where the materials that have been used may have originally come from. Find other words which describe different types of collage, ie. frottage, photomontage.

- Experiment with the following collage processes:
  - Using acrylic paints, fabric off cuts and a range of application tools such as sponges, brushes, rollers, string and stencils experiment with applying paint and dye to a textured fabric surface.
  - Experiment with grained textured surfaces: place glued paper and calico off cuts face down into trays containing sand and coloured pigments.
  - Apply paint to plastic or Perspex surfaces and scratch into it to create patterns.
  - Glue nature's detritus (found plant materials that have died, dried and dropped from the garden or the bushland) along narrow strips of cardboard to create elongated strips of vegetation.
  - Use fibre such as wool, flax, linen and jute to tease out threads into fine linear forms.
  - Cut and tear tiny pieces of assorted, patterned and plain cotton cloth, felt and woollen material.

Select the most interesting sections of the work samples from each of the experiments in the previous activity and experiment with layering these to create a landscape on a baseboard of heavy cardboard or wood.

- Create your own collaged figures. Trace around and cut out two small human silhouettes on thick card. Paint the figures hands, faces and feet with acrylic paint. Using torn and cut coloured paper and fabric, make shapes to represent clothing from two different cultures. You can use small pieces of aluminium or copper foil to create patterns to decorate the clothing on the figures, and fibre such as wool, flax, linen and jute to tease out threads for hair and facial features.
- In class, discuss what makes a family. Talk about your own family groups and the two families in *Mirror*. Create a tracing of your family in a room setting by drawing onto a piece of strong cardboard. Use scale and shape to represent the different people and animals in your home. Include one special object of value which the entire family uses as part of their daily life. Place it in the foreground and increase the scale of the object to give it importance and also to allow room for intricate detail.
- Describe and discuss an object of value that you or your family owns. In Jeannie Baker's *Mirror* there are two specific objects which are valued and desired, the rug and the computer. One is modern technology and one is ancient or traditional artmaking. Ask students to draw a symbol that represents their personal interest. The shape might represent a hobby, sport, object, favourite toy, food, idea or a belief. These shapes might be geometric or organic or a mixture of both. They represent the design ideas of the student and are 'owned' by them. Then ask students to find unique icons, shapes or patterns from computer fonts e.g.  Compare and contrast the two different design styles; from technology and ones created by student's own imagination.
- Ask students to draw what they see outside a window. Then also draw an artwork from the outside looking in. They could imagine themselves sitting at the window inside and having a friend take a photograph of them. Ask students to cleverly combine the two images, using the covers of *Mirror* as their inspiration.
- On a rectangle of calico ask students to create a rug design. First create the background. Use vegetable dyes, gouache or other flat paint and the 'spice colours of Morocco' as inspiration. Then paint a design, using symbols and iconography, across the calico. Use the rug designs in *Mirror* as inspiration.

### AFTER READING *MIRROR*

- Ask students to give a five minute presentation on *Mirror* and the saying "a picture speaks a thousand words".
- Ask students to imagine *Mirror* is to be made into a film. Prepare a pitch to the producer in which you provide a brief synopsis of the film, casting list, examples of two scripted scenes for the film with storyboards, and publicity material for the film release.
- Ask students to research the creator of *Mirror* and prepare a newspaper article on them and the book. They should include a cover image and review of the book.
- Go to the library and find other books by Jeannie Baker. Choose your favourite book and prepare a talk for the rest of your group or class what you like about it. Think about things like: the way Jeannie Baker makes her pictures, the stories she tells with pictures, how the book makes you feel.