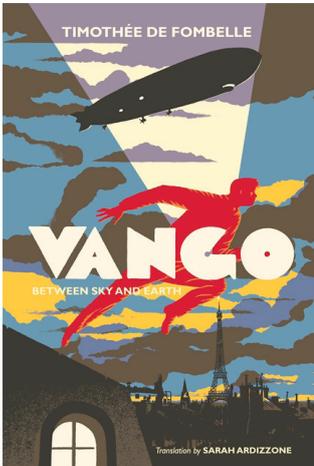


Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Vango: Between Sky and Earth

Author: Timothée de Fombelle
ISBN: 9781406354010
ARRP: \$24.95
NZRRP: \$27.99
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

A gripping mystery-adventure set in the 1930s interwar period about a character desperately searching for his identity. Raised by a strange nanny in Sicily, Vango grows up with one friend, a priest Zefiro, who lives in a monastery hidden from sight. On reaching adulthood, Vango decides to follow in Zefiro's steps, but at the moment he is taking his holy orders at Notre Dame in Paris, he is falsely accused of a crime and has to go on the run. This is a breathless and highly cinematic story that follows Vango travelling by Zeppelin across Europe from Stromboli to Nazi Germany, from Scotland to the Soviet Union, climbing the rooftops of Paris, crossing the paths of arms traffickers, crooked policemen, Russian spies and even Stalin.

Author Information:

Timothée de Fombelle is a much-admired French playwright, as well as the author of *Toby Alone* and *Toby Alone and the Secrets of the Tree*. Walker published *Toby Alone* in 2008, when the work had already been translated into twenty-two languages.

How to use these notes:

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

These notes are for:

- Secondary years 8+
- Ages 13+

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Novel
- Fiction

Themes/ Ideas:

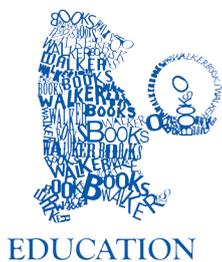
- Trust
- Justice/ Injustive
- Freedom
- Family

National Curriculum Focus:*

English content descriptions include:

Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
ACELT1626	ACELT1633	ACELY1744
ACELT1627	ACELT1771	ACELY1746
ACELT1807	ACELT1634	ACELY1748
ACELT1629	ACELT1635	ACELT1812
ACELT1632	ACELT1773	ACELT1642
ACELY1732	ACELT1638	ACELT1814
ACELY1732	ACELY1741	ACELY1749
ACELY1736	ACELY1742	ACELY1751
ACELY1738	ACELY1743	ACELY1752
		ACELY1776

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.



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Discussion Questions and Activities

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Where and when do you think it is set? What genre do you think it fits into? Once you have finished reading the book, revisit your answers to this question and compare your judgements based on the cover to the actual story. Have a class discussion about whether you should or should not judge a book by its cover.

“In media res” is a Latin term used for when a story starts at a mid-point or at the conclusion rather than at the beginning. Why do you think the author has used this technique with *Vango*? How would the novel be different if it was told in chronological order (starting with Vango and Mademoiselle washing up on the shore of the island)?

Besides Vango, who are the main characters in this story? Write a character assessment for each character. What purpose do they serve in the story?

What are the themes of this novel? Write a statement of belief for each theme, then assess how Vango’s treatment of these themes makes you feel.

What is the significance of the subtitle of this book (*Between Earth and Sky*)?

Keep a “Vocab Journal” while reading the novel. Make a note of any words you come across that are unfamiliar and look up their meaning. Also keep track of any words or phrases that you particularly like and write a note next to each explaining why you like that word/phrase.

Write a book review on *Vango*. What did you like/ dislike about it and why? Who would you recommend this book to? Is it similar to any other books you have read?

The concept of belonging is often revealed by exploring alienation and isolation. Discuss this statement in relation to Vango by finding examples of how people are alienated and isolated. Consider Vango not knowing about his past, Ethel and Paul living in her mansion without their parents and Zefiro running an invisible monastery where people can escape from peril. How does not belonging affect individuals and the wider society? What factors influence or determine whether a person ‘belongs’?

In small groups, construct a mind map, drawing out the major aspects of and issues in the text and making links between these to show the complexity of the narrative structure and the relationships between individuals and groups. Two groups join together and discuss each group’s mind map to refine their ideas about the text.

Discuss the significance of the names The Bird and The Cat. What traits do these characters share with their namesake? What do the names signify about the relationship between these two characters? How do you think their relationship will continue to develop in the second volume of *Vango*?

Vango travels far and wide in his adventures. Plot his travels on a map of the world in chronological order. The timeline at the beginning of Part Two would be a good starting point.

Research the real Graf Zeppelin. Is it described accurately in the novel? Why do you think the author chose to incorporate the Graf Zeppelin in the story?

There are many exciting action and chase sequences in *Vango*. A storyboard is a series of panels of rough sketches outlining the scene sequence and major changes of action or plot in a film. You can use this technique with a novel as well. In a storyboard capture a key action sequence in *Vango*, such as Vango’s escape from Notre Dame in chapter 1 or Vango’s escape from the Graf Zeppelin in chapter 12.

Vango is set in Europe during the 1930s, in the build up to World War II. Why do you think the author chose to set the novel during this time?

Freedom is an important theme in *Vango*. Have a class discussion about how this theme is explored in the book and how it applies to each of the main characters and their motivations.

Using all the information that Boulard gathers in the novel, create a ‘Wanted’ poster that could be used in the search for Vango. Make the poster as persuasive as possible to inspire anyone who has seen Vango to contact the police.