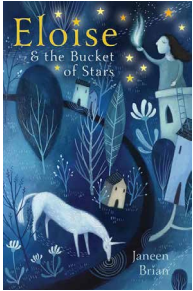




Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Eloise and the Bucket of Stars

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

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Outline:

Orphaned as a baby, Eloise Pail yearns for a family. Instead, she lives a lonely life trapped in an orphanage and made miserable by the cruel Sister Hortense. Befriended by the village blacksmith, Eloise soon uncovers some strange secrets of yesteryear and learns that something terrible may be about to happen to the village. As troubles and dangers mount, she must learn who to trust and choose between saving the village or belonging to a family of her own. Unless something truly magical happens...

Author/Illustrator Information:

At age sixteen Janeen Brian trained as a primary teacher and at eighteen stood in front of her first class of year five students. Her teaching career saw her work in junior primary, primary, drama and as a teacher-librarian. While raising a family, she began a four-year career with a professional children's theatre company, both acting and writing. She has also been involved in over 100 television and radio commercials as well as dozens of voiceovers for radio and video. She began dabbling in writing in her thirties. Since then she has written over 100 books both in trade and education, and in genres ranging from picture books to poetry, short fiction, nonfiction and novels. Janeen is an award-winning author and poet and many of her books have been translated and published overseas. For more information about the author, please visit her website: janeenbrian.com

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:

- Primary years 4-6
- Ages 9-12

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Fiction

Themes/Ideas:

- Friends
- Imagination
- Secrets
- Belonging



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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Before Reading

Before reading *Eloise and the Bucket of Stars*, view the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:

- The title of the book
- The author
- The illustrator
- The publisher
- The blurb

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answer after reading the story to see if your predictions were correct.

Exploring the Text

What are the themes in this novel? As a class or in small groups identify and list the themes. Individually write a statement of belief about each theme.

Identify the orientation, complication and resolution of the story. Ask students to try to identify this structure in other books or movies. As a class, discuss how these narrative features give meaning to stories.

Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? If you were asked to choose an alternative title for the book, what would it be? Remember, a good title should capture the audience's attention and give them some idea of what the book is about.

Consider the world Janeen Brian has created in *Eloise and the Bucket of Stars*. What real time period is it set in? What elements in the world seem real, and what seems fantastical? How is the setting important to the story? How might the novel be different if it were set in modern day?

"With the stars, she had friends. Besides that, she loved them for what they were: flickers of luminescence that shone light and hope into her heart." (page 31). Discuss Eloise's connection with the stars, what they represent to her, and why. What other stories do you know that are set in an orphanage? How are they similar or different to *Eloise and the Bucket of Stars*?

"How was she to know that the lesson she'd enjoyed so much would be the source of yet more anger? Why did nothing that felt good survive?" (page 28). What does Eloise mean when she says this? In what ways are things Eloise cares about taken away from her in the novel, and does that change throughout the story?

The idea of family is incredibly important to Eloise, as she grew up without one. Write a paragraph on a particular character in the novel that you think becomes like family to Eloise, and why. Suggestions could consider Sister Genevieve, Mr Jackson, or Janie.

In small groups, explain how Eloise demonstrates the following character traits in the novel:

- Resourcefulness
- Courage
- Resilience
- Compassion

"How can it be wrong when stories of all kinds fill our hearts and minds?" (page 60). Consider how and why Eloise tells stories in the novel, and how other characters react. Why are stories and storytelling so important to Eloise? This is also one of many moments in the novel when Eloise is told she's doing the wrong thing, even if she has her reasons or she believes she's right. Discuss how right and wrong are presented in the novel, and if it's always black and white.

Stories of mythical beasts like unicorns have been handled down for thousands of years. Why do you think myths survive? What makes them special?

Find another text that involves a unicorn. How is it similar or different to *Eloise and the Bucket of Stars* and why? Why do you think unicorns are so popular?

"...she wondered how it was that she could be lonely too, when there were so many others around her. And she wondered too, how a heart kept on wishing and hoping in such emptiness." (page 79). Loneliness is an important theme in the novel. Do you have to be alone to be lonely? What are some positive things you can do if you feel lonely?

How do things change for Eloise when she meets Janie? How would the story have been different if Janie never arrived at the orphanage?

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.

*Please check page numbers against a final copy of the book



Walker Books Classroom Ideas

Creative Responses to the Text

Design your own cover for the book with new imagery and a new tagline that will persuade and interest people in reading the book.

A novel will describe the setting and action in words, allowing the reader to visualise using their imagination. A comic strip or graphic novel uses illustrations to show the reader the setting, action and character's emotions. Create a comic strip of a key scene from *Eloise and the Bucket of Stars*.

Choose a scene in the novel and rewrite it from the perspective of another character. Focus particularly on the character's attitudes and feelings, rather than simply recounting events. How might another character see and experience events differently to Eloise? You could even write from the perspective of Sister Hortense!

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Janeen Brian
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Katharine Orton
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Edwina Wyatt
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