

Just One Bee

Exploring the 2022 CBCA Short List: Picture Books



Parts in this unit of work

- [Reading, listening to and appreciating the book](#)
- [Using the book for speaking, writing and creating](#)
- [Relevant resources and links](#)

Author: [Margrete Lamond & Anthony Bertini](#)

Illustrator: [Christopher Nielsen](#)

Publisher: [Dirt Lane Press](#)

Synopsis (From the CBCA judge's comments): The language here is poetic and balanced, and the illustrations use a limited palette and stark design to create an arid effect in this flower-less dystopia. There is a strong sense of place with the environment itself developed as a key character. On the surface, this is the story of three bees who question their own power and place in creating a more sustainable future. But these characters are rich representations of climate deniers and activists in the real world and the book helps readers to consider their own role in climate change and the importance of resilience and working together to make a positive impact. The shifts in tone, from bleak and barren to vibrant fields of flowers, are affective and create a sense of hope and optimism.

Themes: climate change, integrity, persistence, environment, hope, optimism

Year levels: Australian Curriculum: English, Year 4; Science, Year 4; HASS (Geography), Year 4; Arts (Drama), Year 4.

Why use this book? The metaphorical nature of this story allows it to be used to support both literal and inferential text analysis. The use of repetition and descriptive language provides easily accessible models for students to create their own texts, while the underlying messages of hope and persistence are empowering for all of us. The illustrations demonstrate the power of images to support and enhance the written word as well as enabling the development of authentic visual literacy skills.

Focus passages: The following pages have been selected for closer analysis throughout the teaching unit:

- Pages 5-7– language devices & etymology
- Page 11-13 – prepositional phrases, noun groups & visual literacy
- Page 21 - character inference
- Page 25 – direct speech

Reading and appreciating the book

Book introduction (big picture)

- *Text predictions:* Read the title of the book with students and ask them to use the title to predict what the text may be about. Look closely at the front cover illustrations to build on their initial thinking. Use the Think-Pair-Share-Compare routine to share and discuss responses. Record student ideas. What common thoughts or ideas did they have? Next, read the blurb as well as the comment from Dr Anna-Maria Arabia on the back cover. Add to the list of text predictions based on this additional information. After reading the text with students, go back and mark the text predictions that were accurate as well as those that were partly accurate. Discuss with students, noticing any surprising or unexpected differences between their predictions and the actual text. [ACELY1692](#)

- *About the authors & illustrator:* The final page of the book has an information page about the authors and illustrators. They all have very different backgrounds which are not all related to creating picture books. Discuss each of them and think about why they might have wanted to be part of this picture book. How does the topic of bees align with their own personal interests and skillset? [ACELT1602](#)
- *Activating prior knowledge:* This text is a fictional story but it is based on the important role that bees play in the natural world. Ask students to respond to the question 'Are bees important? Why or why not?' Record their responses using post-it notes or a digital tool such as [Padlet](#) or [Answer Garden](#) (limited characters). Sort and group answers according to similar ideas or themes. [ACELY1692](#) [ACSHE061](#)
- *Building the field:* Use the **Know** and **Want to Know** sections of a [KWL chart](#) to record students initial thinking about bees. To learn more about bees and their importance watch this [video](#). Next, find out more about some of the threats to the survival of bees by watching this [video](#) and finally learn about what can be done to help bees in this [video](#). Complete the **Learned** section of the KWL chart. [ACELY1692](#) [ACSSU073](#) [ACHASSK088](#)
- *Context:* The significance of bees to our planet is recognised with the proclamation of May 20th as World Bee Day. Read about World Bee Day [here](#) and [here](#). Discuss some of the [United Nations' list of observed days](#). Think about what makes something important enough to make it to this list. Ask students what else they think is significant enough to recognise through an international day. What makes it so important?
[ACSHE062](#) [ACELY1692](#)

Close reading

For this unit, links between receptive and productive modes have been made. For each teaching idea in **Close reading** you will find a corresponding teaching idea in **Using the book for listening, speaking, writing & creating**.

- *Text structure:* This text is a narrative with a typical complication-resolution structure. As you read the text with students support them to notice the typical features of a narrative – characters, setting, complication and resolution. As a class create a visual story map to show the structure and sequence of the events in the story. On your map identify and label the part of the story where the complication becomes obvious to the reader as well as the part where the resolution is revealed. [ACELY1690](#)
- *Metaphor:* In the story the bees can be seen as metaphors for human climate activists and climate deniers, thereby providing a message for readers about what we as humans can do to protect the planet. To help students to see and understand these metaphors for themselves, ask them to work in small groups to create a role play of the story, using bees as the characters. Next, ask them to think about how the story might be different if the characters were human. Can you think of a person in real life who is a bit like One-bee? Can you think of someone who might be like Other-bee and Queen-bee? You might like to use the [story of Greta Thunberg](#) to support student thinking. Students can then create a

second role play but replacing the bees with humans as the characters – how might they respond to each other and work out their disagreements? Discuss the way that the authors have created a powerful message by using bees as metaphorical representations of humans. How effective have they have been? [ACELT1605](#) [ACADRM031](#) [ACADRM033](#)

- *Inferences about character:* Read the text up until pg. 21 and stop reading after the sentence ‘Your dreams aren’t welcome here!’ Use the [conscience-alley](#) drama routine and ask students what they think One-bee should do. Have one student play the role of One-bee and, as they move through the conscience alley, the other students take it in turns to give them advice about what to do – ask students to think of as many different options as they can. Once One-bee has made it through conscience-alley they can make a decision about what they would do next if they were in the story. You can repeat this process with a student playing the role of Other-bee to compare the different opinions and advice. [ACELT1603](#) [ACELY1692](#) [ACELT1605](#) [ACADRM031](#)
- *Language – direct speech:* Look at the sentences on pg. 25. Notice the two sentences that show direct speech from each of the characters. Write each sentence on strips of paper. Ask students to identify the parts of the sentence that show the actual words that the characters say. Cut these parts to separate them from the rest of the sentence – what is left?

‘Just a little,’	says One-bee,	‘but just enough.’
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‘Stay away!’	cries Other-bee.
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Notice the **verbs** that show that the character is speaking (says; cries). Use these two words to start a list of words that represent the action of speech – substitute some of them for ‘says’ and ‘cries’ in the mentor sentences. How does the meaning of the sentence change? You may also like to notice the way that direct speech is punctuated in these sentences. The first sentence in particular is a good example to show the way that the speech marks act as a ‘boundary’ of the words that are actually spoken (or thought).

[ACELA1492](#) [ACELA1493](#)

- *Prepositional phrases:* Look at the first sentence on pg. 11. The sentence begins with three prepositional phrases – ‘**in** the wind’, ‘**in** the dust’ and ‘**in** the burning sun’ and finishes with the main clause that tells us the main participant (One-bee), the process (sees) and the second participant (another bee). Break this sentence apart with students and discuss how each part of the sentence functions to create an image in the reader’s mind. Ask students to close their eyes and imagine themselves being in the wind, in the dust, in the burning sun. How might they feel if they were in this scene? Discuss the power of prepositional phrases to ‘set the scene’ and provide important details to the story. As a class, think of

some other sets of prepositional phrases, e.g. 'in the wind, in the snow, in the icy evening' and imagine what it would like to be there. [ACELT1606](#) [ACELT1604](#) [ACELA1493](#)
[ACELA1495](#)

- *Noun groups*: Look at the final sentence on pg. 11. This is a fragment sentence (as it has no verb/ process) that consists of three noun groups. These noun groups function to create an image of Other-bee in the reader's mind. Support students to notice the repeated noun (bee), the three adjectives that have been used to describe the bee, and the article (a) that indicates how many, or which one. Why do you think the author has used these repeated noun groups? How do they support readers to make meaning from the text? What inferences can you make about the bee based on these noun groups? [ACELA1493](#)
[ACELT1604](#) [ACELY1692](#)
- *Character development*: The Other-bee character changes their thoughts and behaviours as the story progresses. Draw three columns on a sheet of paper, and then draw a picture in the top left-hand corner of Other-bee as he appears on pp. 10-11. Underneath the picture record all the characteristics of Other-bee at this stage, both physical and behavioural. Notice the observations that are literal and those that have to be inferred. Then, look at the image on pp. 36-37 (last page). Draw this version of Other-bee in the top right-hand corner of the page and list all of the characteristics of the bee at this stage. Notice what has changed from the beginning to the end. In the middle column record some of the events that occurred in the story that contributed to the changes.
[ACELT1605](#) [ACELY1692](#)
- *Connecting to self*: One-bee has to show resilience and persistence in order to convince Other-bee to take action. Ask students to think about a time when their ideas were not listened to. How did it make them feel? What did they do? Did they persist like One-bee, did they 'give up' or did they find another solution? How are they the same or different to One-bee? [ACELY1692](#) [ACELT1603](#)
- *Connecting to the world*: How do the events and the characters in the text connect to issues and people in the real world? Consider literal connections to bees and the environment as well as less obvious connections such as climate change activists and climate change deniers, or other people who have advocated for change. Ask students if they have seen or heard about people with similar ideas or points of view as One-bee or Other-bee? [ACELY1692](#) [ACELT1603](#)
- *Visual literacy*: Look at the illustrations of One-bee and Other-bee on pp. 12-13. Notice the features that help to show the personality of the bees. Examples might include the shape of their antennae (rounded vs angular), their colour (warm vs cool), the shape of their body (rounded vs angular), the pointiness of their faces (rounded vs pointy) or the shape and size of their wings (short and round vs long). Compare each feature and discuss the effect that it has on how the viewer perceives each bee. Why do you think the illustrator has done this? How do the visual features of the bees support and enhance the written text? You may also like to compare both illustrations to [this 3D image of a bee](#). Notice how both One-

bee and Other-bee's features are exaggerated from those of an actual bee.

[ACELY1692](#) [ACELA1496](#)

- *Language devices*: The authors have deliberately 'played on' language with the name of the bees. On pg. 5 notice the use of One-bee as a name and then 'one bee' to describe his feelings of helplessness. Why have the authors done this? How effective is this for readers? How does it help the reader to understand the message of the text? Reflect on the title of the text, *Just one bee*. Discuss whether the title suits the story – why or why not? [ACELT1603](#) [ACELT1606](#) [ACELY1692](#)

Word recognition, phonic knowledge and spelling

- *Etymology*: On pg. 7 notice the similar sounding and looking words **wonder** and **wander**. Write both words and discuss the differences in the sound and spelling of each word. Support students to notice the vowel sound vs the spelling. Both words have German and Dutch origins, which helps to explain their spelling. Use either [Etymonline - Online Etymology Dictionary](#) or [Google Translate](#) to investigate the connections between the English spelling of both words and the Dutch or German spelling. [ACELA1487](#)
[ACELA1828](#)
- *Phonology*: On pg. 7 look at the words **flower** and **without**. Write both words and highlight the 'ow' and 'ou' graphemes. Notice that although the spelling (grapheme) is different, the sound (phoneme) is the same. Ask students to find more words with the same grapheme and/or phoneme while they are reading independently and create a word list to show the different ways that the sound can be represented. [ACELA1828](#)

[Back to top of page](#)

Using the book for listening, speaking, writing and creating

For this unit, links between receptive and productive modes have been made. For each teaching idea in **Using the book for listening, speaking, writing & creating** you will find a corresponding teaching idea in **Close Reading**.

- *Text structure*: Revise the typical features of a narrative (characters, setting, complication, resolution). Ask students to create a story map of their own to represent their ideas for a narrative. Support students to notice the way that narratives often feature a series of events that build up to a complication – how can they show this build up in their story map? [ACELY1694](#)
- *Metaphor*: In small groups think of a real-world issue that humans have some control over and that causes disagreement. Think of an animal or other living thing that could be used to tell a story about the issue. Develop and perform a role play to tell the story, focusing on

the message that students would like to convey. [ACELT1603](#) [ACELT1607](#)
[ACELT1794](#) [ACADRM031](#)

- *Inferences about character*: Think of a time when you have faced a dilemma like one of the characters in the story – were you being pressured to do something that you didn't believe in? Were you having trouble getting people to listen to you? Draw a picture of yourself in that situation and write about how you felt. What did you do to solve the problem? [ACELT1607](#) [ACELY1692](#)
- *Language – direct speech*: Find a text (or short movie) that contains mostly dialogue. [Anemone is not the enemy](#) is a good example that would work well for this task. For each example of direct speech, use talking marks to delineate the spoken words. Next, think of a verb that could be used to show the way that the words are spoken (refer to list created during Close Reading) as well as the person or character who is speaking. Use this information and refer to the mentor sentences from the text to create a sentence together. Students could then work in small groups to create a short text that includes direct speech. [ACELA1492](#) [ACELA1493](#)
- *Prepositional phrases*: Review the first sentence on pg. 11 with three prepositional phrases. Ask students to find a place in the classroom or schoolyard to sit. How does it feel? What can they see? Following the mentor sentence structure, students can create a sentence beginning with three prepositional phrases to describe where they are and then finish with what they see. This sentence might be developed into a story by students or kept in a Writer's Notebook as a 'seed' for future writing. [ACELA1493](#) [ACELA1495](#) [ACELT1607](#) [ACELY1694](#)
- *Noun groups*: Review the final sentence on pg. 11 that contains three noun groups. Using images of interesting or unusual animals ask students to think of three noun groups that describe their chosen animal. Think about the ways that the noun groups can support the visual image of the animal. Animal images can be found at [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). As an alternative, students could create their own animal or creature, as described in 'Visual literacy' below, and think of noun groups that will add detail to their picture. The images and descriptions could be used to develop a full written text or kept in Writer's Notebooks as a 'seed' for future writing. [ACELA1493](#) [ACELT1794](#) [ACELY1694](#)
- *Character development*: Ask students to write a similar story to Just one bee with characters that disagree on an issue. Begin with a map to show how each of the characters will change throughout the story so that they will come to a productive resolution in the end. Then, develop the ideas into a full narrative or role play. [ACELT1607](#) [ACELT1794](#)
- *Connecting to self*: Drawing on an understanding of the experience of One-bee in the story collaborate to write an alternate ending. What if Other-Bee didn't change their mind about helping? What else could One-Bee do? Could Queen Bee help? [ACELT1607](#) [ACELT1794](#)
- *Connecting to the world*: Think of an issue that you would like to see changed in the world. Who are the people that might disagree with you? How could you convince them to work together? Come up with reasons why they should agree with you – how will you use

language and reasoning to convince them? Students can present and defend their argument to their peers, in small groups or to the whole class. [ACELA1488](#) [ACELY1688](#)

- **Visual literacy:** Using the observations of the ways that illustrations can show personality (Close Reading), ask students to create and illustrate their own character – it could be a person, animal or other living thing. Think about the characteristics that they would like to highlight – how can they use visual features to show the characteristics? They might like to find an image of an actual living thing and think about the ways that they can exaggerate the features, or they may like to create an entirely new creature. Share the character illustrations with a partner and describe the visual features that you have used to show their personality. The character could be developed into a narrative or added to a Writer's Notebook as a 'seed' for a future writing idea. [ACELT1607](#) [ACELA1496](#)
- **Language devices:** After creating their own character (above) ask students to think of a name for their character that uses a play on words – how can they match the name and the visual features with the characteristics? [ACELT1606](#)

Relevant resources and links

- **Related PETAA units of work:** [How to Bee](#) by Bren MacDibble from the 2018 CBCA shortlist.
- **Artist information:** More information about [Christopher Nielsen and his artistic style](#)
- **Discussion starter:** [This article](#) has some interesting ideas about the role of bees in Australia that could be used to discuss and debate as a whole class after reading *Just one bee*.

[Back to top of page](#)

Exploring the 2022 CBCA Short List [main page](#) | [Terms and conditions](#) | Download this unit | [Consider the environment before printing](#)

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