

TEACHERS' NOTES
WE LIVE IN A BUS

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Teachers' notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

We Live in a Bus



DAVE PETZOLD



Thames & Hudson Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. For our head office in Naarm (Melbourne), we respectfully acknowledge the people of the Kulin Nations. We recognise the continuing connection to culture and story passed down through generations of Indigenous Australians that unite people, environment and ways of seeing. We pay respects to elders past and present, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waterways and community. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

Synopsis

When a young boy and his family embark on a year-long trip around Australia, they enjoy diversely beautiful landscapes and quirky nooks and crannies, meeting many new friends along the way. Oh – and their home is a bus!

With everyone pitching in to get on the road each day, their adventurous journey is filled with weird and wonderful sights, from lizards and budgies to musical fences, waterholes and some rather noisy frogs, just to name a few.

Whether sleeping under the stars or basking in the sun, *We Live in a Bus* is a delightful story that explores the splendours of nature, the importance of family time and the knowledge that comes with listening.



Themes



ADVENTURE



FAMILY



HOLIDAYS



NATURE



AUSTRALIA

Writing style

Told in first person, present tense, *We Live in a Bus* shares a little boy's perspective of his family's year-long journey around Australia. Noticeably devoid of screens and electronic devices, he delights in the simplicity and diversity of the bush, learning to play his part in the family routines that help make this time together a memory in the making. The inclusion of onomatopoeia and alliteration adds to the sensory explosion in each colour-filled illustration, making the text highly accessible and engaging to younger readers. It makes for a perfect read-aloud and is sure to be a text that is read again and again.

Author motivation

In 2022 my partner, Anna, and I decided to buy a Toyota Coaster bus and take off for the towns of Winton, Hughenden and Richmond in outback Queensland – commonly known as the Dinosaur Trail because of the incredible fossils found in the area.

We named our bus Nulla because we bought her from a guy in Perth and she had to travel across the Nullarbor Plain to get to us in northern New South Wales. Nulla loosely translates to 'nothing' or, as we like to say, 'spaciousness'. We love that it relates to open spaces and to slowing down and being present – something that I tried to capture in the book.

We met some fun characters along the way. We swam in freezing waterholes and played on a musical fence. We explored Aboriginal rock art and saw some dinosaurs, too. We broke down a few times and we had a bus spider for a while, but she jumped ship in Winton. I don't blame her – the flies were crazy there. We watched sunrises and sunsets, camped by billabongs, recorded frog calls and walked for hours along ancient forest trails. The book is inspired by moments from our adventure, but it reimagines the story from the viewpoint of a much younger version of myself.

I hope the book inspires readers to go out and explore, even if it's just in their own backyard. There are lots of interesting things to see if you stop and look.

Nulla, Anna and I are planning our next adventure to the Northern Territory, Darwin and Broome.



Study notes

- Using the cover and blurb, predict what this book may be about. Why might the family be living in a bus? What clues do we get about the setting for this story?
- The family has given their bus a name – Gracie Joy Rufus Bean. What does this tell us about the place of the bus in their lives? Does your family name its vehicles? Share with a friend.
- As you read *We Live in a Bus*, take note of the figurative language used throughout. How does the use of onomatopoeia and alliteration help make the story more engaging? Examples include:
 - *Tic-shhh!*
 - *Honk! Honk!*
 - *Cheep! Cheep! Cheep! Cheep!*
 - *Dong! Rink! Tong!*
 - *Whizz! Whoosh! Whirr!*
 - *Dragonflies zip and zoom*
 - *Crackle! Pop!*
 - *Tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!*
 - *Flitter-Flutter!*
 - *Aaaaark! Aaaaark!*
 - *Pobblebonk! ReeEEEEet! Tok! Tok!*
- Why do you think the story starts and finishes with the bus door opening and closing – '*Tic-shhh!*'?



- Compare the page illustrations below. How are they similar and different? How do the illustrations share the diversity of Australia's landscape? What words would you use to describe each? Write these around the illustrations.



- When Gracie Joy Rufus Bean gets a flat tyre, Pete the truckie helps out. How does this show the importance of helping one another? How do you help others? Share in a journal.
- Take time to 'read' each page's illustrations carefully. What is each family member doing? What can we tell about each of them from these images? What do they like? How do the illustrations tell us more than the words alone?
- In the page opening below, the family learns how to listen to Country from Ranger Jess. Why is listening such an important skill? Why is listening to Country so central to First Nations cultures? What can we learn from this practice? What other ways do First Nations' People listen to Country? Read picture books such as *Big Fella Rain* by Beryl Webber and Fern Martins (Magabala Books) or *Thank you Rain!* by Sally Morgan (Magabala Books) as companion texts.

One morning we visit Ranger Jess who shows us how to listen to Country.

'When you see the red-tailed black cockatoo, rain is coming,' she says.

Aaaaark! Aaaaark!



- In the pages below, the family looks 'at the small things' from above and 'the big things' from below. The illustrations show these different perspectives. Why do they do this? How does this show the joy they are taking from their time away? Explore outside and find 'a small thing' to look at from above and a 'big thing' to look at from below. Sketch these two perspectives. You may wish to take photos to help with your drawings.



- The sentence stem 'We live in a bus and ...' is repeated throughout the text. Write and illustrate your own page opening that starts in this same way.
- In the role of Blob the bus spider, describe what it is like to live in the bus with this family.
- Make a list of the native flora and fauna that the family encounters on their way. In addition, add significant landforms and landscapes.
- What everyday objects from the city are noticeably absent in this story? Why do you think the author has done this?
- Create a bird's eye view of the bus, showing its floorplan. Add in what's not shown using your imagination (such as the parents' bed and the dining table). Use floorplans from caravans online to help with this task.
- Using the illustration below, discuss what the family might get from meeting others at the campground.



- Each family member helps with daily chores. Why is this important? What do you do in your family to help the household run smoothly?
- Which place in this story would you most like to visit? Why? Share in a reflection.
- What do you learn about the importance of family time from reading *We Live in a Bus*?
- Using a map of Australia, trace where the family travels. Add places members of the class have visited.
- In the role of Suzy, retell this story. What special treasures have you found? Use the illustrations to help see this story from her perspective.
- Which is your favourite page in *We Live in a Bus*? Why? Share with a friend.
- In small groups, perform a part of *We Live in a Bus* in a dramatisation.
- What special mementos or souvenirs do you have from a family holiday? Choose one to share with your class in a one-minute oral. Remember to explain why it is so special to you.
- Have you and your family ever gone camping or on a road trip? Share your experiences through a recount.
- What is your biggest take-away from reading *We Live in a Bus*?
- On the last page, Dad asks where they should go. The family replies, 'Wherever the road will take us!' Create one final page to add to the end of this story that shows their next day's adventure.



- Choose one of the postcards on the next page. In the role of one of the children, write home to a grandparent to share your experiences.
- Use the year-long calendar at the end of these notes to track this journey. Alternatively, use this resource to plan your dream holiday around Australia.
- Create a board game that captures the adventures of *We Live in a Bus*. Alternatively, create a map of Australia that you can code a Bee-Bot (or similar) to travel around.





Dear

Post Card



To _____

From _____



Dear

Post Card



To _____

From _____



Dear

Post Card



To

From

We Live in a Bus



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



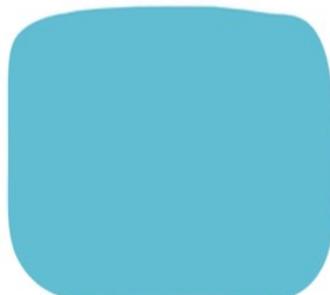
September



October



November



December

