

Pumpkin and the Hidden Heroes

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Illustrator: Zinelda McDonald
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Pumpkin wakes one morning to a loud noise. When she and Toots the cat peek through the window, they see people who are removing the trash. The men and women look dashing in their uniforms, like real heroes. Then Pumpkin starts to wonder about all the Hidden Heroes out there … *"Look for bits of magic that hide out in plain sight. Hidden Heroes are often quiet and don't talk about their plight. They improve the lives of others, make a difference where they can. They look out for what needs to be done and DO it - that's their plan."* A beautiful story that shows children there are heroes everywhere, you just need to look for them.

- Lapa Publishers

Teaching notes

These notes have been written by the Otto Foundation to provide teachers and caregivers with ideas to develop reading comprehension and support literacy skills. They encourage deep reading of the text and illustrations, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, not just one sitting.

These notes have been written with Grade R, 1, 2 and 3 readers in mind, but teachers and caregivers will need to adapt them to the age and experience of their readers.

Themes

- Gratitude
- Celebrating everyday heroes
- Kindness
- Empathy
- Community observation
- Family pride

Before reading the story

- Open up the discussion by allowing the children to share their initial responses to the front cover of the book. Encourage them to discuss what they see and their responses to it.
  - *What do you notice about the cover illustration?*
  - *Which animals do you recognise on the cover?*
  - *Does the main character on the cover look familiar to you? What other stories do you recognise her from?*
  - *What do you like most about the cover illustration?*
  - *What does the cover illustration make you think about?*
  - *How does the cover illustration make you feel?*

- Explain that the title of the book is **Pumpkin and the Hidden Heroes**. Ask the children to share their thoughts about the title.
  - *What is Pumpkin? Girl, vegetable or both?*
  - *What is a* **hero***? What does it mean to be a* **hidden hero***?*
  - *What do you think Pumpkin might do in this story?*
  - *Who do you think Pumpkin might meet in this story?*

- Read the back cover blurb aloud. Explore how the children may change their ideas about the story now that they have more information.
  - *How does reading the back cover blurb change what you thought might happen in the story?*
  - *Why does Pumpkin think the people who remove trash are* **real heroes***?*
  - *Who else do you think Pumpkin might meet who are* **hidden heroes***?*

Reading aloud discussion points

- On pages 6–9 Pumpkin wakes up early in the morning.
  - *What is the name of Pumpkin's cat?*
  - *What insects are* **chirping** *early in the morning?* Ask the children to make **chirping** sounds like crickets.
  - *Who is snoring down the passage at Pumpkin's house? What farm vehicle does the snoring sound like?*
  - *Look at the illustration on pages 6–7. What special South African flower is growing in Pumpkin's garden?*
  - *Pumpkin wakes with a* **start***. What does it mean to wake with a* **start***? How did Pumpkin's body feel when she woke with a* **start***?*
  - *Why do you think Pumpkin goes to her parents' bedroom when she hears* **weird noises***? Look at the illustrations on page 9. What does Pumpkin imagine the* **weird noises** *might be?*

- On pages 10–13 Pumpkin's dad tells her: "It's Hidden Hero Day" and explains what this means.
  - *What do Pumpkin and her dad see when they look out the window?*
  - *What is* **muck***? What type of* **muck** *are the hidden heroes in* **orange vests** *working with? What name do we give the Hidden Heroes in the* **orange vests***?*
  - *How does Pumpkin feel learning about Hidden Heroes? How do you know this is how she feels?*
  - *Pumpkin wants to be a Hidden Hero. Her dad explains that she needs to* **investigate** *Hidden Heroes in order to be one. What does it mean to* **investigate** *something?*

- On pages 14–15 Pumpkin's dad teaches her how to investigate Hidden Heroes.
  - *Pumpkin needs to look for magic* **in plain sight***. What does* **in plain sight** *mean?*
  - *Hidden Heroes are often quiet and do not talk about their* **plight***. What is a* **plight***?*
  - *How do Hidden Heroes make a difference in the lives of others?*
  - *Hidden Heroes move like leopards, they* **whisper** *and they do not* **roar**. Ask the children to **whisper** "Hidden Heroes" and then **roar** "Hidden Heroes".
  - *Look at the illustration on pages 14–15. Name two different types of cats you see.*

- On pages 16–17 'Detective Pumpkin' gets ready to investigate some Hidden Heroes.
  - *Pumpkin washes her face before getting dressed. What are some of the morning activities you do before leaving the house?* (For example: brush hair, brush teeth, get dressed)
  - *Pumpkin wants to be a* **detective**. *What does a* **detective** *do?*
  - *What does it mean to be wear a* **disguise***? What does Pumpkin wear to* **disguise** *herself?*
  - *Pumpkin has to be* **stealthy** *like a cat. What does it mean to be* **stealthy***?*
  - *Look at the illustrations on pages 16–17. What do you notice about how Pumpkin and Tootsie are moving?* Ask the children to move around the room in the same stealthy way as Pumpkin and Tootsie.

- On pages 18–21 Pumpkin's first stop as a detective is to the corner store.
  - *What is a* **corner store***? What is the name of your local* **corner store***?*
  - *Look at the illustrations on pages 18–19. What is for sale at the* **corner store***?*
  - *What is a* **shopkeeper***? What is the name of the* **shopkeeper** *at Pumpkin's corner store?*
  - *Which snacks does Pumpkin choose at the corner store? Which snacks would you have chosen at the corner store?*
  - *What is the name of the special kind of dress* **Ms Patel** *is wearing?*
  - *What kind thing does* **Ms Patel** *do for* **Old Lance***?*
  - *Describe* **Old Lance**.
  - *How does* **Old Lance** *feel about the kind thing* **Ms Patel** *did for him? How do you know this?*
  - *Have you ever met anyone like* **Old Lance***? How could you be a Hidden Hero to them?*
  - *Why do you think* **Ms Patel** *is a Hidden Hero?*
  - *Look at the illustration on page 21. How do you think Ms Patel feels about being a Hidden Hero? Why do you think this?*

- On pages 22–25 Pumpkin rides the bus to school and looks for more Hidden Heroes.
  - *Describe the different passengers on the bus on pages 22–23.*
  - *Pumpkin keeps her* **eyes peeled** *for a Hidden hero. What does it mean to keep your* **eyes peeled***?*
  - *Who do you think the Hidden Hero on the bus might be? Why do you think that?*
  - *Pumpkin sees a* **familiar face** *at the front of the bus. What does it mean when someone is a* **familiar face***? Who is the familiar face that Pumpkin saw?*
  - **Johan** *sometimes says* **uncomfortable truths** *at school. What is an* **uncomfortable truth?**
  - *What does* **Johan** *do that surprises Pumpkin? Why do you think Pumpkin is surprised?*
  - *What is* **Johan** *really good at?*
  - *Have you ever met anyone like* **Johan***? How could you be a Hidden Hero to them?*
  - *Why do you think* **Johan** *is a Hidden Hero?*

- On pages 26–33 Pumpkin went in search of more Hidden Heroes.
  - *Pumpkin moved with a* **hop** *and a* **skip** *and a* **wiggle**. Ask the children to **hop**, then **skip**, then **wiggle** around the room.
  - *Pumpkin keeps a* **sharp eye** *out for more Hidden Heroes. What does it mean to have a* **sharp eye***?*

- *Look at the illustrations on pages 28–29. Name the four different colours of backpacks Pumpkin could see.*
- *What is a* **centipede***? What other insect can you think of that is similar to a* **centipede***?*
- *What are the kids Pumpkin is watching doing?*
- *What is the name of* **Thembi's** *gogo?*
- **Ma Makwethu** *is having an* **absolute jol***. What does it mean if someone is having an* **absolute jol***? Have you ever had an* **absolute jol***? What were you doing?*
- *What is special about* **Ma Makwethu***'s family?*
- Ask the children to form a line and march like a **centipede** around the room.
- *What does Pumpkin notice under* **Ma Makwethu***'s backpack?*
- *Have you ever met anyone like* **Ma Makwethu***? How could you be a Hidden Hero to them?*
- *Why do you think* **Ma Makwethu** *is a Hidden Hero?*
- *Why do you think* **Ma Makwethu** *gives Pumpkin a* **secret wink***?*
- *What does it mean to be* **starstruck***? Why is Pumpkin* **starstruck** *by* **Ma Makwethu***?*

- On pages 34–37 Pumpkin makes her way back home.
  - *Look at the illustration on page 34–35. What does Pumpkin have stuck in her hair? How did she get* **twigs and leaves** *stuck in her hair?*
  - *Pumpkin's brain went* **tick-tock-tick** *as she thought about everything she had seen. Can you name the three Hidden Heroes Pumpkin has seen?*
  - *Look at the illustration on pages 36–37. Pumpkin gets home to see her dad arrive in his* **hero machine***. What is the correct name for the* **hero machine***? What type of hero do you think Pumpkin's dad is?*
  - *Is Pumpkin's dad a* **Hero** *or a* **Hidden Hero***? Why do you say so?*

- On pages 38–39 Pumpkin goes to bed.
  - *Look at the illustrations on pages 38–39. Describe Pumpkin's bedroom.*
  - *What insects are chirping outside Pumpkin's window?*
  - *Pumpkin realises that something makes her smile. What is it?*
  - *Do you agree with Pumpkin that everyone has the power to be a hero in disguise?*
  - *Who do you know a* **Hidden Hero***? Why are they a* **Hidden Hero***?*
  - *What could you do to be a* **Hidden Hero***?*

Topics for discussion after reading the story

- Ask the children:
  - *What did you like most about this story?*
  - *Which Hidden Hero from the story would you most want to meet? Why?*
  - *What is something you have learnt from reading this story?*
  - *If you were writing this story, what would happen to Pumpkin next?*
  - *Who do you think should read this story next and why would you recommend it to them?*

Activity ideas for after reading the story

- Ask the children to each draw a picture and write down the name of a Hidden Hero they know. Create a display of Hidden Heroes.

- Discuss with the children what they could do to be Hidden Heroes. Ask them to work in pairs and describe what they could do as a Hidden Hero. Each pair should share feedback with the larger group of children.

- Bianca Flanders has written a number of books in the Pumpkin series:

  - *Pumpkin finds her Queen*
  - *Pumpkin find her Kindness*
  - *Pumpkin finds her Beat*
  - *Pumpkin and the Hidden Heroes*

  Request these books from your local library and read them with the children. Discuss which one is their favourite Pumpkin story and why.

Please see the following pages for Grade specific CAPS aligned skills covered in these teaching notes.

CAPS skills covered in teaching notes

Listening and speaking

Grade R

- Listen to stories
- Listen and respond to simple questions
- Listen without interrupting
- Talk about pictures
- Participate in discussion and asks questions
- Ask questions
- Give explanations

Reading

Grade R

- Use pictures to predict what a story is about
- Predict what will happen in a story through pictures
- Recognise and point out common objects in pictures
- Interpret pictures
- Make up own story by 'reading' pictures
- Pretend to read
- Make links to own experience when reading with teacher
- Discuss and describe characters in a story
- Describe characters in stories and give opinion
- Answer questions based on the story read

Listening and speaking

Grade 1

- Listen to and express feelings about a story
- Listen without interrupting, taking turns to speak and asking questions of clarification
- Respond to pictures
- Listen to stories with interest and enjoyment, drawing on a picture to show understanding
- Listens for the detail in stories
- Talk about personal experiences and feelings
- Answer closed and open-ended questions
- Participate in discussions

Reading

Grade 1

- Develop book handling skills (holding the book and turning pages correctly)
- Uses book cover to predict what a story is about
- Use pictures in the book for understanding
- Make up own story by 'reading' pictures
- Discuss a story identifying main idea and characters
- Ask questions related to a story told and read
- Recognise cause and effect in a story
- Give an opinion on what was read
- Answer open-ended questions based on text read
- Interpret information from pictures

Listening and speaking

Grade 2

- Listen to stories and answer higher-order questions
- Listen to a story with enjoyment and answer questions related to the story
- Listen to stories for a longer period with enjoyment
- Listen without interrupting showing respect for the speaker
- Use ever increasing vocabulary when answering questions
- Understand and use appropriate language in context
- Ask questions and comments on what was heard
- Talk about personal experience
- Express feelings about a story
- Answer closed and open-ended questions and justify answers
- Participate in discussions, asking and answering questions and suggesting ideas

Reading

Grade 2

- Read books as a class with teacher
- Use the cover of a book to predict what a story is about
- Use pictures in the book for understanding
- Identify key details in what was read, such as main characters and setting
- Express whether a story was liked and justify response
- Express personal response to a text read
- Give opinion on what was read
- Answer open ended questions based on text
- Answer higher order questions based on text read
- Recognise cause and effect in a story
- Describe main ideas in a text
- Identify key details in what was read
- Discuss different cultures represented in a story

Listening and speaking

Grade 3

- Listen for main ideas and detail in stories
- Listen to story for cause and effect
- Ask questions for clarification
- Express feelings and opinions about text and gives reasons
- Talk about personal experiences
- Answer open-ended questions and justify answer
- Answer higher order questions based on text
- Participate in discussion
- Engage in conversation as a social skill, accepting and respecting the way others speak
- Listen without interrupting

Reading

Grade 3

- Read books as a class with teacher
- Discuss main idea, characters, plot and 'problem' in a text
- Answer a range of higher order questions based on text
- Express whether a story was liked and justify answer
- Interpret information from pictures
- Use illustrations in text to increase understanding