

TEACHER NOTES

Lucas and Jack

Ellie Royce / Andrew McLean

Title: *Lucas and Jack*
Author: Ellie Royce
Illustrator: Andrew McLean

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Author: Ellie Royce has been a freelance features writer for magazines in Australia and New Zealand since 1996. Her first book, *Moon Rites*, a non-fiction women's self-help book was published in 2002 by Lothian Books. Her real love however is writing fiction for children and young adults and says she writes whenever she has a spare minute and quite often when she should be doing other things! Her two titles for teenagers, *Letterbook One - Amy's Secret* and *Letterbook Two - Passion for Fashion*, were published by ABC Books in 2008. *Lucas & Jack* is her first picture book. Ellie lives in northern NSW with a little dog, a big dog, a second hand cat and her human family.

Illustrator: Andrew McLean is one of Australia's best-loved and most highly awarded illustrators of children's books. Many of the 50 or more books illustrated by Andrew have received awards from the Children's Book Council of Australia, including *My Dog*, written by John Heffernan, winner of the Book of the Year for Younger Readers; *You'll Wake the Baby* by Catherine Jinks and *A Year On Our Farm* by Penny Matthews, winners of the Book of the Year award in the Early Childhood Category. Other books illustrated by Andrew include *Reggie Queen of the Street* by Margaret Barbalet, *There's a Goat in My Coat* by Rosemary Milne, and *My Country* by Dorothea Mackellar. Together with Janet McLean, Andrew has also created a number of popular and award-winning picture books, including *Hector and Maggie*, *Dog Tales*, *Josh*, and *Let's Go Baby-o!* His books for Working Title Press include *Little Bat* by Tania Cox, *Sam the Cat* by Sam Bowring and Emily Rodda's Squeak Street series, which are to be released as two new collected editions, *Stories from Squeak Street* and *More Stories From Squeak Street* in August and October 2014. Andrew lives in Melbourne.

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SYNOPSIS Every week Lucas' mum visits Great Grandpop at the nursing home. And every week Lucas waits for her outside. Waiting, for Lucas, is boring. Then one day he meets Jack. Jack is tricky and Jack is fun, and he is a great storyteller. He understands how Lucas is feeling - *'Not much to do in there with all the oldies, I suppose'*. To help pass the time he tells Lucas stories about himself and other residents of the nursing home. *Lucas & Jack* is a great book for introducing young children to the idea that old people can be fun and that deep down we have more in common than we think. More importantly *Lucas & Jack* encourages children to ask questions, be curious, imaginative and empathetic.

WRITING STYLE Ellie Royce has written a moving, understated story that invites us to see others differently and recognise the bonds we have in common. Lucas, one of the main characters, is introduced on the first page of the book. Ellie reveals Lucas' problem – he is bored. Then, throughout the rest of the story Ellie reveals how the other main character, Jack, helps Lucas to look at his world differently. Ellie uses time-shift to move the story from the present to the past. The present: *(Jack) points to someone in the distance, 'What do you see?' 'That's easy,' I reply. 'An old man in a wheelchair.'* – letting us know what Lucas sees. The past: *'I see Leo,' Jack says. 'He was a detective.'* - revealing what Jack knows and recalls. Ellie uses dialogue to develop the characters' personalities and to move the story forward - for example, Jack's dry sense of humour. When telling Lucas about Evelyn he says, *'She still has her favourite red ballet shoes under her bed. Says she never knows when she might need them.'* Lucas is gradually drawn into Jack's stories, and wants to know more about Jack. He asks Jack, *'Do you hate being old?'* and he learns he and Jack have something in common - a border collie dog. The next time Lucas visits the nursing home he brings his dog, plays a game of cards, and wonders about Great Grandpop, *'Pop, before you were old, what did you do?'* Great Grandpop tells him a story about when he was a boy *'I was about eight when I drove a cart and delivered ice for pocket money.'* This simple sentence captures how vastly different life was between then and now. Lucas wants to know more about Great Grandpop and he is eager to come back next week to hear more stories. At the end of the story Lucas has a new friend, and through Jack's stories he has learned a way to find out – ask questions, listen, explore, and imagine.

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ILLUSTRATING STYLE Andrew McLean created the illustrations for this book by making rough drawings with charcoal and watercolour on paper then photographing them and scanning them onto an iPad. Then on the iPad he coloured them using an illustrating app: *Sketch Club*. Andrew's expansive and expressive illustrations complement and enrich Ellie Royce's subtle text. There are only two single page drawings in the book - the first and last pages. These highlight how, with Jack's help, Lucas changes from a bored, unhappy boy, into someone who is lively and friendly. In between these pages the full bleed, double-page spreads reveal information that is not carried in the text. Andrew uses a mix of close up and distant views, with the illustrations always focusing on the characters. The growing connection between Lucas and Jack is depicted through their body language and facial expressions – the way they make eye contact with each other, Jack's wide-spread arms and kindly face, the subtle changes in Lucas' face from downcast and gloomy to open and interested. Lucas and Jack see things from different perspectives. Lucas sees 'an old man in a wheelchair' and 'an even older lady'. Jack knows that these people have led rich lives, and the illustrations bring his stories to life. Alternating pages contrast the current quieter lives of the elderly residents with the stories of the past. Andrew has used different colour palette to contrast the present (soft warm colours) and the past (vivid, rich and sunny)

DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

This book introduces young children to themes of aging, storytelling and oral history. *Lucas and Jack* can be used to generate discussion and exchange of stories and ideas about family, the past, and our links with our older members of society.

- Before reading the story to a large group of children, spend time reading with small groups. This will provide an opportunity for children to share their own responses to the story, and for educators to draw attention to how the words and the pictures work together to tell the story.
- As you read through the story respond the children's spontaneous reactions – which pictures do they respond to most eagerly. Is it the pictures of the detective and the ballet dancer?
- Ask how we can tell from the pictures that Lucas is interested in what Jack is saying.

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- Ask the children if they know anyone who is old – grandparents or great grandparents?
- Do they know what this person does now, or did when they were younger. If they don't know they can find out by asking the person.
- With the children make up a list of questions.
- Ask the children's families to share any interesting stories about past generations.
- Make these stories into a book.
- Invite families if they have any souvenirs or memorabilia from the past – photos, ballet shoes, detective tools, farm implements?
- Invite families to an event where they can talk about their souvenirs and share their stories of the past.
- Invite other older people into your classroom to talk with the children about their past lives. You can include people from the school and local communities.
- If possible establish a relationship with a local nursing home. Invite the residents to visit the class. Find out if you can visit the nursing home with the children. Ask these visitors to share their stories. Find out what songs they used to sing. Learn some of these and sing them with the visitors.
- Everyone has memories and stories to share about what they have done in the past. Tell the children a story about your past. Ask them to tell a story about what they have done in the past.
- Look at the pictures of the people in the story. Talk about how Andrew McLean made people look old – wrinkles, white hair, baldness, wheelchairs, walking sticks
- Ask the children to draw pictures of people they know who are old. They can draw a picture of what they are like now, and one of them when they were younger.
- Talk to the children about how colour helps set the atmosphere of a drawing. For instance compare the 'now' and 'then' pictures of Evelyn.
- Find out more about Ellie Royce and Andrew McLean. Find more of their books in the library. Visit their websites: Ellie Royce www.ellieroyce.com/; Andrew McLean <http://mcleanpicturebooks.com>