

Pope Max by David Caddy

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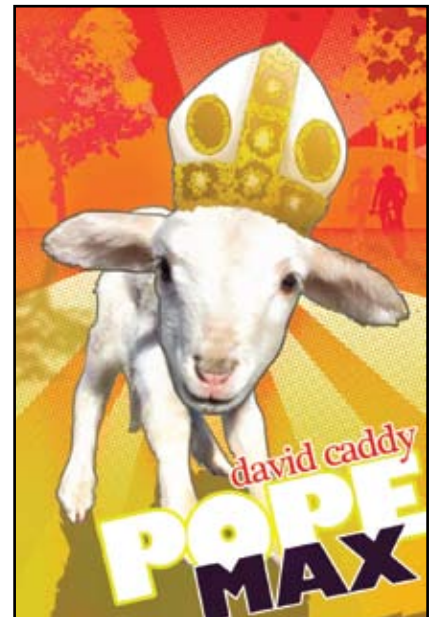
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Synopsis

Fulfilling a promise made to his dying grandfather Max sets himself a hard road—the Vatican or bust! An unlikely hero, Max lurches from challenge to challenge in his bid for the big job; from his secret adoption of a lost lamb to his thwarted attempts at saintly behaviour.

About the Author

David Caddy was born in 1962, in Perth, Western Australia. He worked for a number of years in computing, but is now a primary school teacher who writes madly in the holidays. He is married to Liz and they have four children named Ben, Meg, Daniel and Joe. Favourite Food: Mashed spud with a dash of milk, a sprinkle of salt, and loads of butter, pepper and cheese. Pet Hate: Not being able to wear casual clothes all the time. Hobbies: Spending time with his family, writing, and surfing.



Pre-reading activities

Based on the title of the book predict :

- The genre of *Pope Max*.
- The theme of the book.
- The central conflict of the book.

Looking at the cover :

- Brainstorm what you know about the pope.
- Look at the early cover design and the final one. [Appendix 1](#). Comment on the covers.
- What differences are there between them?
- Why do you think the changes were made?
- Would a different medium, eg. oils/charcoal/water colours, have been more appropriate/impactful for the cover?
- What about the colours of the cover?
- What other design could have been used for the cover?

After reading the story of the cover design in [Appendix 2](#) answer the following questions:

- What sort of relationship do the author and publisher have?
- Why could it have been detrimental if the editor/publisher or the author had been single-minded about the cover design?

Reading — Level 4

The student recognises that texts are constructed for particular audiences, contexts and purposes.

Pope Max is an unusual text in that it is a religious book for the mainstream audience — it was written carefully, with consideration for both audiences. This was a task that took much time and many rewrites. Even the title is one that may ‘put off’ some non-religious readers. Initially, the title was *The Pope*. The author’s father recommended the main character’s name be changed to Max, and that the book be called Pont Max, which is one of the Pope’s official titles. The publisher, Cate Sutherland, suggested the novel be called *Pope Max*, still representing the boy’s name, and the position of being the ‘max’, but not alienating the non-catholic audience.

David Caddy says his target audience is teenagers and his purpose was to create a humorous book. He has read many serious books for young adults, and many wonderful fantasy books for young adults, but not too many humorous realistic fiction books. Life is quite serious for many teenagers — they are under many pressures from many directions, and David wanted to make them laugh.

The context just ‘appeared’. At the time of writing the novel there was a societal push for children to have heroes. An article in a popular newspaper stated that the most known face in the world was that of Pope John Paul II, so David made the protagonist’s hero the Pope. Authors write best what they know about, and David is Catholic. The difficulty lay in making this story with its unusual context a mainstream novel. The issues presented were that the context pushed the novel towards religion, however, by making it humorous, David was keeping it accessible for the mainstream; it would have been much harder to make it mainstream had the context been a serious religious book.

One of the main problems in writing the story was convincing the reader that a child would actually aspire to popehood. It was a serious criticism by many readers of David’s earlier drafts, so he had to ensure that Max did want to become pope.

“I tried having a flashback, which didn’t work. I tried having a gentle story about his Nonno, which failed. I tried having him coerced into it by Christian Brothers. I eventually had something similar to the story as it is now, however it wasn’t presented with enough oomph. So I made it more dramatic. Max promises his dying Nonno that he will become Pope. And his religious, Italian relatives support his quest.”

The student discusses the conventions used in the layout of texts that appeal to specific audiences, e.g. magazines and newspapers.

In *Pope Max* the text has been formatted in two columns to look similar to a bible. If you examine the format of the page numbers, you will see it represents chapter and page. (In some bibles you will find chapter and verse references as page numbers.)

This is an unusual text format and the decision to format a fictional book like this was not taken lightly. The idea was discussed for some time between the author and publisher, and tested on industry professionals and students.

The two-column format and the 'normal' format were put to a group of students. Some of students responses are in [Appendix 4](#).

Predict what some of their responses were:

Two-column format.	'Normal' format.

Read the author's biography at the back of *Pope Max*.

Why has it been done this way? The author's biography is in a format similar to the lineage of Jesus, found in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:28-38.

Ask your parents for a family tree, then write you own family lineage in a similar way as in *Pope Max*.

With support, the student recognises and discusses language forms such as figurative language, jargon, technical words eg. similes and metaphors.

Similes and metaphors are used to enhance a reader's perception of a character or event or setting.

Here are some sample from *Pope Max*. What do the following similes and metaphors tell us?

That citrus section in Gino's nose must have been irritating him again because his nose twitched, not like a cute bunny, more like a rabid dingo and his muscles locked. He was about to detonate and demolish us.

'Jesus is like green,' I began.

A canary on a stump was in the lane behind my house, jogging on the spot and instructing Shaun.

... locked eyes with Gino, like a mouse looking at a cat before the cat kills it.

The student identifies text features that may help readers to distinguish fact from opinion, eg. use of 'I think ...'

In one of the last edits of *Pope Max*, the author did a global search for 'I think', 'about', 'like' and 'sort of'. He deleted many of these words, not because of anything to do with fact/opinion, but rather because a text is so much tighter if it is specific. Readers like to be informed. They like to have a clearly painted picture in front of them. The picture can be complicated, involuted and tricky... but it must be clear.

The student explores and discusses humour in narratives, showing an awareness of how humour is constructed, eg. bizarre or unusual situations.

There are a number of literary devices used to create humour in *Pope Max*.

The first, and most obvious is 'fish out of water'. This is where a character is placed into a situation that is not 'normal' for that character, and because of the interactions between the character and the world, funny situations develop. A boy wanting to be Pope, or a boy trapped in a tree, or a storm water drain. A sheep in a cellar!

Another device used is exaggeration. This is particularly appropriate when Max's Mamma is larger than life, and creates all sorts of confusion. Slapstick humour often comes from this.

A third device for creating humour is to create confusion. Some authors do this by having someone mis-hear something. Another is to have a person lie. In *Pope Max*, this is done in three ways: Firstly, Mamma does not have a strong grasp of the English language. “You are a trout Max. NO, I am not a groper.”

Secondly, Max has a seriously swollen lip, so he is often misheard.

And, of course, there is the implied confusion in Max’s world caused by a cacophony of voices inside himself, each interjecting at times that are sometimes inappropriate.

Another way to create humour is to use plays on words, or puns. Eg. When Max is trapped under a grate. ‘Are you grateful?’ The maintenance bloke yelled.

There is also humour played out on the way that the written word is portrayed. Eg. ‘My God! My bambino is with the drug, Lord.’ (Make sure you include the comma.)

People tend to laugh at other’s misfortunes, especially when they cannot fathom how they themselves would get out of the horrible predicament they are observing. This occurs in the cinema with Diana, or when Max is bitten by a spider, or when Max is faced with the decision to dock Shaun’s tail, or when the novel reaches its climax and Max is caught from every angle.

Brainstorm books/shows/situations where various devices have been used to create humour, and determine how the humour is created. Your examples can come from film and television as well, eg. hillbillies in a modern world (*The Beverley Hillbillies*); an Australian in polite American society (*Crocodile Dundee*). Note: Often a number of techniques are used together to get the audience to laugh.

Values Education

Values are at the core of *Pope Max*. In just the first twenty pages we see that Max:

- Has a ‘best friend’ relationship with his grandfather.
- Respects his grandfather.
- Tries to help a stranger.
- Has respect for the opposite sex.
- Stays with someone in times of trouble.
- Eats his meals with his family around a table, and discusses events.
- Has a belief in a higher being – a god.
- Has good personal hygiene and self respect.
- Loves his family.
- Feels guilt when he disrespects his Mamma and when he fails to stand up for a friend.

Find ten more instances of values portrayed in the text.

Draw a character web, showing the developing relationships between the characters, and the values they embody.



- Discuss the differences that Max, Jessie and Diana have in regard to their belief and values systems. What growing-up experiences may Jessie and Diana have, as compared with Max, which contributed to their beliefs and values?
- Many teenage youth do not attend church, despite their family's religious values. What are some reasons for this? What are some advantages and disadvantages of attending church on a regular basis? If you attended church on a regular basis, would your interpretation of events be altered?

Religion

Outcome 1 – Discovering God – Goodness within people created by God.
 Examine lives of well-known figures to discover goodness within people and goodness of God.

Outcome 2 – Discuss concerns, questions, and aspirations that come from life experiences and how these help people find meaning in their lives.
 Analyse how to relate Catholic beliefs and practices to real life situations and experiences.

Outcome 3 – Knowing Jesus
 Know the life and ministry of Jesus and, in the gospels Jesus taught and demonstrated the commandment to Love.

Outcome 4 – Living like Jesus – Role of the saints.
 Research the lives of some saints.
 Research the lives of some of the popes.

Outcome 5 – Catholic Practices – different types of prayer.
 Max makes up many prayers in the novel. His relationship with his God is a familiar one.
 What is good/bad about having such a 'casual' relationship with one's God?

Characterisation

The author uses the device of the protagonist's brain and heart discussing decisions to be made. In this way justification is given for the character's actions. The character can follow the lead of the heart or the head.

This is done light heartedly in *Pope Max*, however, it is a powerful device, revealing the inner conflict, which is often strong.

Choose a decision that you or another has taken, that was a hard decision. Now present it as a debate between your heart and your head.

eg. A politician allocating the budget to health education instead of hospitals.
eg. A friend has accidentally broken your house window and has asked you not to tell.

Protagonists should be active characters, even if their actions result in a worsening of their situation.

What are some actions that Max takes that lead to a worsening of his problems?

Make a list of some problems and their solutions.

(Also see the section on [Values Education](#))

Writing

The author commenced writing *Pope Max* when there was a societal push for children to have heroes. David Caddy wanted the children to have the BEST possible hero – the world's most known face – John Paul II.

But there are many other heroes he could have chosen. Decide on a hero that someone could try and copy, and make an outline for a story. Remember that the humour is primarily created by fish out of water, eg. if you want your hero to copy a soccer star, and be kicking a ball around, dribbling, etc, then make your setting 'the opposite' eg. a funeral, or a school assembly, or mass, or in a glass shop.

Write part of this story from another viewpoint, eg. Max's Mamma, Shaun, Diana.

What if Max could have cleaned off the graffiti with a command? What if he was a God Consultant? What if he could perform miracles? Write a story where Max is a miracle man. Remember that having powers is NOT ENOUGH for a story. There must be a big problem that needs solving, with other problems along the way, all related to the big problem.

Chapter Activities

Chapter 1

- Max is a pallbearer and walks along beside the hearse. What are some of the other duties one must perform when someone dies?

- Do you ever wonder what has gone before you, in your family tree? Ask a parent or grandparent to tell you stories about your great grandfather.

Chapter 2

- What is a definition of a saint?
- How does a person become a saint?

Chapter 3—4

- What are the main gangs in your town/city/country?
- What have students (especially those who have finished school early) from your school become? (Some schools keep this information.)
- In which countries of the world do you find voodoo? What are some of the beliefs of voodoo?

Chapter 5—6

- What are the traditional foods of the main cultures in the area you live in? (Cook and bring some of these foods to school.)
- Conduct a survey: How many children in your class/year level/ school/ or a sample from your school community (conducted during lunch times) eat most of their evening meals around the dinner table? What other questions could you ask to determine if, by doing this, the family unit is enhanced?
- With a group of friends, design a calendar, with your friend's pictures above each month. Print off a number of copies and sell them, with the proceeds going to charity.
- In many of Max's conflict situations he prays to god, or a saint, and the problem is resolved. In what incidences in history to have people attributed their success to their prayers?

Chapter 7

- If you were a God Consultant, what changes would you make to the world?
- Has anyone ever been in a plane crash, and slit open the stomach of an animal, and crawled inside to stay warm?
- Compare Buddhists and Evolutionists and Christianity. Do a pie graph showing the beliefs that overlap.
- Research the Gothic culture.

Chapter 8

- How often is the Para-Olympics held? Where is it held? How much sponsorship is there in comparison to the Olympics?
- Set some goals – academic, spiritual, social. Put your goals in order of importance. Are they realistic goals? How can you measure if you have achieved them? Who can help you achieve them? What will interfere with you achieving your goals?

Chapter 9

- The piano accordion is not a common instrument. Bring an unusual instrument to school and play a simple tune on it, eg. ukulele, didgeridoo, comb, kazoo...

- How could *Pope Max* have taken a different direction if the lady in the car was being pursued by men in black, trying to kill her?
- What does the 'St Christopher option is to carry him' mean?

Chapter 10

- What decibel rating is allowed in your community? How can you get a valid court order in regards to noise pollution in your neighbourhood?
- Why is St Francis so well known?
- What are your local government laws in regard to keeping animals? What are the possible fines/penalties the RSPCA may impose?
- Who was Anne Frank? Read her diary.
- What is your country's current stage of progress to the World Cup.
- Find a recipe for preparing/cooking snails and try it out.
- There are hundreds of books about dog training. If you have a dog, read one of these books and teach your dog not to pull on your lead when you are walking him/her. Try some other skills as well.
- Have you ever done something for your mum you really didn't want to? Eg. haircuts, taking a holiday somewhere, entertaining a relative ...

Chapter 14

- Why were Catholic priests given a hard time in the 1600s in England?
- Find out how many years the earth was around, before man came onto the scene.

Chapter 15

- How were the Bungle Bungles formed?
- Research the Australian saint – Mary McKillop.
- There have been many popes, and there are some wild stories about some of them. Who is considered the worst/best?
- The pope has many different titles. What do they all mean?

Chapter 16

- Why is bran good for the diet?
- How do you toilet train a dog?
- How do you train a dog to commando crawl?
- Mamma assumes Jessie is into drugs. Your own parents may make unfounded assumptions about you. Ask a parent what assumptions their parents made about them.
- Research how to exorcise a person.

Chapter 17

- Max has to care for a lamb. Research different mammals to find out how to care for the young of different breeds. Eg. if Max had been hiding an elephant he would have had to feed it every ___ hours.

Chapter 18

- What is stigmata?

- Research the Spanish Civil War.
- What are some home remedies used for different illnesses? Eg. urinate on your own toes to remove chilblains.

Chapter 19

- What is St Jude well known for?
- Who is responsible for removing graffiti in your community?
- How is graffiti removed?
- Who was St Anthony?

Chapter 20

- What does 'diddly-squat' mean? Research some other colloquial terms.

Chapter 21

- Research the drainage system in your community.
- Have there ever been any news articles regarding crocodiles in the sewers?
- Who is Gary Parsons?

Chapter 22

- Who was St Dismus?
- Who was St Gregory?
- Who was St Vitus?
- Who was St John?

Chapter 23

- What is Nirvana?
- What is Buddhism?
- When was Lycra invented?

Chapter 24

- Research different types of spiders, their bites, and antidotes.
- Who was St Catherine?

Chapter 25

- What diseases are transmitted by saliva?

Chapter 26

- How did Joan of Arc die?
- How did St Lawrence die?
- How did St Christina die?
- How did St Arcadius die?

Chapter 27

- Research infallibility.

Chapter 29

- Where is St Peter's Square? Why is it so well known?

Chapter 30

- Who was St Elizabeth?
- Research Australian boxers.
- List 10 superstitions. Where did these superstitions come from?

Chapter 31

- Locate some brochures on drugs. Research addictions.

Chapter 32

- List some well-known cases of premature burials.

Chapter 33

- What is the cost of a leg of lamb?
- What is the cost of a side of lamb?
- Who is allowed to slaughter animals in your community?

Chapter 37

- What range of clothing does Pierre Cardin make?
- What is a tabernacle?

Word Study

Determine the meaning and/or origins of a selection of the following:

Chapter and words to be studied.

- 1 - pallbearer hearse Madonna Nonno mozzarella deistic unravelled cortege artefacts
- 2 - congregation cicadas coup herbalist arthritis spaghetti cardinals ploughed foetal
- 3 - interwoven cathedral grotesque buttresses Sikh consternation Australopithecus
Cro-magnum
- 4 - squeamish bile feigned epitaph guttural fortuneteller rabid mimicked
- 5 - karma *Karma Sutra* hysterical
- 6 - '*Grazie tante per il pranzo.*' diocesan Psalms
- 7 - gobbledygook charisma suspiciously mortar obscenities trinkets *Bernini* aerobatics
reincarnation Philippines pewter carcinoma homophobe *Doc Martins* luminous
dematerialised
- 8 - simultaneous Plumbum apothecary convulsions dilemma devious dignity hypocritical
disciplinarian
- 9 - accordion annihilated *Eucalyptus* mascara hoisted
- 10 - anatomical anomaly winepress capsicums paprika hyacinths chrysanthemums
- 11 - verandah chandelier reinforcer
- 12 - puberty deviant usher pursuit pervert pre-emptive politician

- 13 - torture writhing strewn ponderous reluctantly calligraphic megalomaniac cosmos
canoodled flourish
- 14 - siren heartthrob lipstick ridiculed *drawn and quartered*
- 15 - administration ogling combination amoeba *Gucci* fishnets Pontiff Sovereign egotistical
- 16 - anthropologists freethinking *asthmatic* elegant resigned possessed synagogue
psychological exorcism dominion projectiles levitate assassination eulogy
- 17 - morality sarcastic grout manoeuvre mutant oppressed martyred
- 18 - dislocated stigmata contaminated *chook*
- 19 - obscenities congregating gesticulating algebra Gothic
- 20 - bookmark Communion minions *Social Justice* pacifist charcoal
- 21 - preservation empathized technique
- 22 - squirmed moor necrophiliac dumbfounded malfunctioning
- 23 - tirade *Casanova* hashish inhibition Buddhist lycra
- 24 - repetitive mafia sanctity juvenile supremacy respiratory gastrointestinal
- 25 - vegemite *Phylum Cnidaria* urchin herpes contagious dilated
- 26 - deviation caressed amoeba' crucifixions Ugandan governor torso
- 27 - camouflage pedophiles delicatessen tenderizing infallible inquisitive
- 28 - grandiose rebellion mercenaries Balgo
- 29 - vulnerable
- 30 - finesse *shrapnel* qualifications resumé
- 31 - collective menacingly
- 32 - *mulberry tree* miracle visualized divine *premature burial* contemplated
- 33 - coyly accusatory deodorant slaughter
- 34 - canary bouquet psychopath pickling oilrigs materializing maggots vaccination
tentatively
stainless steel strudels retching
- 35 - scolding
- 36 - assertive fishnets logo mischievously psychedelic luminous
- 37 - blur Testament *ballot* seethed consciousness onus NASDAQ
- 38 - tabernacle *Il stupido*

Pope Max Sleuth

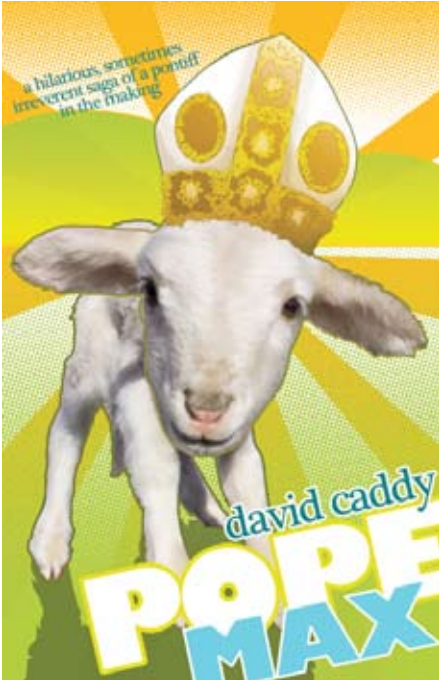
J	N	N	J	P	L	D	E	Q	P	D	I	S	L	N
O	R	X	T	F	E	V	L	I	G	V	U	Y	E	X
I	Z	S	N	S	C	Z	C	L	K	O	V	D	A	M
A	I	G	U	D	N	J	Y	R	I	G	X	M	X	K
D	E	D	Z	R	E	H	C	T	U	B	M	I	C	G
S	T	I	V	U	I	T	I	F	F	A	R	G	I	R
T	S	B	S	G	C	T	B	Z	M	Z	U	C	L	H
C	R	J	R	S	S	E	N	E	V	I	G	R	O	F
Q	B	A	D	R	E	H	P	E	H	S	C	O	H	R
A	T	R	E	C	R	J	A	O	A	I	A	C	T	M
E	U	P	H	H	V	L	L	U	P	L	R	U	A	H
F	U	H	D	I	A	N	A	D	N	U	Q	K	C	W
S	C	W	L	R	N	G	Y	M	H	Y	G	F	Z	H
G	N	M	R	M	T	Y	F	C	B	U	M	E	D	N

Find the following words in the sleuth.

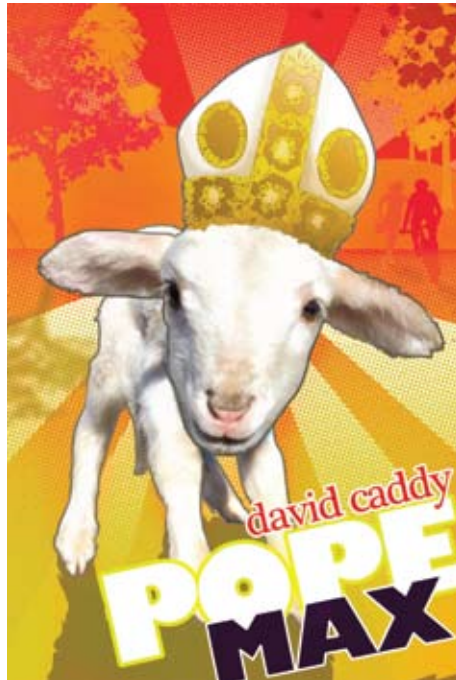
BICYCLE BRAIN BUTCHER CATHOLIC
 CHURCH DIANA DRUGSFORGIVENESS
 GOTH GRAFFITI GRATE LAMB
 HEART JESSIE MAMMA MARCO
 MAX SERVANT POPE SCIENCE
 SHAUN SHEPHERD SUPERSTITIOUS
 LUKE GINO MARIE LIPS

See [Appendix 3](#) for the solution

Appendix_1



EARLIER COVER DESIGN
(Contents)



AND THE FINAL ONE.

Appendix_2

Story of the Cover Design

The first ideas for the cover were of a 'distorted' realistic human face with a Pope's mitre on his head. The author mentioned that there had been a similar illustration on a book cover, and that he didn't like it. The publisher/illustrator put forward their ideas of a sheep for the cover. The first cover was shown and the author responded with —

Well Cate, I am quite amazed at the cover.

My thoughts:

At first I hated the embossing. I thought it looked rushed, and scribbly and with little effort. I even tried to cut and paste a braid off the internet. Then I wondered WHY it appeared thus — maybe it was supposed to indicate Max's 'take' on the pope. It is a young school boy making his mark on popehood.

So, maybe it is a good idea.

I asked 34 kids in my class what they thought. 4 loved the scribble but 30 thought it should have proper braid! Having said that, I had to enlarge the cover on a smartboard, so they all saw the 'braid scribble' enlarged. Can we see what it looks like as a braid? If not, it has grown on me and I think it is ok.

In the background there are a number of streaks of light going from the sheep. One thin white streak on the right, (at ground level) seems out of place.

Outline - One child said, 'there is an outline all around the sheep and the pope's hat, except for two little bits on either side of the hat, where the scribble is.'

Another said, the outline was better when it was blue. It brought out more colour.

Another said, why have any outline at all?

One child said. The extra comment at the top corner looks like it is just in times new roman. Why isn't it in a better font?

The white mitre is the same colour as the white word 'pope', which ties the two together. The word david caddy and Max are the same colour indicating they are the one and the same. Ha!

Max is a sheep – he is dumb to follow this crazy idea to become pope.

Despite his stupidity, Max shines.

There is a line in the book where Max dreams of Jesus being the colour green, because all life on earth depends on chlorophyll. This concept is shown through the colours.

All the light of the world comes from the church, represented by the leader of the church – the pope, illustrated as a dumb animal – ha!

Jesus, (And any pope since, who is his representation) is the Lamb of God - the light of the world. The cover is a lamb.

I love illustrations which tell many stories – this cover does. It's a great idea. Please convey my thanks to the illustrator.

Appendix_3

Solution

J	N	N	E	K	U	L	E	Q	P	D	I	S	L	N
O	R	X	T	F	E	V	L	I	G	V	U	I	E	X
I	Z	S	N	S	C	Z	C	L	K	O	P	D	A	M
A	I	G	U	D	N	J	Y	R	I	S	X	M	X	A
D	E	G	Z	R	E	H	C	T	U	B	M	I	C	R
S	T	I	V	U	I	T	I	F	F	A	R	G	I	I
T	S	N	S	G	C	T	B	Z	M	Z	U	C	L	E
C	R	O	R	S	S	E	N	E	V	I	G	R	O	F
Q	B	A	D	R	E	H	P	E	H	S	C	O	H	R
A	T	R	E	C	R	J	A	O	A	I	A	C	T	M
E	U	P	A	H	V	L	L	U	P	L	R	U	A	H
F	U	H	D	I	A	N	A	D	N	U	Q	K	C	W
S	C	W	L	R	N	G	Y	M	H	Y	G	F	Z	H
O	C	R	A	M	T	Y	F	C	B	U	M	E	D	N

Appendix_4

Two column Format.	'Normal' format.
I love the format – it gives it an unusual look.	This is a lot easier to read because the writing is big and easy to see.
I think it looks alright and is still easy to read.	I like this format because I am used to it.
I like it but the writing is a bit too small.	Easy format to read.
I think the format is really creative and I like the idea.	Both are good.
I can't read it as well as the normal writing style. The writing is too small. I don't like the format.	Its easy to read but the columns make it look real fantasy.
It is harder to read, but it is a shorter book.	It is more attractive but I feel like it's more work and slower.
It's okay with the columns. You can see the words well. It's quite a good idea.	It is easier to read than the 2 columns but the columns will be different which is good.
Its different to other books and it makes it stand out.	
It doesn't make a difference. It is a good idea. Maybe you should put thin lines in the middle of the columns like this. <i>(This boy drew a thin vertical line between the columns on each page.)</i>	
The two columns sort of make you feel you can't be bothered reading it because of the small writing.	