

LITTLELIGHT

KELLY CANBY

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YEAR LEVEL: K-3

ABOUT THE BOOK

When bricks start to go missing from the town of Littlelight, the mayor whips his citizens into a frenzy of aggravation. But when the townspeople find the thief, and her motive, they discover perhaps it is the mayor who is the problem. Illustrated in moody black and white with dynamic neon highlights, this is a thought-provoking tale of tolerance and acceptance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly Canby is an award-winning, internationally published illustrator and author. Kelly was born in London, but has lived in Australia since the age of three, which is probably around the same age she started playing with pencils and crayons, and it was probably only a few years after that that she decided playing with pencils and crayons was something she wanted to do for the rest of her life. Her books include *Rodney* and *The Hole Story*.

THEMES

- Diversity
- Tolerance
- Curiosity
- Visual art

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

K-3 English

K-3 Visual Art

K-3 Humanities and Social Sciences (Geography; History)

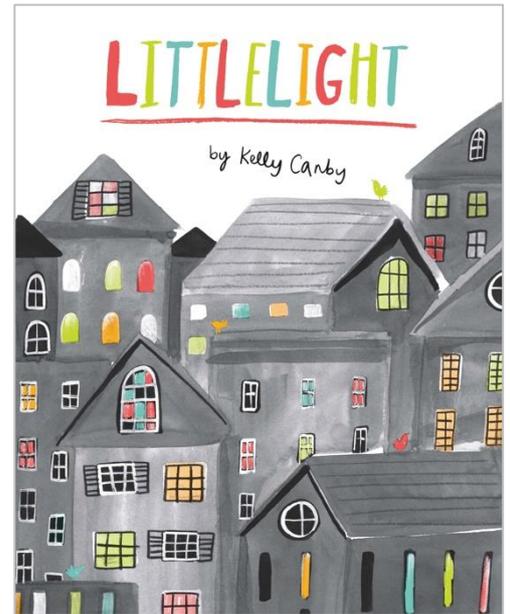
USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: <https://kellycanby.com>
- Author's Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/kelly_canby
- Author's Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/KellyCanbyArt>
- Author's Twitter: <https://twitter.com/kelcanby>

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Look closely at the first spread – can you spy where some bricks are missing in the wall? Why do you think someone is stealing them? Who do you think the ladder belongs to? What kinds of things could be on the other side of the wall? Brainstorm a list of positive and negative things that might be waiting.
2. The scene is mostly illustrated in greyscale – how many splashes of colour can you find? How many different colours can you count? Create a definition of the word 'contrast'. Do you like the contrast between the grey and the bright colours?
3. The mayor claims the wall exists to *protect us from everything that is different*. Create a class definition of the terms 'different' and 'unique'. What makes you unique? Create a self-portrait and around the artwork list some of your personal qualities (e.g. kind, funny, brave), talents (e.g. hobbies, sports) and favourite things (e.g. books, foods, animals). Display around the classroom and conduct a 'Gallery Walk' – how is your portrait similar/different to your peers? Do you think we need to be 'protected' from people or things that are different to us? Why/why not? Would it be boring if we all looked exactly the same and had identical interests? Discuss in pairs.



4. The people who live on the other side of the wall grow *unusual food* – create a definition of the term 'unusual'. Have you ever eaten what you would describe as 'unusual food'? Who introduced you to it? How did you feel when you first tried it? Did you like it? Have you ever travelled to a different town, city or country? What other things were 'unusual' there that you hadn't encountered before in your everyday life at home in Australia? Did you enjoy learning about new ways of doing things and trying new foods? What were some of your favourite discoveries?
5. Look closely at the illustrations of the people on the southern, northern, eastern and western sides of the wall. How are they 'different' to the townsfolk of Littlelight (e.g. clothing, hairstyles)? Do they appear friendly? How can you tell? Do you think Littlelight really needs the wall to protect it?
6. The northerners speak *strange words*. Create a definition of the term 'strange'. How many languages exist in the world? Why isn't one language 'better' than another? Do you speak any language/s other than English? How many different languages do the students in your class speak? What language/s do you learn at your school? What are some advantages of being bilingual or multilingual? How can a language feel 'strange' to one person, and yet 'normal' to another, depending on where they live? Is it the same with different foods? With music? With books?
7. What things are 'common' in Australia but might be considered 'unusual' in a different country like India or Iceland (e.g. kangaroos, Vegemite)? Create a list of ideas as a class.
8. The mayor claims that the people on the other side of the wall dance to *offbeat music* – what does this mean? What is your favourite song or band? Is it the same as the person sitting next to you? As your sibling/s? As your parents or your teacher? Why do different people like to listen to different kinds of music? Would it be boring if there were only one song in the world everyone had to listen to?
9. The people on the other side of the wall read *unfamiliar books*. Create a definition of the term 'unfamiliar'. What is your favourite book? Is it the same as your friends or sibling/s? As your parents or your teacher? Why do different people like different kinds of books? Create a definition for the term 'variety'. Why is it good to have lots of variety in our lives?
10. Why do you think the mayor is so afraid of things that are *different and unusual, strange, offbeat and unfamiliar*? Is it because he doesn't understand the 'unusual' food, music, languages and books of his neighbours? If he tried to understand them, do you think he might actually like them? Have you ever felt scared or suspicious or uncomfortable about something or someone different? What happened?
11. Why do the townspeople of Littlelight change their mind and begin to disagree with the mayor about the importance of rebuilding the wall?
12. Do you think Littlelight looks a lot more interesting, vibrant and joyful once the wall has disappeared? Would you rather live in grey Littlelight with the wall around it or in brightly coloured Littlelight open to its neighbours? Why? Write a short paragraph outlining your reasons.
13. Create a definition of the term 'tolerance'. Why is it important to be tolerant of others who are different to yourself?
14. Create a definition of the word 'symbolism'. What might colour symbolise in contrast to the grey throughout this book?

Visual art

1. What style has the illustrator used to draw the characters – realistic, cartoon or abstract? What do you like/dislike about this style? Can you draw yourself and your friends in a similar style?
2. Use oil pastels to draw your town, suburb, city, home or school using contrast between greyscale and bright colours in a similar style to Kelly Canby (for best results use watercolour paper). Next, apply watercolour paint to 'colour in' the images and/or the background. What do you notice? Why does the paint fail to cover up the crayon underneath? Do you like this effect?

Humanities and social sciences (Geography; History)

1. Look at a map of the world – what countries are the closest international neighbours to Australia? In pairs, choose one to research using the following subheadings: name, flag, capital city, population, currency, language/s, religion/s, national cuisine, traditional art forms (visual art, music, dance), climate/s, flora and fauna, top five suggested tourist attractions. Create a PowerPoint, poster or pamphlet encouraging your peers to visit this place!
2. What did you discover that seems 'different' or 'unusual' in this country you researched in comparison to your home in Australia? Would you like to travel there one day? Why/why not? Present your findings to your class.

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Where did the idea for your book Littlelight come from?

The idea began with a brick! And exploring the idea of what you can do with a brick and that if you take a brick out of a wall...you make a window! That then lead me to think about walls and about the world we're living in now and how, in some countries, walls or a wall, is being used to divide and separate because of leaders who possibly aren't as tolerant or accepting of the people around them as they could be.

What was your process for creating the book's illustrations?

The illustrations for this book were all created in grey ink, black pencil and white pencil and then coloured digitally. The reason for digital colouring was so I could achieve the bright and vibrant colours, in particular the flourescent orange, which I love!

What is the best part of being a children's books author? What's the hardest part?

The best part is getting to think like a child. The hardest part is having to go back to thinking like an adult.

What other projects are you currently working on?

Right now I am exploring the concept of "time" and seeing if I can mould that idea into a picture book.

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