



OMNIBUS BOOKS

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| Illustrator | Kim Gamble |
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Previous publications

Kim Gamble

Eight

(Omnibus Books, 2006)

Bunyips Don't

(Scholastic Press, 2005)

Mary, the Big Brown Hairy Spider

(Omnibus Books, 2004)

Pog

(Omnibus Books, 2000)

Let's Escape

(Scholastic Press, 1997)

Victor's Quest

(Omnibus Books, 1996)

Bella of Bananaland

(Omnibus Books, 1995)

Teachers' Notes

Trouble at Home

Written by Cate Whittle
Illustrated by Kim Gamble

Teachers' Notes by Rae Carlyle

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Introduction

No one really expects to come home one day and find their house simply not there. And they definitely don't expect to be the only person to see their house being carried off by a dragon. But this is what happens to Georgia and her family, although only Georgia actually saw the dragon carry off her house, complete with small brother Godfrey inside.

Having your house (and your baby brother) carried off by a dragon most definitely makes life more complicated. Sleeping on a camp stretcher in the shed soon loses any attraction it might have had, and with none of the adults around believing her tales of a big green dragon flying off with the house, Georgia soon decides to take matters into her own hands.

Following the faintest of clues, she and younger brother Henry set off in search of their house (and baby brother), and while things don't go precisely according to plan they do eventually come face to face with Trouble the dragon.

Finding yourself eyeball-to-eyeball with a big green dragon is quite possibly even more disconcerting than seeing your house being carried away, but Georgia shows herself to be both determined and resolute, and despite her fears she demands that Trouble return her stolen home. Trouble, however, is not enthused by the idea. How Georgia and her family – and Trouble of course – manage to resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction makes a delightful end to an unusual adventure, and leaves plenty of room for future escapades with the appealing, if aptly named, Trouble.

About the Author

Cate Whittle was born in Africa, spent her childhood living in five different countries, in thirteen different houses, and attending six different schools. Cate now teaches primary school, where her favourite thing is reading to the children. After all, with a good book in your hand you can go wherever you want.

About the Illustrator

Kim Gamble is one of Australia's most talented illustrators, best known for the long-running Tashi series and the Minton books. He has worked for NSW *School Magazine* and illustrated many picture books including *Eight* and *Pog*. He lives in Manly, NSW.

Activities

English

The first few pages of any novel have to convey a lot of information to the reader. In *Trouble at Home* the author provides most of the information about what has happened and who the main characters are by having Georgia, the protagonist, tell us directly. The story is written in the first person; every event is from Georgia's perspective, and we use her descriptions of the other people and events to form a mental picture of the characters and the action. Georgia shares with the reader what has happened, but as a part of that she also tells us a lot about others in the story – what sort of people they are, what interests them – and how she fits into the family.

Georgia doesn't specifically tell us much about herself, but we still learn a lot about her personality and how she thinks about the world from the language she uses to share her story. How she chooses to describe the people around her and the events that are taking place, and the conversations that she has with other people, help the reader form a picture of who she is and how she thinks and feels.

1. As a class discuss some of the different techniques that the author has used to develop the characters of Georgia and her family at the very beginning of the story. Some points to consider in your discussion are:
 - What does the very first sentence of the book tell us about the person speaking – how old do you think they are?
 - How does the language used in the first sentence give us information about the speaker – what is it about the syntax and word choices that let us form conclusions about the speaker?
 - What do we know about Georgia's family by the end of the first page?
 - What do we know about Georgia's family by the end of the first chapter?
 - What do we know about Georgia's personality by the end of the first page?
 - What things are important to the different members of Georgia's family – and how does the author share this information with us?
2. If a different character were telling the story, then the opening sentences would be completely different. Rewrite the first two sentences of the story from the point of view of either Georgia's mother, Henry, or Georgia's gran. Think carefully about what words your chosen character would be likely to use, and how an adult might say something differently from the way a child would say it. See how much information you can share about your character and their personality just by your choice of words – and remember that the event you are describing is exactly the same as the event that Georgia describes – it is only how the character describes it that should be different.

3. In small groups or as a class, make a chart showing what you know about Georgia and her family by the end of the first chapter. Your chart should have at least three columns. In the first column write the character's name. In the second column list in bullet point form everything you know about the character – things such as their age, how they are related to Georgia, how they feel about the house disappearing, what their likes and dislikes are etc. You should have several pieces of information about each family member in this column. In the last column, list *how* you know each fact in the second column. Did Georgia tell us directly, was it implied by something else she said, or did you find out through dialogue between characters?

Social Sciences

4. In pairs or small groups, research dragons either online or in the library. As Georgia found out, there are a lot of dragons in mythology and literature, but they are not all the same as each other. Different cultures have different types of dragons and tell different stories about them. Some points to consider are:
 - How many different cultures and countries have dragon mythology?
 - What are the different dragons like – what do they look like, how do they act, do they have wings, what do they eat, are they good/bad/neutral characters, what colour are they, how big are they?
 - How many main types of dragons can you identify – can you categorise your dragons into groups?
 - Which cultures still celebrate or revere dragons, and what forms can these celebrations take? (Hint: look for information on 'dragon festivals' for a starting point.)
 - Can you find examples of modern dragons being used in logos and symbols for sporting teams, stores, or businesses? If so, what sort of dragon are they using as their inspiration?
5. Choose one type of dragon from your research above to investigate in more depth, and create a presentation to share your findings with the class. You can make a powerpoint presentation, or you might like to create a poster or information leaflet about your chosen type of dragon.

Science

Georgia's little brother Henry found out that tents can fly – but that it is not a good idea if they do! Dragons, on the other hand, fly extremely well. Dragon-shaped kites, some with many strings and in extremely complicated shapes, have been flown for thousands of years. Simple kites may not be quite as impressive, but can still be a lot of fun to fly, and you can decorate them with any design that you like.

6. Individually or in pairs, experiment with making kites and flying them. The simplest method is to start with a basic diamond-shaped design using stiff paper, and use bamboo or balsa dowels, or lightweight plastic rods – the sort that often come with balloons on them work well – for the cross-braces. You can then decorate your kite in different colours or patterns as you wish. (You can find instructions on building a simple kite at <http://www.kidspot.com.au/kids-activities-and-games/Outdoor-activities+9/Winter-Craft-Make-a-kite+103.htm>, including a video.) For a challenge try making a more complicated shape of kite. Remember that it should be symmetrical along a vertical axis, and the braces should cross at a point so that the bottom of the kite is heavier than the top half! Take your kites to a large open space well away from any power lines on a day with wind. School ovals can be perfect for this. See which designs of kite work well, and which ones work less well. Some things to think about are:

- Which kites flew the highest?
- Which kites were difficult to launch but then flew well?
- What features do the kites that flew well have in common with each other?
- Did using different materials change how the kites flew?
- Does it make a difference if a kite has a tail, and if so what is it?
- What would you change about your design the next time you build a kite?

Georgia's mother has always wanted a really big veggie patch, and now she finally has the chance to have one.

7. Design the really big veggie patch that you would love to have if you had the time and space (and money for seeds!) to have one. Things to consider when deciding which vegetable should grow next to other vegetables in your design are:

- What plants grow well in your area, and at what time of year do they grow best?
- What vegetables do you and your friends and family like to eat?
- How much space do different vegetables need to grow in?
- How long do the vegetables you have chosen take to grow large enough to harvest?
- How much sun and shade do the different vegetables you have chosen need?
- How much water will your vegetables need, and how often should they be watered?

Draw a plan of your dream veggie patch and clearly label all the different vegetables. Be sure to include information such as which way is north, which areas will get the most sun, whether or not the land is sloping, and where your water will come from. Colour your plan to make the different areas clear and decorate around the edge with pictures of vegetables that you would like to harvest. Share your design with your class.

Creative Activities

8. When Georgia first comes face to face with Trouble, she isn't quite sure what to say. What would *you* say if you came face to face with a dragon unexpectedly? Write a short story where you meet a dragon and have a conversation with it.
9. Make a papier-mâché dragon. Use masking tape to stick small balloons together to form the body, and use a large juice carton for the head. Cover the balloons and carton with strips of newspaper that have been soaked in wallpaper paste. Allow your dragon to dry, add cardboard triangles to make teeth and spikes down the spine, and cut out cardboard shapes for the legs. For a winged dragon cut wings from corrugated cardboard and brace them against the body with pieces of bamboo. Paint your dragon whatever colour you want. You can add glitter to the paint for a shimmering effect, or try to make a scale pattern by drawing them on with a pencil in the wet paint. Red, yellow and orange streamers can have your dragon breathing fire. When it is finished hang your dragon from the ceiling.
10. Georgia found lots of books about dragons in her school library. Investigate your school library and see how many books you can find that have dragons in them or that are about dragons. Choose one of the books you found and read it, then summarise it for your class.
11. On page 39 Georgia describes the view she is looking at. Paint an evening landscape scene using acrylic paints based on Georgia's description of the scenery.
12. One of the problems that Georgia and her family face when their house is taken by Trouble is finding safe places to sleep. If a dragon came and took your house, where would you sleep? In small groups or pairs, discuss where you could sleep, what you could eat, and how you could cook your food if your house was taken by a dragon. Write down your own solutions, and then share them with your class.
13. Create a crossword about dragons.
14. When Trouble took the house, he didn't realise that Godfrey was inside it. Within a day he had raided the town for potato chips and fizzy drink. He must have been more than a bit surprised to find Godfrey, and was kind-hearted enough to look after him (well, more or less look after him). Write the scene where Trouble finds Godfrey in the house from Trouble's point of view.
15. If a dragon picked up your home and carried it off, where would you like them to take it? Write a description of the place that you would like your home, with you inside it, to end up, and describe how you would solve problems such as getting electricity and water, and how you would get to school. You can choose a real place or imagine the perfect place that you wish existed.

16. Design a label for a packet of chips or bottle of fizzy drink with a dragon on it. What will you call your chips or drink? Make a poster advertising your dragon-labelled snack food.
17. Design your own dragon. If you could have a dragon as a friend, what would they be like? What colour would they be, how big should they grow, and would they have any magic tricks or other powers? Be as inventive as you can, and write a detailed description of your perfect dragon-friend.
18. Use small pieces of coloured paper and a gold gel pen to make a dragon mosaic-collage on black paper. Use white dots of paint for stars, and paint a moon as well if you wish. Use a black texta and lead pencil to draw a barely visible night-time landscape below your dragon.
19. Dragons in the story aren't given their names when they are born – instead they have to earn them. What would you like *your* dragon name to be? Write a brief piece explaining what you think your dragon name could be, and why. If you want to, you can also talk about what you would like to do in your life, and what you think your future dragon name might be when you are an adult.