

VIOLET AND NOTHING

Author: Fiona Burrows

ISBN (HB): 9781925591552

Year level: K–3

ABOUT THE BOOK

Violet is a little girl with big ideas. She is always thinking. One day she starts thinking about nothing. What is nothing? Where is nothing? Is it real? And if nothing is real, is anything real? A thought-provoking picture book for curious kids.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Fiona Burrows is an author-illustrator from Perth, Western Australia. She is passionate about creativity, imagination and education, and loves to collect beautiful picture books. When she is not creating books for kids, she teaches writing, research and communication skills at the University of Western Australia.

THEMES

- Curiosity
- Imagination
- Visual art

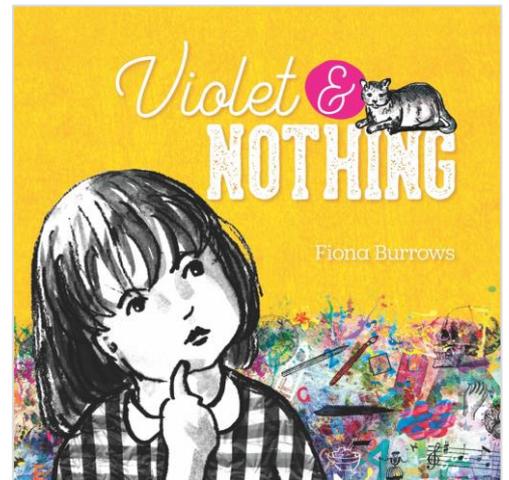
AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

K–3 English

K–3 Visual Art

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: www.fionaburrows.com
- Author's Facebook: www.facebook.com/fionaburrowsillustration



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Violet is always thinking and asking questions about the world around her – do you do this too? What do you like to think about? Create a collage or illustration of all the different things you like to think about.
2. What question is Violet pondering in each of the eight illustrations on spread two? Can you create a list of ten questions you have about the world around you? Why is it good to be curious and ask lots of questions?
3. Violet's family all provide different answers to her questions about nothing. What do *you* think nothing is? Is it real? If so, where is nothing? If nothing is real, is anything real?
4. How do we know when something is real? E.g. Can we see it, hear it, touch it, smell it, etc.?
5. What is the opposite of nothing?
6. Do all questions have an answer? Are there any questions we may never know the answer to?

Inquiry Box

1. As a class, create working definitions for the following words on spread fifteen: universe, infinity, zero, time, imagination, history, science, 3D.
2. Start an Inquiry Box in your classroom. Place it somewhere easily accessible with pencils and paper nearby. Students can post a question anonymously through the slot any time it occurs to them throughout the school day (e.g. 'Why is the sky blue?'). At the end of the week, empty the box and read the inquiries aloud as a class. Vote on which question the children would like to focus on during a weekly 'Guided Inquiry Hour' or during studies in Science, Humanities and Social Sciences or Technologies.
3. Have children develop their own 'fascinating questions' to research and then make a short presentation to the class on their findings. They should create a poster or PowerPoint and be encouraged to bring along props, photographs or models.

Punctuation – the question mark

1. Violet is always asking questions! Have children change the following statements into questions by moving the verb to the beginning of the sentence, and adding a question mark at the end. The answer to each is italicised below.
 - a. Statement: Violet's grandma likes to garden.
(Answer: *Question – Does Violet's grandma like to garden?*)
 - b. Statement: Violet is a little girl with big ideas.
(Answer: *Question – Is Violet a little girl with big ideas?*)
2. Challenge: Can you turn this question into a statement?
 - a. Question: Is Violet always thinking?
(Answer: *statement – Violet is always thinking.*)

Visual literacy

1. In groups of four, examine the illustrations in detail. What style has Fiona Burrows used to draw the characters – realistic, cartoon, abstract, fantasy?
2. What medium has she used? E.g. collage, black and white, watercolour, ink? What effect is created?
3. Why do you think she chose a bright colour palette to represent Violet's imagination? Why do you think she chose a predominantly greyscale palette for the characters themselves? What does the word 'contrast' mean? Do you like this effect?
4. Where has the illustrator positioned objects on each page and what effect does this create? Can students identify any patterns? (E.g. repetition of colour sequences.)
5. What do you notice about the colours on the second last page? Why do you think the illustrator has made this spread different to the others?

Visual art activities

1. Violet has thoughts galore! Create a watercolour self-portrait in the style of Fiona Burrows. Above your head, illustrate all the ideas and questions buzzing through your imagination!

2. Look at the collage on the inside of the front and back covers. It depicts questions, objects, ideas, people, colours and topics Violet is interested in. Create your own collage on A3 paper to represent your unique imagination!
3. Magic scratch art: can you make a bright artwork appear from a piece of paper with 'nothing' on it? Can you trick your parents and friends? Begin with a piece of sturdy A4 white paper or cardboard. First, colour it with oil pastels until the entire piece is covered with no gaps. Next, apply black acrylic paint over the top of the entire page and leave it to dry. Finally, you are ready to trick your audience! Using a toothpick instead of a pencil to 'draw' (scrape) on the piece of seemingly innocent black paper, your illustrations will reveal a rainbow of colours hiding below – magic!
4. Watercolour paint splatter: start with a piece of A3 paper with a large watercolour paint splatter in the centre. Rotating this to select an orientation, use a fineliner pen to draw into the splatter and transform it into either a character, invented creature or object.

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