



# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## Horatio Squeak

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\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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## Outline:

When tiny Horatio Squeak is invited to a mysterious party at the top of the stairs, he finds himself in the unexpected company of kittens with dreadfully bright teeth and dreadfully sharp claws. Despite their intimidating appearance, the kittens are welcoming hosts who seem to enjoy Horatio's company. But when they spot a bird in the window, they cannot resist the urge to catch it. As Horatio watches on with horror, he finds the courage to speak out and save the scared bird. With his newfound bravery, Horatio returns home feeling stronger and not nearly so small.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Karen Foxlee spent most of her adult life working as a registered nurse while pursuing her secret dream of becoming a writer. Her young adult novels *The Anatomy of Wings* and *The Midnight Dress* as well as her books for younger readers, *Ophelia and the Marvellous Boy*, *A Most Magical Girl* and *Lenny's Book of Everything* have been published locally and internationally to much acclaim. This is her debut picture book. She lives and writes in Queensland, Australia

Evie Barrow is an artist and illustrator, living in Melbourne. Her work has been featured on the cover of *Frankie Magazine* and in *Shout Out to the Girls*. This is her debut picture book.

## How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

### These notes are for:

- Primary (all years)
- Ages 3-6

### Key Learning Areas:

- English

### Example of:

- Picture Book

### Themes/Ideas:

- Bravery
- Friendship
- Standing up for your beliefs



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## Discussion Questions and Activities:

### Character

Horatio is the main character in this story. What do we know about Horatio as a character? The illustrations will give you some extra clues. Create a character profile for Horatio.

How does Horatio feel about the kittens when they first meet? How do his feelings change throughout the story? Why?

“It was nice to be liked,  
nice to be a good friend,  
to be at a party and  
not want it to end.”

What do you think makes a good friend? How does Horatio demonstrate this?

Why is Horatio “proud of the way he behaved” at the end of the story?

### Exploring the text

Karen Foxlee uses interesting vocabulary in the text that some students might not be familiar with. Ask the class what the following words mean or research their meaning together:

- Threadbare
- Feat
- Cordially
- Trappings
- Dread
- Trembling

Some of the text is designed so that certain words are larger, bolder or somehow different to the rest of the text. Find examples of this in the book and discuss what impact the design has on the story.

Why are the three kittens described as “marmalade”? Describe other colours in a similar way, for example, one of the kittens is wearing a strawberry shirt.

### Exploring the Illustrations

Examine the body language of the characters on several spreads. Why do you think the illustrator drew the characters this way? What does it tell you about how the character feels? Some spreads to examine:

- “Now little Horatio, he got such a fright,”
- When Horatio first meets the three kittens
- When Horatio yells “STOP!” at the kittens

Examine the illustration of the house at the beginning of the book. Can you see some of the characters from the story hiding in the illustrations?

Endpapers are the first and last pages of a picture book, usually stuck to the inside of the front and back cover. What are on the endpapers of *Horatio Squeak*? How do the endpapers give the reader clues about the story?

### Themes

#### *Fear*

Have you ever been afraid of going to a new event (starting school, visiting a new friend’s house, having a sleepover)? How did you feel before you went? Did your feelings change once you got there?

Why is Horatio afraid of going to the party? How does he try to get out of it?

#### *Bravery*

What does bravery mean to you? What kind of people can be brave? How does Horatio show bravery?

#### *Standing Up For Your Beliefs*

Why does Horatio yell “STOP!” at the kittens when they are playing with the bird?

### Further Activities

Choose one of Horatio’s brothers or sisters and write a story about them. What can you tell about them from the illustrations? Use this information to inspire your story.

Horatio goes through a range of feelings in the story. Look at each spread and discuss how he might be feeling. Create a mood/feelings chart for the story. Discuss situations when students have felt the same way and why.

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