

Unit written by Dr Pam Macintyre & Dr Susan La Marca

Love, Aubrey by Suzanne LaFleur

Year 7

Background

When this story opens, eleven-year-old Aubrey is living alone in the family home 'playing house', watching television all day and surviving on cheese and crackers – until they run out. When she goes shopping for food using some of her birthday money, her reactions reveal that all is not right, and the pretence that everything is as it should be in Aubrey's world is subtly, gradually undermined.

The adult reader feels both admiration and anxiety for Aubrey. What about young readers? Are they comforted when Gran eventually arrives, or disappointed that the adventure of living alone, eating whatever and whenever you feel like it, not going to school and watching as much television as you want ends? LaFleur's gradual revelations that something shocking has happened to Aubrey's family lure the reader into the story.

Supported by the firm, caring manner of her Gran, Aubrey finds stability, and writing letters to family who are gone permanently or temporarily help her to cope. This is an emotional, moving story with tough decisions and strong women at its centre.

Objectives

To increase awareness of the conscious decision authors make to position readers in relation to their stories and storytelling, and how they use language to convey emotion and meaning. The following VELS statements support this approach:

They develop a critical understanding of the contextual factors involved in the construction and interpretation of texts, including the role of audience in shaping meaning.

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2005) *VELS English Domain Level 5*, page 24

[Students] develop a critical understanding of the contextual factors involved in the construction and interpretation of texts, including the role of audience in shaping meaning... They critically examine the variety of ways in which spoken language influences audiences and, in their own presentations, experiment with a range of persuasive techniques.

Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2005) *VELS English - Learning Focus*, Level 6, page 22.

Also relevant to this text are the following statements from the draft statement on the National English curriculum:

Encountering literary texts and creating their own will engage students partly because of what they might learn about human experience and what they might learn about how language has been used, and can be used by them, to create particular emotional, intellectual, or philosophical effects. (ACARA (2009) Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English, page 8).

Literature – Understanding, appreciating, responding to, analysing and creating literature: an enjoyment in, and informed appreciation of, how English language can convey information and emotion, create imaginative worlds and aesthetic and other significant experiences. (ACARA (2009) Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English. Literature, page 6).

Focus

First person voice

Aubrey has a singular way of looking at the world, and of expressing her reactions, which is strongly appealing. As you read, stop and discuss:

- What sort of person is Aubrey? What are we gradually being told about her?

Focus

Story construction

Love, Aubrey has a gripping opening and works to maintain suspense by a slow revelation of past events.

Read aloud the opening until the end of the first section or listen to the mp3 file of the opening being read at

<http://www.suzannelafleur.com/4s_9780739380284.mp3>

At this point, stop and discuss:

- What do we know?
- What questions do we need answered about Aubrey?
- What do we predict might happen next?

She will make you cry.

She will make you smile.

AUBREY WILL STAY WITH YOU FOREVER.

Assessment

Before reading to the end of the book, stop at ‘...while I wrote’ (p. 261) and have the class members, with a partner, write the letter Aubrey would write to her mother.

Before this, have the class jointly draw up an assessment rubric to judge how the letters will be evaluated (e.g. in the voice of Aubrey, consistent with her character, etc). Have a class reading of the possible endings and use the rubric to evaluate them. Read Aubrey’s letter in the book and decide whether the winning letter, or the author’s, is better.

Focus

Visualising

Love, Aubrey is a very emotional, heart moving book. The author paints very vivid word pictures to create strong reactions in the reader. The letters Aubrey writes to members of her family are simple, yet powerful, examples.

Think about the mood the story creates for the reader, and how you might convey this to someone visually in an artistic medium. What colours or textures convey the emotion for you?
What music might complement your ideas?

Focus

Communication

The draft document on the new Australian English curriculum states:

The Digital and online technologies continue to profoundly transform how members of Australian society work, meet, keep in touch, express themselves, share, build and store knowledge, and access material for pleasure and learning. Clearly, digital and online materials present the English curriculum with new teaching opportunities. Enhancing the access of all teachers and students to these resources is critical. (ACARA (2009) Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English. Literature, page 15).

Suzanne LaFleur is a new author interested in corresponding with her readers. Her website is at <http://www.suzannelafleur.com/> and an email address (which she gives freely on the site) is suzlafleur@gmail.com.

Assessment

In small groups, brainstorm a response to *Love, Aubrey* that you would you like to communicate to the author via her email. This may take the form of a

series of reactions, observations, links or ideas inspired by the text, or a series of questions.

'The best book I have read
all year... I loved it'

CATHY GASSIDY

Related Reading

Loss/Death

Almond, David *Skellig*
Bateson, Catherine *Painted Love Letters*
Carmody, Isobelle *Greylands*
Dessen, Sarah *The Truth About Forever*
Gleeson, Libby *Dodger*
Gleitzman, Morris *Two Weeks with the Queen*
Metzenthén, David *Gilbert's Ghost Train*
Metzenthén, David *The Colour of Sunshine*
Patterson, Katherine *Bridge to Terabithia*

Family/Friendship

De Goldi, Kate *10 pm Question*
Di Camillo, Kate *Because of Winn Dixie*
Dubosarsky, Ursula *The First Book of Samuel*
Kane, Kim *Pip, The Story of Olive*
Murray, Martine *The Slightly True Story of Cedar B Hartley*
Patron, Susan *The Higher Power of Lucky*
Valentine, Jenny *Finding Violet Park*
Zusak, Markus *The Underdog*

Suzanne LaFleur

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