



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower primary
(ages 6–8)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Children learn about individual differences: perceived negatives and actual positives

THEMES

- Individuality
- Imagination
- Loneliness
- Compassion

PREPARED BY

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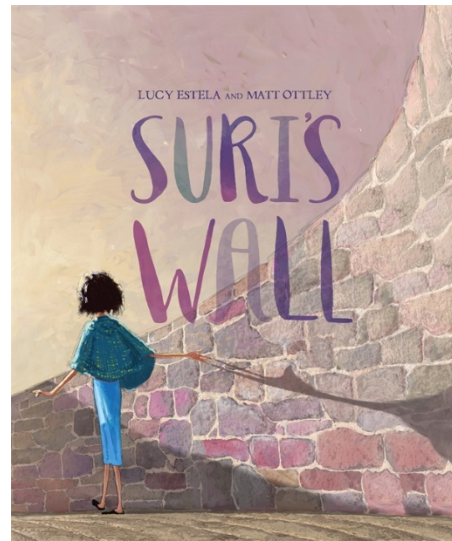
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Suri's Wall

Lucy Estela and Matt Ottley

PLOT SUMMARY

Suri is lonely behind the walls of a crumbling building that is designed to keep her and the other children safe. A single guard protects them. But for Suri the safe haven is a type of prison: no one speaks to her, a girl who is different – much taller than the others, although they are the same age. She is not part of their night time confidences. Her bed has to be longer than theirs and is apart. But as in all good stories there comes a moment when the world changes for Suri and her difference allows her to give a special gift to her companions: the gift of her imagination.

As time passes, Suri continues to grow. One day she can see over the wall. This is the pivotal turning point for Suri: her height becomes precious and her difference important. When Eva asks what she can see, Suri's imagination takes flight – and so does the visual text: the subtle pinks and greys are displaced by an intense wide blue sky, the 'castle' dwarfed in the background by lush pasture, a golden bridge, a glorious peacock and the darting coloured butterflies. The enclosed walls have given way to vast expanses, distant mountains, and a meandering river and a peaceful lake. Turn the page and an ornate galleon dominates the foreground. Each day, Suri brings the town to life in the eyes of the children, creating its beauty. The children are

transported beyond the walls in their imaginations, and they believe in the world Suri is creating for them. All seems to be improving, and the tone of the language is light: 'giggling', 'skipping', 'smiled', 'laughed', until one night, the children hear the noises of conflict.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lucy Estela's love of writing became apparent as early as age seven when she began writing and illustrating a multitude of storybooks and newspaper columns that were printed up at home and forced upon her family. Since then she has taken a fascinating path towards publishing her first book.

Her university degree focused on languages but rather than becoming a language teacher, Lucy was introduced to the world of computer games and has pursued a successful career in London and now in Australia as a developer of websites and games for the kids and youth entertainment market including such brands as Disney, Warner Bros Pictures, Chorion and Xbox.

Suri's Wall, illustrated by the talented Matt Ottley, is Lucy's debut book with Penguin. Lucy lives in Sydney with her husband and three children.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Matt Ottley is a multi-modal artist working across the fields of visual arts, music and literature. He is an award-winning picture book writer and illustrator, with 25 picture books published. He spent his childhood in Papua New Guinea, and has travelled widely throughout Australia and the world. As a teenager and during his early twenties he worked as a stockman on remote cattle stations in the Australian outback, before studying fine arts and music. He lived for three years in Britain working as an equestrian painter, painting some of Britain's finest racehorses and polo ponies.

He is now one of Australia's most popular children's author/illustrators, and has been published in several different languages around the world. His book and musical work for young adults, *Requiem for a Beast* was awarded the Children's Book Council of Australia's Picture Book of the Year in 2008, and the Queensland Premier's Award for Young Adult Literature in the same year. His picture book, *What Faust Saw* was an international best seller. Matt has also worked as a professional flamenco and classical guitarist. He is currently working on two large-scale

orchestral projects that will also have visual and literature components.

BEFORE READING

From the moment we feel the indentations on the cover, take in the sweep of the wall in its pinks, browns and greys, and follow the shadow of Suri as her hand trails across the stones with her back to us, we are intrigued. Who is this slim, black-haired girl? Where is she? When is this story set? The soft grey endpapers look to be close ups of the stones, but also look like creased paper. Does this suggest that the walls might not be as solid and impenetrable as they appear? There is nothing more exciting than a book that sets up such intrigue and questioning before the story begins.

THEMES

- Individual differences: perceived negatives and actual positives
- Power of the imagination
- Loneliness
- Friendship
- Compassion
- Selflessness
- Being loved and loving

UNDERSTANDING THE WRITTEN AND VISUAL NARRATIVE

This book models for young readers how active they need to be as readers, as not everything is spelled out for them. It is perfect for encouraging inferential reading, and exploring the idea of metaphoric stories. If they look closely at the illustrations, they will realise that the words only tell some of this story. The style of telling prompts them to explore their own interpretations. Told in direct prose and dialogue, the written narrative allows the illustrations to supply the tone and mood, add much context not referred to in the written text, and so prompt questions that open up interpretations.

Ideally, this rich picture book would be read aloud with a small group so that they can look closely at the words and images.

There are moments in the story ideal for pausing the reading for predictions. This will deepen understanding and prompt young readers to think



about the decisions the writer and the illustrator have made, and about what is happening. For example, pause when Suri can see over the wall for the first time. What do readers think she will see? Why does she stay looking for 'some time'? Consider where she is looking from and what surrounds the buildings she is in.

Pause again on the next page where Eva asks Suri what she can see. Will she tell them what she can see? What do readers think she will tell Eva? Why? Consider the perspective on this page, and why the illustrator might show Suri and Eva as so small against the high disappearing cliff on the other side of the wall.

Turn the page and look at what Suri describes. Talk about the colour intensity in this image, the vast, open landscape against the colour of their building in the background.

Look closely at all the detail in the next spread. Why does Peter say that the king's ship must be a 'good sign'? A sign of what do you think?

On the next page we see people moving through the town in a steady stream, with laden carts and animals. Where are they going and why are they taking their belongings?

On the next spread Suri and the children are surrounded by the immense forest, but does she notice the people walking through it? They look tired and downcast. Why is that?

On this spread and the next one there are no words, only pictures. Why do you think this is?

On the next spread we are looking down on a happy Suri, with Eva snuggled next to her. Why has the illustrator drawn this in such close up? How do you feel when you look at it?

On the next page, the guard says to Suri 'They will find out, you know.' What does he mean? Before you turn the page, ask readers what they think Suri will see.

Turn the page. Are readers shocked, surprised at what she sees? What will she tell the children?

Then turn to the final page. Discuss what readers think of Suri's decision.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think the children are in this castle? Are they prisoners or is it to keep them safe?
- What games are the children playing?
- Why does the iron gate never open?
- Why are the children afraid of Suri?
- Why are there no adults other than the guard?
- Why doesn't Suri tell the children about the reality over the wall?
- Ask the children for two words that describe Suri at the beginning of the story and two words at the end of the story. Are they different? Why?
- Do you think Suri is happy to be taller than everyone else?
- Why do you think the book is called *Suri's Wall*?
- There is a real wall in the story, but is there also a metaphorical one?

Suri's Wall as a Fable

A fable is a story that has a moral. Have the class write morals for *Suri's Wall* and discuss them. Does everyone agree with the morals?

ILLUSTRATED RESPONSES

- Innovating on the text: This story begins in the middle: write and/or draw what happened in this land before we meet Suri, before the children are in their safe place.
- Write and/or draw what you think will happen now.
- Use this story as a model: your images must tell more than the words show.

FURTHER READING ON INDIVIDUALITY

- Aaron Blabey – *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley; Sunday Chutney*
- Stephen Michael King – *The Man who Loved Boxes*
- Jiri Tibor Novak – *Puffy*
- Tohby Riddle – *Nobody Owns the Moon; The Singing Hat*



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Suri's Wall	Lucy Estela & Matt Ottley	9780670077755	K-2	\$24.99		
Mr Huff	Anna Walker	9780670078042	K-2	\$24.99		
Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley	Aaron Blabey	9780143503071	K-2	\$16.99		
Sunday Chutney	Aaron Blabey	9780143504108	K-2	\$16.99		
TOTAL						

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