



Reflect and Respond

My Strange Shrinking Parents: A Tall Tale by Zeno Swords

Author: Zeno Swords

Illustrator: Zeno Swords

Storyteller: Trystan Go

Publisher: Thames & Hudson

Themes: Immigration, Migrants, Family, Belonging and Acceptance, Love, Hope, Sacrifice, Culture, Diversity, Milestones

Year levels: Upper Primary

Learning Areas: Humanities



Discussion questions:

- Before reading the story, look at the front cover. What do you think this story might be about? What clues does the title, subtitle and illustration give us? What is a 'tall tale'?
- The story is dedicated to the author - Zeno Swords's "*immigrant parents*". Discuss the term 'immigrant' (a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country). How do you think it would feel moving to a new country that is not familiar to you?
- Who is narrating the story?
- What do you think is meant by the phrase "*They had old shoes and empty pockets*"?
- What do you think the baker meant when he asked the boys parents for five centimetres?
- What is happening to the boys parents throughout the story?
- What do you think the theme of 'shrinking' represents in this story?
- How do your parents help you to 'grow'?
- What happens when the boy has his own family?
- "*Our hearts are just as big. Our love is just as good.*" Discuss this scene and phrase. What does the boy's mother mean? Why do you think she is telling him this?
- Why do you think boy wants his parents to stop shrinking?
- Discuss the significance of the song at the beginning and the end of the story. What does 'humble' mean. How can they be 'giants'? What are the key messages the author is trying to convey?

Story response ideas:

a. Immigrating to Australia -stories to explore

Did you know that almost 30% of Australia's population were born overseas? Explore stories of peoples experiences moving from other countries to live in Australia.

1. Using a **KWL chart**, start by noting down what you already **know** about the experiences of immigrants moving and settling in Australia.





Story response ideas continued...

2. Next, note down questions that you would like to find out about this topic - in the **Wonder** section.
3. Use the following websites to explore stories and information about the experiences of immigrants. Make a note of any interesting new facts or understandings that you have gained after exploring the stories. These can be written in the **Learn** section of the KWL chart.

- Immigration Museum: Immigrant Stories:
<https://museumsvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/resources/immigrant-stories/>
- National Archives of Australia: Migrant Stories: www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/immigration-and-citizenship/migrant-stories
- ABC: BTN Video Clip: Australia's Waves of Migration:
www.abc.net.au/btn/classroom/migration-history/10910880

B. Explore an illustration

Revisit the illustrations in the book and discuss how they help to tell the story. Look particularly at how visual techniques such as colour, perspective, angle, size and symbols have been used.

Invite students to select an illustration to explore. They can use the prompts on the **Visual Analysis template** to help them delve deeper into their chosen image.

C. Dear Journal...

Select one of the characters from the story and write a diary entry from their perspective. They may be reflecting on a particular event in the story. What might they be thinking and feeling? What do they hope for?

Use the **Dear Diary** template.



Scan the QR code to
view the story!



KWL-CHART

NAME _____



Date _____

Topic _____

**WHAT I
KNOW**

**WHAT I
WONDER**

**WHAT I
LEARNED**



Visual detective

Title of book: _____

Author: _____ Illustrator: _____

Start by describing the illustration you have chosen to analyse:

- Who and what is in this image?
- What is happening? What are the different participants/objects doing?
- What is the purpose of the image?
- Does it remind you of anything?
- How does the image make you feel?

Select some of the relevant prompts below to help you analyse your selected illustration:

Colour

- What do you notice about the use of colour?
- How has colour been used to set a mood or tone?

Size:

- How big or small are things compared to one another?
- Why has the author chosen to use size like this? What might this mean?

Gaze:

- Is the character looking directly at you or away from you?
- Where are their eyes looking?
- How does their gaze relate to what is happening in the story?

Movement:

- How has movement been shown?



Visual detective continued

Saliience:

- What do you notice first?
- What is your eye drawn to?
- How has the illustrator drawn your attention to this part of the image?

Reading path:

- How does your eye move from one point to another across the image?
- What has the illustrator done to help guide this?

Symbols:

- Symbols could be objects or a choice in the illustration that represents an idea or concept.
- Are there any symbols in the image? If yes, describe this/these.
- Why has the author chosen to use these symbols? What might this mean for what is happening in this story?

Perspective:

- Is the image in the foreground or background?
- What might this choice of placement be important to this part of the story?

Body language and facial expressions:

- What does the characters facial expressions, gestures, stance or position, tell us about their attitude, personality or how they are feeling?



_____ 's Journal

Date: _____

Dear Diary,

(Space to include drawings, magazine cut-outs etc.)





Student Task Sheet

Print this page for your students to use during Literacy Rotations

Today, you will be viewing and listening to:

My Strange Shrinking Parents: A Tall Tale by Zeno Swords

Author: Zeno Swords

Illustrator: Zeno Swords

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Year levels: Upper Primary



Learning tasks:

After viewing the story, choose one of the following three activities to complete.

A. Plotting the boy's journey through childhood to adulthood

Use the **Timeline** template to plot key events from the story that tell us about the boy and his experience growing up. Include a description about how he might be feeling at these different stages of his life.

B. Weighing up the pros and the cons

The parents made many sacrifices for their son throughout his life. Use the **T-Chart** to identify the positives and negative aspects of their efforts. Consider these both from the perspective of the son and the parents.

C. Exploring messages in the story

"I had learned from their examples to wear my differences with my back straight and my head high. Their belief in me had grown into my courage."

What does the boy - now grown into an adult, mean by this? What might those differences be? How had their belief given him courage?

Use the **Quote Analysis** template to note down your thoughts and ideas about these lines from the story.



Scan the QR code to
view the story!



TIMELINE

NAME



Quote Analysis

Select a quote from the story to analyse:



A light blue rectangular box with an orange border, containing six horizontal orange lines for writing. An orange rectangular tab is attached to the top center of the box.



Use the following prompts to help you analyse the quote:

- In your own words, explain what the quote means.
- Why did this particular quote stand out to you?
- How does it make you feel?
- How has the author used language in an interesting way?
- Have any particular language devices been used?
- How is this important to the story?
- What do you visualise when you hear or read this quote?

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