

Type of Text

Picture book

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

English Literacy

The Arts

Writing

Social Science, HPE

Science, Natural Science

Music

Maths

THEMES

- growing up
- overprotective parenting, protective behaviours
- homing pigeons, pets
- family relationships
- self-awareness, letting go
- adventure, exploring, risk taking
- child parent relationships
- perseverance
- the importance of initiating change, finding your inner strength.

Publication Details

Published: July 2019 (HB) February 2020 (PB)

Author: Dimity Powell

Illustrator: Andrew Plant

Publisher: [Ford Street Publishing](#), \$24.95 RRP (HB) \$16.95 (PB)

ISBN: 9781925804263 (HB) 9781925804270 (PB)

Format: Hardcover and paperback 32pp

Ideal for: 3 – 6 year olds, lovers of picture books and pigeons!

These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools and other educational institutions, but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.

SYNOPSIS

Pippa is a little pigeon with big blue-sky ambitions: to fly solo and explore the world beyond her nest. Her parents are less than thrilled with their risk-taking feathered fledging and smother her with well-meant yet suffocating warnings until one day she ignores them all, and takes the leap into the unknown...alone.

Pippa is a light-hearted adventure tale about striking out alone, following your dreams and desires and experiencing what it's like when you get there. It is a tale that acknowledges the sometimes-suffocating affection parents have for their offspring, which can temper and frustrate a child's sense of freedom and adventure, and suggests that it's okay to take risks from time to time. Although the adventure may be perilous, it is still worth experiencing for you never know what glorious discoveries lie ahead.

AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Award-winning children's author, Dimity Powell loves to fill every spare moment with words. She writes and reviews exclusively for children and is the Managing Editor for Kids' Book Review, one of the world's leading review sites for children's literature. She is a seasoned presenter both in Australia and overseas and believes picture books are food for the soul, to be consumed as often as possible. She regularly relishes creating her own including *The Fix-It Man*, (2017), and *At the End of Holyrood Lane*, (2018) her second title with illustrator, Nicky Johnston.

WRITING STYLE

Dimity's writing style is often described as powerful and emotive, laced with humour and lilting language to soften the often sensitive subject matter she tackles. *Pippa* is a slight departure from her usual issued-based stories, inspired by her childhood memories of pigeon keeping. Their ability to navigate their way home from far distances still fascinates her to this day. This amazing trait coupled with a strong-willed, defiant young character like, Pippa (and many other six-year-olds) provided the background for a subtly informative yet action-based storyline.

Originally the Pippa in this story was a male bird character, called Columbus* so named as a slightly humorous homage to one of our better-known historical explorers and risk takers, Christopher Columbus and his great (and sometimes misguided) yearning for adventure. Although she's had a gender change, the

sense of adventure and daring still prevails in Pippa's story. *The scientific name for homing pigeon is **Columbia livia**.

ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Andrew has been a bit of a bird-nerd most of his life, having travelled the world and so far seen over 1,100 different species of birds (not that he's counting!) So illustrating Pippa was a natural fit. He studied to be a zoologist, but quickly realised that he loved illustrating animals more than studying them. Andrew has now contributed artwork to 160 books and magazines, including writing and illustrating several Early Learning titles, science education books and picture books. Over the last few years, he has focused almost exclusively on picture books, as they allow the greatest scope for his imagination to take flight. Several of his picture books have been CBCA Notable Books.

Also by Andrew Plant

As author/illustrator

- *The Poppy*
- *The Perfect Leaf*
- *Could a Tyrannosaurus play Table Tennis?*

As illustrator

- *Spark*
- *Glitch*
- *The Little Dinosaur*

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

With a science background, Andrew's work was initially very detailed and 'tight'. But over the years, he has loosened up quite a bit and enjoys adding spattered paint and sketchy pencil work to his illustrations now. The paintings for Pippa, although reasonably accurate anatomically, are not very detailed in terms of feathers or leaves etc. The artwork features unusual points of view and a strong focus on light, or its absence, which are features of most of his books.

SELLING POINTS

- Published Australian author and illustrator
- Zero – 100-year readership

- Champions the concepts of adventure, letting go, risk taking, embracing change and navigating through adversity
- Illustrates the unique instincts and abilities of the homing pigeon, which also reflect the emotions of young children intent on '*doing their own thing*' contrary to parental advice
- Highlights '*cause and consequence*' promoting cognitive developmental skills in pre-schoolers and early primary schoolers
- Addresses the Australian primary SOSE curricula plus many other areas including Geography, Science, Art, HPE, and Natural Science.
- Emphasises the importance of family as the core to contentment and security in a fun uplifting way
- Striking artwork that beautifully accentuates the sometimes misunderstood personality and unique traits of the homing pigeon.

ABOUT WRITING PIPPA

We had a loft in our backyard when I was a kid and kept up to 20 pigeons at a time. They were incredibly good parents and FAST breeders so we were never short of eggs or babies – called *squeakers* because of their constant excited squeaking for food whenever a parent was about. I often stayed with them well after dark, petting them and watching them sleep, not to avoid my parents, although sitting in the pigeon coop was an excellent way of postponing my homework. I just loved observing them. Like lots of kids, I'd really loved to have had wings so I could fly.

Caring for my pigeons taught me a lot about societal structure, the benefit of routine, persistence, and joie d vivre – the way pigeons loved the simple pleasures of life like bathing, being with their mates and tumbling through the air first thing in the morning were observations that entertained and delighted me. Our pigeons were homing pigeons from racing stock. We never seriously raced them but we did 'throw' them from time to time from distances as far as 500 kms away from their home loft. They always came home. This ability to 'home' is an instinct that intrigues and fascinates me.

For many years, the idea of a little pigeon finding her way home alone bobbed around in my head. I wanted to pen a story about following your heart and believing in yourself. A few other picture books about pigeons surfaced soon after and I thought my procrastination meant my ideas would never take flight. Fortunately, I was wrong and Pippa found her wings...and her way back home!

Paying homage to the pigeon's unique homing instinct in an accessible way for children as a picture book has been the most rewarding part of this project. That and watching the cheeky faced Pippa burst into glorious life thanks to Andrew's stunning, life-like illustrations.

Ensuring that the language remained interesting and fun without slipping too steeply into an information dump about pigeons was the most challenging aspect of this endeavour. I wanted young children (and their parents) to recognise themselves in Pippa; as someone eager to begin her adventures without constant restraint from her parents. Pippa is energetic, wily, game for anything yet not without the child-like innocence and wants of many typical pre-schoolers – she gets hungry a lot for instance!

Andrew's technique of depicting Pippa's various stages of independence and eventual flight, beautifully capture the essence of this story in a way I hope children find exciting and informative and gives them reason to ponder about the humble pigeon even more.

ABOUT ILLUSTRATING PIPPA

I got my first pair of binoculars at age 10, and have been a bird-watcher ever since, so it's not surprising that many of my books feature birds. I even illustrated a bird field guide once (for Vanuatu, the Solomons and New Caledonia), a job where every feather had to be the correct size and colour, every detail spot on. Luckily, *Pippa* isn't like that. An ornithologist (a bird expert) would be horrified by the facial expressions on Pippa, Peg and Percy, by the inaccurate feather patterns and eye details. But *Pippa* isn't a science book, although it's based on real science. It's a fable and an allegory and an adventure. Pippa is a character, not a museum specimen, and so I had the freedom to be creative.

When I first read Dimity's text, I straight away saw the whole book as being from Pippa's perspective. The reader isn't on the ground looking up – we're perched in the branches with her, flying alongside her. The only time we're stuck on the ground is when Pippa is trapped in the barn. Dimity and I didn't talk together about how the pictures should look – in fact, I have never discussed the illustrations with any author before I started the rough pencil sketches for their book. I never discuss the art with anyone. Not because I wouldn't value what the author in particular thought, but because if we don't share thoughts, then we get two imaginations working full blast to produce one story. I love it when an author says "I never thought of that!" when I show an idea, just like I had never thought of their story. We're working separately, but need

each other to make (hopefully!) magic. So I doodle. I mull. I procrastinate. I start sketches and give up. I get great ideas that turn out to be awful, and nearly give up on silly little thoughts that turn out to be winners.

The main design idea of the book that I finally decided on, after trying out and discarding a couple of others, is that when Pippa is 'trapped' in some way – by her parents' concerns, or actually trapped in the barn – the pictures are trapped in little boxes too. It isn't until Pippa is flying free that the art fills up the whole page. It's an idea I've used once before, not that it's my original idea. *Where the Wild Things Are* does it too. What I find very interesting is that, when I'm doing school presentations, and I ask the students what is it, in the illustrations, that changes through the book, it is rare for them to pick up on the size changes, despite it being such an obvious feature. They seem to focus on the content of the art, rather than the design aspect. I believe that this is a discussion opportunity well worth pursuing, especially for those class levels creating their own picture books.

The paintings are acrylic, with watercolour pencil scribbles as well. I like acrylic's powerful colours, and the fact that I can go over mistakes!

The problem that took the longest time to resolve was Pippa's look. Wild homing pigeons come in an almost endless variety of patterns and colours. How Pippa looked would then determine how her parents look. (There are a lot of pigeon fanciers out there, and they know what colour-and-pattern parents can produce which colour-and-pattern child.) I tried a lot of variations, but eventually settled on one of the most common – with a single out-of-place dark feather on the wing for fun. I liked the idea that kids could look at an average pigeon and say "Look! There's Pippa!"

TEACHING POINTS & ACTIVITIES

This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well. Where possible, [Australian Curriculum goal codes](#) have been included which address Foundation to Year 2 curriculum learning outcomes and apply directly to the targeted audience intended for this book, (3 – 6 years).

Knowledge and Literal Understanding

- Before Reading (Interpreting, analyzing, evaluating / [ACELY1660](#))
 - Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.

- Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
- Ask students if they can recognize and name of the bird shown on the cover.
 - Ask them what they know about this bird.
 - Can they name some of the stigmas or facts that surround pigeons?
- **During Reading**
 - Ask students if Pippa reminds them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
 - What is their first impression of Pippa? Do they regard her as brave and daring or naughty and disrespectful?
 - What changes does Pippa experience during the story?
 - Discuss why they think Pippa wants to escape on her own so badly.
 - Ask students how they perceive Pippa's situation. Do they think she is happy at home? Or just restless to be somewhere else.

Inferential and Critical Thinking

- **After Reading** (Responding to literature / [ACELT1783](#), [ACELT1582](#), [ACELT1578](#))
 - Ask students how they think Pippa views her father and her mother at the end of the story.
 - What are the students' impressions of her parents?
 - Are they relieved that Pippa made it home?
 - Do they find the ending: satisfying, confusing, hopeful, predictable, a surprise, comforting, or a relief?
 - Gently enquire if any of the students have ever experienced a situation for the first time that frightened them. Discuss how it made them feel.
 - What did Pippa do to achieve her dreams? Do they think it worked? Discuss what students would do or have done? Would they have ignored their parents' warnings as well?
 - The text is a lightly metaphoric look at parenting. Examine the similarities between Pippa's character and parents and their own family situations.
 - Whom do students regard as the main character of the story? Who are the sub or secondary characters?
 - Why are the sub characters important to the story?
 - How do they support Pippa and help her learn from her situation?

CROSS-CURRICULAR DISCUSSION AND IDEAS**ENGLISH LITERACY SKILLS**

Vocabulary (Language for interaction/ [ACELA1462](#))

- Alliteration – give examples from the story.
- Onomatopoeia – where and how is it used to emphasise the situation.

Grammar (Expressing and developing ideas / [ACELA1786](#), [ACELA1451](#), [ACELA1462](#))

- Why do they think the main character in the story is named Pippa?
- Discuss the meanings associated with some names. Do students know what their name means?
- Investigate the meaning of Pippa's name in relation to the habit of baby pigeons 'pipping' their eggs when hatching.
- Discuss how the punctuation used enhances the flow and drama of the story.
- Do certain words and adjectives link to the action sequences and emotions depicted in the illustrations? If so, which ones?
- Identify some of the metaphors and similes the author uses and discuss their meanings. For example; '*snaking river*', '*a patchwork of paddocks*', '*a blistering bullet...shot past her.*'
- Encourage students to identify some of the adjectives used. Can they suggest other words or ways to describe Pippa's flight and plight?
- There is very little dialogue shown in this story. Why do students think this is? Does it make the story easier or less easy to follow?
- How does the dialogue replicate the sounds a pigeon makes?

Comprehension (Wellbeing / [ACPPS005](#), [ACELT1581](#))

- Get students to name the sequence of events in this story. Attempt this via:
 - Listing them as a group
 - Writing out key sentences from the story, cutting them out and then getting students to arrange in order
 - Illustrating scenes in correct order of occurrence
- Discuss how it would affect the feeling and outcome of the story if it began at a different point in time, i.e. in the middle of the falcon attack.

- Do the illustrations follow the story? Do they enhance it, if so, how?
- At which point or points do Pippa's emotions change? How many times does this occur?
- Were students able to predict what would happen next? Name the clues – in the text and pictures? If not expected, how did it make them feel? Were they ever anxious about what could happen next?
- What do they think happens after Pippa returns home?
- Make a list of the various emotions and the adjectives that describe to them that Pippa is experiencing eg. Hungry, frightened, frustrated, excited, happy, free...
- Discuss whether students feel this is a sad story, a scary one or a happy one and encourage them to give reasons based on the words and images used.

Writing

(Examining literature / [ACELT1584](#))

- Identify whose point of view (POV) the story is written in.
- Attempt to write the story from a different POV: her father, mother, a friend, the falcon.
- Get students to choose a scene and rewrite it using dialogue.
- Ask students to work in groups or pairs to create an Acrostic Poem using emotion words such as: HAPPY, SCARED, LOST, HUNGRY, GRATEFUL. Share with the class and compare.
- Write a book review of the story using the [WORKSHEET 1](#).

Literature and Media

(Responding to literature / [ACELT1582](#), [ACELT1583](#))

- Enquire whether students have ever seen information, news articles, YouTube videos etc. that depict pigeons in a certain way. Perhaps it's something their parents have relayed to them from one of these sources.
- Ask students to name cartoons, books or movies that have similar themes to *Pippa*.
- Define which ones stick most in their memories and discuss why? Is it because of the way they make them feel, for example.
- Consider how they end. Do all adventure tales end happily? If they think so, ask why they think this is.
- Which have the better endings? Which ones do students prefer most? Debate what makes a good ending and why that is important.

VISUAL LITERACY

(Expressing and developing ideas / [ACELA1453](#))

- Search for the visual clues the illustrator includes in the story to show a change of:
 - Emotion / action
 - Time / situation
- How do the end pages make students feel? What do they project about this story?
- How do the illustrations depict the personalities of the characters and what they are experiencing?
- Examine the perspective and angles used in the illustrations. Do the students get a sense of being with Pippa, rather than simply looking up at her from the ground as they would normally?
- How does the use of altered or unusual perspectives enhance the story experience?
- What direction do most of the illustrations flow to and from? When does this direction change? How does this influence the story and what does it tell us about the main character?
- How do certain colours make students feel? How can they apply these feelings to this story?
- Discuss the use of colours to project or symbolise emotion and a change of circumstances and time in this story. (used with [Visual Arts and Craft](#))
- Identify the predominant colour palette, and then list emotions to match those colours. Use their location in the story and the associated text to help identify matches.
- Ask students to identify Pippa's unique trademark.
- Ask student to draw their own favourite bird or animal (used with [Visual Arts and Crafts](#)).

MATHEMATICS **[ACMNA035](#)**

(Probability/Chance, Shape, Numbers and Patterns [ACMSP024](#), [ACMMG042](#),

- Chance and Probability
 - Explore the likelihood of Pippa making it home safely versus not.
- Shapes
 - Identify the geometric shapes and symbols used throughout the illustrations.
 - Count them and examine their use in the illustrations. Is it deliberate or incidental?
 - Discuss how certain shapes could produce certain subliminal impressions, eg. The use of square and rectangle boxes to 'enclose' and restrain Pippa vs. the absence of them when she is free-flying.
- Discuss the presence of patterns. Can students spot any – wing feathers for example.
- Can students spot the numerical differences in the illustrations? The number of family members shown in the paintings, the number of pigeons in the flock, for example.

THE ARTS**VISUAL ARTS / CRAFT** (Visual Arts / Communicating ideas [ACAVAM108](#))

- Make an origami pigeon! Use the [instructions included online](#) or in this [video link](#). Experiment with different coloured paper. String them up in flocks to make a mobile or chain and decorate the classroom etc. For a more simplistic version, try this [link](#)
- Using [colouring-in templates and worksheets](#), found online and throughout these notes, use colours to show emotion and time of the day in the various scenes.
- Invite students to name their favourite colour and explain why. (use with [Visual Literacy](#))
- Ask students which page (spread) of the story they feel is the most dramatic or moving one and how it makes them feel? (This is known as the Blue page in picture books.) What part of the story does this page occur?
- Which spread do they consider the scariest?
- Which do they deem is the happiest page?
- Ask students to draw their own favourite pet bird or animal and get them to describe any visual physical unique characteristics eg. Pippa's dark wing feather (use with [Visual Literacy](#)).

MUSIC (Communicating and interacting, wellbeing, Music [ACPPS020](#), [ACAMUM082](#))

- Listen to and watch the [Book Trailer](#) for this story. What type of music is used? How does it make students feel?
- What types of instruments suggest scary feelings? Excitement? Joy? Does the pace of the music dictate the feeling of this mini movie?
- Do students think background music is important for relaying the feel of the story and suggesting what it could be about? Do they think instrumental background music is enough or if a song with lyrics should be used instead; what would they choose?
- Can music trigger certain memories? Ask students if they have a particular song that elicits strong memories, good or bad. (use with [Science](#))
- Encourage students to name instruments or music styles that describe the various movements, vocal sounds and habits of a pigeon.

DRAMA (Language for interaction, Drama [ACELA1787](#), [ACADM027](#))

- Using [string or stick puppets](#) get students to re-enact the story. Rig up a small stage to facilitate this. (use with [Visual Arts and Crafts](#))
 - Enlist someone to be the narrator.
- Get students to experiment with how to manipulate the puppets to show the different emotions and voices used in the story. Cover:
 - Body Language
 - Stage position
 - Influence of music to the performance – when to use it to inject drama or relief for the audience.
- Re-enact the story with students but not using words or a narrator, just music to accentuate the:
 - 'light and shade' moments of the story
 - Show scene changes
 - Mood changes (use with [Music](#)).

SOCIAL SCIENCE

(Social Health [ACPPS005](#), [ACPPSO17](#), [ACELA1787](#), [ACPPS020](#))

- Discuss the notion of risk-taking.
- When is risk-taking beneficial / healthy? When is it not?
- Get students to discuss how they feel when they are not allowed to do something – mad, frustrated, safe, determined, rebellious?
- Do students understand the concept of 'stranger danger' and can they identify people in their lives they can trust? Get them to name them. (use with [Inferential and Critical Thinking / Protective Behaviours / Safe People WORKSHEET 2](#))
- Discuss the meaning of parenting. What do students perceive their parents' / care givers' roles to be: to protect, teach, entertain, guide etc.
- Discuss the difference between *being cautious* and *being over cautious / unnecessarily afraid*. Explain why it is important to try new things safely and explore new situations
- Ask them why they think this is – because you may miss out learning, tasting, trying new wonderful things.
- When is it important to listen to your parents?
- Give an example when it might be okay to ignore parental advice and 'go solo'?

- Pippa left without telling her parents. Do students think this is okay / the right or wrong thing to do?
- Ask how students feel when something makes them feel frustrated. Get them to list some of the ways or things that would help them feel less frustrated. Explore ways to cope with bad feelings: writing / drawing them down, stepping back and counting to ten, meditation, talking about them, engaging in your favourite activity, burning energy, crying, telling jokes, sharing your anxieties with someone you trust... and so on.
- '*Pippa loves to explore*'. Name / discuss other great explorers e.g.; Columbus, Cook, Doc Who! (use with [History / Contemporary Society](#))
- Can students name any famous pigeons in history or in fiction and what they are noted for?

SCIENCE, NATURAL SCIENCE & GEOGRAPHY (STEM)

- What is a pigeon? Use the [Fun Facts page online](#) to research!
- Discuss the various types of pigeons. Were students aware of the variety?
- Introduce the term *instinct*. Do students know what this term means? After giving the definition, see if they can identify Pippa's instincts.
 - What traits and instincts are unique to pigeons, namely homing pigeons?
 - Do students regard pigeons as: pests, useful, beautiful, funny, useless? How have their viewpoints been determined by stereotypes? (Use with [Social Science](#).)
- Invite opinions as to how pigeons can navigate their way home – GPS, guess work, luck?
 - Compare these with current scientific explanations (research online).
 - Do they think this is a learnt behavior or something they are born with?
- What type of device would students invent to:
 - Prevent them from getting lost
 - Help them find their way home if they get lost
 - List the ones they already know and elaborate from there: apps, sat nav, maps, asking someone... for example.
- Introduce map-making. Either draw a graph with grids to encourage students to 'map' Pippa's way home or use the [Find Her Way Maze Map WORKSHEETS 3 & 4](#) (use with [Mathematics and Visual Arts](#))

- Pippa's first flight covers a variety of terrains. Get students to list them and discuss their geographical features.
 - How does Pippa's *bird's-eye-view* differ from ours?
- Consider the five senses and how music, smells and words can stimulate and trigger memories.
 - Hypothesize why they think this is and then research the answer.
 - Locate words, phrases and images the author and illustrator use in the story to add sensory detail and evoke the reader's senses. Discuss how this could enrich the story telling experience.
- What is a *predator*? Identify those in the story.
- Apart from predators, what other elements represent threats or obstacles in this story? E.g. weather, hunger, thirst, disorientation.
- Humans invented planes to fly and mimic birds. [Make a paper plane](#) and see what designs are best for:
 - Height
 - Length of flight
 - Longest time airborne
- Research how birds land and brake. How does this compare to landing and stopping a plane?

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (Health and Wellbeing / [ACPPS005](#), [ACPPS020](#))

- Dancing is a fun physical activity that makes you laugh, move and feel good – useful in times of stress and despair. What other physical activities could positively improve mental wellbeing? (Hint: there were some in [The Fix-It Man!](#))
- Flying is very physical too. What other sports or activities:
 - Allow humans to fly?
 - Simulate the sensation of flying?
- Skydiving, surf kiting and parasailing are some sports that use parachutes to simulate flying. Use a giant parachute with a group of students to make objectives move / create movement.
- Jumping off roofs like Superman is not a good way to fly. Discuss why not. What are some of the potential consequences? (use with [Social Science](#))

- List other activities / sports that simulate flying and are safer (for kids) to try, examples:
trampoline, trapeze, ribbon gym, hand gliding, butterfly stroke, dinghy sailing, parasailing,
base-jumping, hot air ballooning, abseiling, zip cord flying, kite flying!
- Identify students who have tried some of these activities. How do they make them feel? Who
would like to try them?
 - What's hard, scary, exciting about these activities?
- Have fun!