

# David Wiesner in the Classroom

## Ideas for Classroom Use

Zoe Ryder White

### Art and Max

Art and Max are both artists – Art, a skilled and practiced painter, and Max, an enthusiastic novice. When Max misunderstands and paints all over Art, his anger reveals his true colors. As Art disappears, layer by layer, Max must figure out his own way to recreate his friend. Use the spontaneity found in this story to inspire your students' own work!

Student activities:

- Enjoy the spontaneity of drawing collaboratively with your students. Choose a familiar person or object and draw its outline. Have students come up one by one to add details. Enjoy your surprising and unexpected finished product!
- Discuss what would happen if people lost their shape and color; how would students
- Re-create their friends? Have them draw and write.
- If your students were to re-draw/paint Arthur, as Max does—what would they change?
- Ask your students to tell the story of the smaller lizard characters, the ones that appear in the background—what are they thinking and feeling?

### Tuesday

In *Tuesday*, David Wiesner takes a perfectly ordinary evening and creates a whimsical world populated by frogs soaring through neighborhoods on levitating lily pads. The story of the frogs' night out is told almost entirely with pictures, with a sneak peek at the following Tuesday's remarkable events at the very end. Students of all ages will be inspired by this imaginative story.

Student activities:

- Ask students to pick a day of the week and tell, write, and illustrate the story of magical events that take place only on that day.
- Ask students to choose one character from an image in *Tuesday* and write and illustrate the story from that character's perspective.
- Ask students to write words to go along with Wiesner's pictures. Discuss how they might add as much detail and expression into their words as Wiesner has added to his pictures.
- Ask students to study the last page of *Tuesday*, and to write and illustrate a story that continues where Wiesner leaves off. What happens on the night that pigs can fly?

### Flotsam

*Flotsam* is another almost completely wordless picture book and tells the story of a curious boy who finds an old underwater camera washed up on the beach. After getting the film developed, he is astounded to discover pictures of extraordinary events taking place below the sea – puffer fish hot air balloons, an octopus lounge, a clockwork fish. He also finds a photographic record of the camera's previous tenders. Delighted, the boy reloads the camera, adds his own face to the record, and tosses it back in. *Flotsam* can inspire art projects, writing activities, and even science inquiries!

Student activities:

- Ask students to envision their own fantastical versions of what *really* happens under the sea, using Wiesner's images as inspiration. Have them draw and/or write.
- Ask students to collect their own piece of "flotsam" and write a backstory.
- Bring in (or ask students to collect) ordinary objects from nature to observe carefully, as scientists do. They might then draw or write their observations.
- Discuss with your students what we can learn from the clues in the photographic portraits of children the boy finds in the camera. Have them take photographic portraits of someone at home (using a shared disposable camera), then trade pictures and discuss what they learn about the subject from the clues in the picture.

### The Three Pigs

We've all heard the story of the three pigs, and Wiesner's version starts in a familiar way . . . until the wolf blows the first little pig clear out of the story! The three pigs have adventures outside of their own story, jumping in and out of other tales and bringing some new friends along with them when they finally head home. Told only with Wiesner's expressive pictures and a bit of dialogue, this book offers a delightful new twist on an old story.

Student activities:

- Ask your students to pick their own familiar fairy tale or folktale and to imagine what might happen if their characters could leave the story. Ask them to draw or write it.
- After reading *The Three Pigs* out loud, discuss with your students how Wiesner's art changes as the pigs move in and out of different stories. Why did he make the choices he made?
- Ask students to study the way Wiesner draws his characters coming out of the page. Have them practice this technique, and have them try it out in the context of their own stories.
- Have students tell stories using only pictures and dialogue.

### Sector 7

What starts off as a routine field trip turns into a dramatic adventure for the young artist in *Sector 7* as he meets a new friend at the top of the tall city building his class is visiting. His friend is no ordinary friend, but a young cloud! The boy visits the place where clouds are designed and

dispatched and adds some creative new designs of his own, changing the skies above his city to the amazement of the people below.

Student activities:

- Have your students choose a natural object – a tree, rock, lake, etc. – and redesign it as the boy in *Sector 7* does with clouds. Have them sketch and write about their new and improved creations! They might also imagine how people might react to encountering these surprisingly different objects.
- Study the names of clouds with your students, as well as the science of cloud formation.
- What kinds of clouds appear in *Sector 7*?
- Go on cloud-watching and cloud-sketching field trips. What shapes do students see in the clouds? What stories do they tell?