

The background of the entire page is a sepia-toned landscape. It features a range of mountains in the distance, with a prominent, sharp peak on the right side. In the foreground, there is a calm body of water, likely a lake or a wide river, which reflects the light from the sky. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds, and a bright sun or moon is visible on the left side, partially obscured by a cloud. The overall atmosphere is serene and nostalgic.

The Curiosities

Companion
Guide

Title: The Curiosities

Author: Zana Fraillon

Illustrator: Phil Lesnie

Genre: Picture Book

Themes: Identity, diversity, disability, empathy, observation, connection, folklore

Suitable for: Ages 6–11, Grades 1–6

Guided Reading Level: Q



Common Core Standards

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening; Reading Standards for Literature

R.CCR.1	RL.1.1	RL.3.2	RL.6.2
R.CCR.2	RL.1.2	RL.3.3	RL.6.4
R.CCR.3	RL.1.4	RL.3.4	W.CCR.7
R.CCR.4	RL.1.5	RL.3.7	W.CCR.8
R.CCR.6	RL.1.7	RL.4.1	W.CCR.9
R.CCR.7	RL.2.2	RL.4.2	SL.CCR.1
R.CCR.9	RL.2.3	RL.5.2	SL.CCR.2
R.CCR.10	RL.2.7	RL.5.4	

Skills and Competencies

making connections; summarizing; predicting; observing; inferring; interpreting literary descriptions; writing literary descriptions; researching; determining the main theme of a book; recording information in a table

Book Summary

The Curiosities is a lyrical and moving story inspired by people who see the world differently. The main character, Miro, wakes up one morning to find the world isn't quite the way he thought it was. The Curiosities begin to follow Miro, and he is led to discover all the marvels waiting in the shadows where no one else looks. Sometimes though, the Curiosities can make Miro feel alone and invisible in the darkness. In the end, Miro finds connection and acceptance.

The Curiosities is a beautiful celebration of disability, diversity, and pride in who you are.



About the Author

Zana Fraillon was born in Melbourne but spent her early childhood in San Francisco. Zana now lives in Melbourne with her three children, husband, and two dogs. When Zana isn't reading or writing, she likes to explore the museums and hidden passageways scattered across Melbourne. Zana has won and been shortlisted for some of the most prestigious prizes in children's literature.

About the Illustrator

Phil Lesnie is a Sydney-based illustrator of children's books. He works primarily in watercolor. His books have been shortlisted and added to multiple notables lists in Australia.

About this Guide

This teacher guide was created by Becky Noelle, an experienced teacher and writer. Use this guide to help students thoughtfully engage with the book and dig deeper into the important themes of identity and empathy.

Students will be given an opportunity to learn vocabulary, use illustrations to infer, reflect on the literary descriptions used in the text, and to write their own literary descriptions. This guide also includes resources and guidance for students to learn more about Filipino culture and the aswang (monsters from Filipino folklore) represented in the illustrations.

Before Reading

Introduce the Book

Show the class the cover of the book and flip through the pages, so they can get a sense of the illustrations. Ask students the following questions. Additional teacher directions are included in brackets after the questions.

- » What do you notice about the illustrations?
- » How do the illustrations make you feel? (Guide students to consider elements like color, light, reflection, and scale that affect the mood of the illustrations.)
- » What do you think this book might be about?
- » Do you think this is a fiction or a nonfiction book? How do you know? (Use the terms your students are most familiar with. For example, they may be more familiar with “story” versus “informational” book, rather than “fiction” and “nonfiction.”)
- » This book is about what it’s like to be different. Describe a time when you felt like you didn’t fit in. What helped you feel better?



During Reading

Reflect on the Illustrations

As you read the book to the class, pause on certain illustrations, and have students reflect on what they see. Use the questions below that are relevant to the illustration you are discussing.

- » What is this character feeling?
(Guide students to look closely at the person's facial expression and body position to infer.)
- » What are the Curiosities?
- » What do the threads represent?





Learn Vocabulary

This book uses some descriptive words that students may not understand. As you read the book to the class, discuss any words that may be unfamiliar to students. The list below includes a few words used in the book that you may want to define. Students can also add words to a personal or class list as you read the book. Then, they can look up the words after the story is finished.

cartwheeled

nuzzled

tingly

flapping

oddments

trilled

gurgled

perched

vanish

hurtling

prickling

yowling

murmuring

snippets

After Reading

Determine the Theme

Use the following questions as a guide to discuss the themes of the book with students:

- » How did Miro change throughout the story?
- » How did Miro get help?
- » What did Miro discover about the Curiosities?
- » What do you think the main idea of this book is?
- » How can elders and people more experienced than us help us in life?

Look at the final page of the book together (illustration of a house at night, with someone standing on the roof). Discuss the following questions as a class:

- » Who do you think is in this illustration?
- » What does it represent?

Then, compare this illustration to page 9 where the same house has Curiosities on the roof (this page, for reference, begins with the text “Before long, others began to notice the Curiosities too.”). Discuss the following questions as a class:

- » What is different between the two illustrations?
- » Why might the illustrator have included the same house in both pictures?
- » How do these two illustrations show the progress Miro has made in the story?

Examine the Literary Descriptions

The Curiousities uses many descriptive words and phrases that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses. Some are literal, but many are figurative. Explain to students that authors use literary description to help readers fully experience what's happening in the text. Discuss the sample literary descriptions in the table on page 15, using the questions below as a guide. Students can use the table to write down the meaning of each literary description. Discuss one or two sample descriptions as a class and then have students complete the rest independently or with a partner.

- » Is this phrase literal or figurative?
- » What do you think it means?
- » Why might the author have chosen to write it in that way?
- » How does this phrase affect the tone and mood of the book?



Write Your Own Literary Descriptions

Once students have reflected on the descriptive language in the book, have them try writing their own literary descriptions. Remind students that literary descriptions help readers fully experience the thing being described. They use the five senses and emotions to describe a common experience, making it feel special. Have students use the template on page 16 to practice writing literary descriptions. Three example “common experiences” are already listed. Students can come up with three additional common experiences they would like to describe in more depth.

Read the Author and Illustrator Notes

An author and an illustrator note are included at the back of the book. Read the notes together as a class and discuss the following questions.

- » Not all books have an author or illustrator note. Why might they have included them in this book?

Author’s Note

- » Had you heard the term *neurodiversity* before?
- » Why is it important to learn from neurodivergent people?
- » How might embracing and celebrating diversity make us stronger as a society?

Illustrator’s Note

- » What is an oral tradition?
- » Do the aswang remind you of any other stories you’ve heard?

Learn More

Tourette's Syndrome

The author wrote this book because of her child with Tourette's syndrome. Use the following questions and activities to guide your class through an exploration of Tourette's syndrome. Take into consideration the students in your class when discussing the questions. Some students may have the conditions mentioned or other conditions and may not be comfortable discussing or sharing about them.

- » Had you heard of Tourette's syndrome before?
- » Do you know of other neurodiversities that might affect how someone sees the world? (e.g., ADHD, autism, dyslexia, OCD, anxiety)
- » Using online sources and books, research Tourette's syndrome or another form of neurodivergence. A couple websites about Tourette's syndrome are listed below to get you started.

Choice Passion Life: "What Is Tourette Syndrome?" <https://www.cpl.org.au/resources/understanding-disability/what-tourette-syndrome>

Tourettes Action: <https://www.tourettes-action.org.uk/>

- » Find personal stories and descriptions from people with Tourette's syndrome describing what it's like to have Tourette's syndrome.
- » Find stories of famous people who have had Tourette's syndrome or another form of neurodivergence.

- » Examine the world around you (e.g., schools, playgrounds, grocery stores, museums, public transit) and consider whether it is accepting of neurodivergent people (e.g., Are there quiet spaces for someone to go if they feel overwhelmed? Are there opportunities for different ways of learning and expressing oneself?)
- » Create a poster, slide presentation, or video using the information you've learned to teach someone else about neurodiversity.

The Aswang

The illustrator drew the pictures based on monsters from Filipino folklore called the aswang. Use the following questions and activities to guide your class through an exploration of the aswang.

- » Look closely at the illustrations and notice what types of creatures are represented.
- » Read about the aswang online. (The Aswang Project is a useful website with an alphabetical list of aswang, including descriptions and some photos: <https://www.aswangproject.com/creatures-mythical-beings-philippine-folklore-mythology/>.
WARNING: This website includes photos that may not be age-appropriate for your students, so it might be best to use the website as an information source to educate yourself and share the information with your students.)
- » See if you can identify which aswang are shown in the book illustrations. (Students can use the template on page 17 to keep track of the names and descriptions of each aswang from the book. They can also draw what they think that aswang would look like based on the description.)



Filipino Culture

The illustrations in the book place Miro in the Philippines. Use the following questions and activities to learn more about the Filipino culture represented in the book.

- » What do you already know about the Philippines?
- » Look closely at the illustrations and make a list of things you notice. (e.g., Miro sleeping on a mat on the floor, houses on stilts, Miro fishing, Miro's fiddle, a village with straw-roofed houses, the elder and Miro wearing headbands, someone wearing a large hat and picking a plant from the water)
- » Research Filipino culture to see if you can identify each item in your list from the activity above. Some sources are listed below to get you started.

Britannica Online: "Philippines" <https://www.britannica.com/place/Philippines>

Jiminez, Gidget Rocoles. *All About the Philippines: Stories, Songs, Crafts and Games for Kids*. Tuttle Publishing, 2017.

National Geographic Kids Online: "Philippines" <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries/article/philippines>

- » Read other books and resources about Filipino culture, including fairy tales and folk tales. (Students can use the template on page 18 to keep track of their research about the Philippines.)

FairyTalez.com: “Philippine Fairy Tales, Folk Tales and Fables” <https://fairytalez.com/region/philippine/>

Fullarton, Alma. *Hand Over Hand*. Second Story Press, 2017.

Romulo, Liana. *Filipino Children’s Favorite Stories Fables, Myths and Fairy Tales*. Tuttle Publishing, 2020.

- » Find out more about the Quincentennial of the Philippines.

Philippine International Quincentennial Conference: <https://nqc.gov.ph/en/>

- » Create a poster, slide presentation, or video to teach someone else what you learned about the Philippines.



Literary Descriptions in The Curiosities

Literary Description from The Curiosities	Meaning
<p>Example: “As the sun tiptoed across the very tops of the trees.”</p>	<p>The sun is setting, and the last bit of sun is shining on the tops of the trees.</p>
<p>“They showed him how to swim with the stars and tickle the songs from the earth.”</p>	
<p>“A weathered elder... her hand soft on his arm and her world-wrinkled stories gentle in his ear.”</p>	
<p>“The Curiosities trilled and gurgled, pulling at Miro’s arms and flapping at his legs, whispering in his ears so that all about him disappeared into a buzz of cold noise and confusion.”</p>	
<p>“A single thread of knowing, thin and fragile and almost invisible to his fingers, but there.”</p>	
<p>“The ground grew again under Miro’s feet, and the sounds of the earth broke through.”</p>	

Name: _____

Literary Description Writing Practice

Common Experience	My Literary Description
reading a book	
eating your favorite food	
meeting someone new	

The Aswang

Name	My Literary Description	Picture
Tikbalang		
Lampong		
Kapre		
pig		

Name: _____

Filipino Culture Research

Location: _____

Languages: _____

Current Leader: _____

Topic	Notes
History	
Foods	
Clothing	
Folktales	
Other interesting facts	