

The Heart and the Bottle
Written and Illustrated by Oliver Jeffers
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Use the double page spread depicting the empty chair.

Working in pairs, encourage children to explore the picture discussing their responses and working together to make meaning of what they see. Ask them to jot down words and phrases, which reflect their responses to looking.

The aims of this activity are:

- to increase the interaction with and enjoyment of picture books for children of all ages
- to develop children's confidence and vocabulary to respond to what they see – to observe and describe
- to encourage them to build on their previous experience, imagination and understanding to make sense of visual information – to interpret
- to consider a variety of graphic forms and their interaction with a text in order to convey layers of meaning – to appreciate
- to recognise different styles and techniques used and developed by a variety of illustrators – to analyse
- to begin to recognise and appreciate visual metaphor, irony, puns and jokes etc. – to participate

The following questions have been designed to help children to look more closely at the illustrative work of Oliver Jeffers moving from the whole picture to the smallest part and to search for and use all available clues given by the artist to make meaning. Please select and adapt the questions to make them appropriate for your setting.

TELL ME ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATION...

Look at the first page, why has the artist confronted the reader with an expanse of white space?

How does it make you feel?

What is the girl looking at?

How would you describe her body language, is she excited, interested, surprised, shocked?

What is she holding?

What do you think she was going to do with the picture?

How would you describe the illustrative style used for the girl?

How does the depiction of the girl contrast to the detail of the chair?

How would you describe the colour of this chair, is it a warm or a dark colour? Does it look comfortable, would you like to sit on it?

What fabric do you think this chair is covered in, what would it feel like to touch?

If this chair was a person, what kind of person would it be?

What has the illustrator brought into view on the next page?

What objects/characters have remained the same?

What has happened to the child's picture?

Why do you think she has left it abandoned on the floor?

Where is the light coming from in this picture, how would you describe it?

What is the effect of the long shadows?

What is the effect of the light that is bathed over the girl and onto the floor?

How would you describe the mood in this room?

What do you notice about the objects that furnish this room?

How has the illustrator created a sense of calm and stillness?

What is the girl doing?

How long do you think she has been in this position on the floor?

If you were able to see her face what would be her expression?

If you could ask her how she was feeling, what do you think she would say?

How would you describe her body language?

What is the predominant colour in this room?

How has the moonlight changed the colour of the chair?

How has the illustrator created a sense of emptiness?

Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to show the night sky through the window?

How would you describe the stars?

How does the outside world contrast with that of the inside?

How do you think these pictures have been created?

There are no words on the second page, what would you write?

Look again at the left hand page, where are you as you look, are you inside the picture or an outside observer?

Now look at the right hand page, where the walls and floor of the room go right to the edge of the page, how has the illustrator made you feel part of that room?

What is your emotional response to these pages? Do they help you to empathise with the girl?

WRITE IT DOWN

Harvest children's responses and record their descriptions and comments on a flip chart. Are there any aspects of the picture that they find particularly interesting or puzzling? How do these pictures interact and work with the rest of the book?