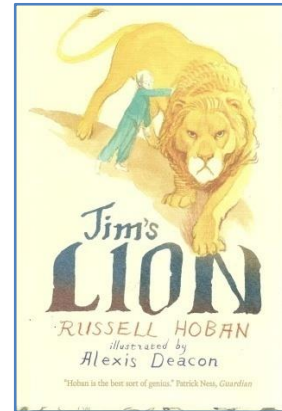


Title: **Jim's Lion**
Illustrator: **Alexis Deacon**
Author: **Russell Hoban**
Publisher: **Walker Books**



First look

- Try to ensure that each shadower has a chance to read the whole book to themselves before working on it with others.
- Look closely at the first pages of pictures and ask the group to point out to each other anything that strikes them as interesting about the artwork.
- Chat in pairs or as a group about whether they enjoyed *Jim's Lion*. Did they understand it? What did they like or dislike and why?

Look again

A first look at *Jim's Lion* may surprise you as it defies simple definition; it is an exceptional book. Neither a graphic novel nor a conventional picturebook yet both word and image carry equal levels of significance in this book. It is possible that more intellectual energy is needed by the reader to comprehend the visual text than to understand the printed word. Take time to look slowly through each illustrated episode with shadowers. Each episode takes place while Jim is asleep in his hospital bed but his sleep is far from being restful. Jim's subconscious is working vigorously on coming to terms with his perilous situation.

- Right from the beginning, Alexis Deacon's illustrations make the lion totally realistic. Unlike the other creatures depicted - that play rugby, do magic tricks, audition for a show – the lion is true to its nature. What has happened to the lion's nature by the end of the book?
- Look at the first set of images from the dedication page to page 13. How do the different events illustrate how Jim is feeling? For example, anyone who has been examined by doctors may feel as though their body is being thrown around like a rugby ball. How might the other images represent his worries about his illness and surgery?
- After Bami, his nurse, explains about having a 'finder', Jim dreams again, but this time only about the lion. Bami gives him a 'don't-run-stone'. What do you think about that? Jim must now face the future on his own. However, on the next page he is anything but alone. He is surrounded first by his collection of soft toy animals and beyond them by the creatures of his dreams. They are all staring at Jim, except one. Which animal is looking out of the page at us- the readers?



- The next two dream sequences are still full of confusion and fear. What situations would make you afraid? Jim dreams of getting lost in a maze, jostled and squashed by massive creatures, being too high, being trapped, snakes. What happens when Jim gets the courage to roar?
- The last sequence of pictures is the most powerful of them all. Let the shadows explain these without too much help. Discuss the use of colour, the choices of setting (rocks, waterfall etc.) and the role played by the lion. Which creature helps both boy and lion at the moment that they are about to drown?

Talk about any visual aspect of the book that interests you, i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. Do these 'extras' to the story contribute to the overall impact of the book.

Interpreting the texts

It is always beneficial, when studying a book, to use tasks which require imaginative response to encourage students to engage fully with the text. The following suggestions may help the group of young readers to become engrossed in the book.

Discussion

Talk about the impact of the story of *Jim's Lion* and the effect of it being divided into words and images throughout. What is the purpose of the two types of text? Did the mixture of written and visual storytelling enhance the experience of the book?

Art

Take note of all the difference positions of the lion (walking, jumping, climbing etc.) portrayed in Alexis Deacon's pictures. Try drawing a lion. Access some images online and make a series of quick sketches of lions in different positions. Choose one sketch to use as the basis for a finished picture.

Writing

Write in the role of Jim. Imagine you had to describe meeting your 'finder'. Use the images on pages 19 – 28, or pages 46 – 50, as the basis of your writing. Focus on the range of feelings Jim will have experienced as well as describing what happens.

Drama, movement and/or music

If there is time for a creative arts response, in pairs or as a group you could choose one visual sequence from the book to retell through movement (drama/dance) or music. A combination of both would be even better.

