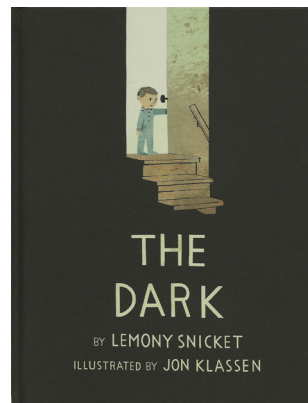


Title: **The Dark**

Author: **Lemony Snicket**

Author/Artist: **Jon Klassen**

Publisher: **Orchard**



First look

* Share the book with the whole group by reading it aloud to them. Give an uninterrupted read, without making comments and holding it up so that everyone can see the pictures as they listen.

* Go through the book again page by page concentrating on the visual text. Look closely at every picture and ask the group to point out to each other anything that strikes them as interesting.

* Chat in pairs or as a group about the first experience of the book. Did you like it? Explain your response. Can you remember being afraid of the dark? Did you have a nightlight in your bedroom?

Did the words and images in *The Dark* increase any feelings you have about being alone in the dark?

Look again

When the group have discussed their first responses, return to the book; look, think and talk more about the artwork.

Colour

Blocks of black dominate most of the book. Dark is the absence of light. What sources of light are used throughout the book? What happens when there is no light?

Space

The darkness takes up most space – in fact, it ‘swallows up’ colours, shapes and lines. Space is filled with nothing but the dark.

Shape & Line

The predominant shape throughout the book is a rectangle but there are other shapes. There are lots of rigid, straight lines because light travels in a straight line. Are there any curves or irregular lines? Do the different sorts of lines relate to anything in particular? For example, could the curved lines be related to feeling safe?

There are no borders to the pictures (i.e. they ‘bleed’ to the edges of the pages). Does that add a sense of vulnerability?

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

The first words of the book tell us that Laszlo is afraid of the dark, but is that true? What would you do if you were awake in bed at night and all light disappeared? Some people would hide under the duvet until morning but Laszlo gets up and does what the dark tells him to do - even though he is frightened. Why do you think he is so brave?

Have the conversation

In this book there are two characters – Laszlo and the dark. John Klassen has personified the dark - that is, he has made it like a person - able to talk, to have ideas and to smile. Work with a friend to read the conversation that starts with the line: **'Laszlo,' the dark said, in the dark.** Just read what they say, not the narration in between. Give them both interesting voices.

Drama

Conscience Alley is a technique used in drama when one character has a dilemma or a problem to overcome. It is sometimes called a *Thought Tunnel*. One person takes the role of a character (in this case, it will be Laszlo) while the rest of the group form an alley by making two lines facing each other. Laszlo walks down the alley while everyone speaks aloud the thoughts he may be having as he ventures out into the dark.



Art

Work on black paper with pale crayons or pastels to illustrate one of the scenes from the story when Laszlo is walking through the house with a torch. It should include Laszlo with his torch, the beam of light and things he can see. Perhaps it is half a chair or part of a bookshelf. Everything that is outside the beam of light, apart from Laszlo, will remain black.