

Title: **This is not my hat**

Author/Illustrator: **Jon Klassen**

Publisher: **Walker Books**

First look

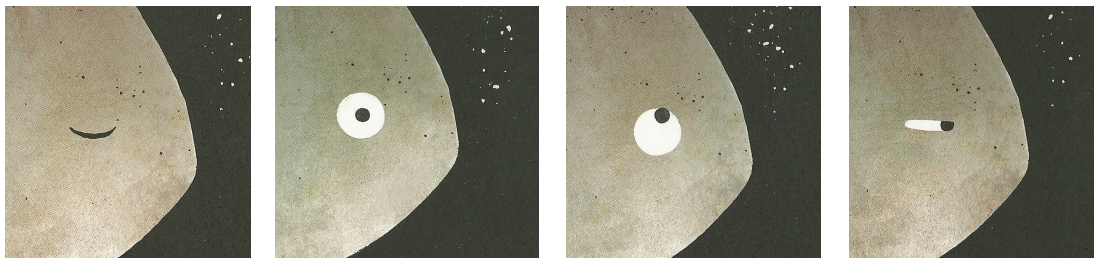
* Share the book with the whole group by reading it aloud to them. Give an uninterrupted read, without making comments and holding it up so that everyone can see the pictures as they listen.

* 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? What did you like or dislike about it and why?

Look again

When the group have discussed their first responses, return to the book; look, think and talk more about the artwork. Jon Klassen (JK) uses computer graphics to produce his illustrations so sometimes it looks as though he has reproduced the same image. His skill, however, is in changing one tiny element of the picture to convey what he wants readers to understand. Look at the following pictures:



What has JK done to show what the big fish is thinking? Even while the Small Fish is telling us that he feels safe, we know what might happen to him. Look at the two pictures of the crab. Why do you think the crab betrays the Small Fish?

Colour

If you had to depict an underwater scene what would be your first choice of colours? Look at the end papers. They show the plants waving in the water but there is hardly a trace of blue or green. All the colours used in the book are somewhere on these pages – even the brighter colours of the crab and the hat – but none are colours usually associated with water, such as turquoise, aquamarine and sea-green. All the colours are muted and total blackness is the backdrop of each underwater scene. There are no borders so the pictures ‘bleed’ to the edges of the page. What effect does that have on the mood of each scene? Does it add a sense of menace?

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.

Debate

Whose side are you on?

Debate the motion: The Small Fish deserved whatever he got.

At the start of the story, the Small Fish - the first person narrator - addresses us directly to let us know that he has stolen a hat. He explains that he does not regret the crime; in fact, he will hide in the plants to avoid retaliation. This fish is dishonest; he has no scruples and little conscience! Alongside the written text, pictures tell the story from a different point of view. We watch as the Big Fish realises what has happened and sets out to retrieve his hat. Often readers identify with first person narrators but should we in this case? Should we be on the side of the thief or his victim?

Art

Design an undersea scene with flowing plants similar to the end papers. Use paints, pencil crayons or pastels to blend a range of colours for the plants. Try to avoid using blue or green.

Drama

The underwater world is silent. The creatures communicate with each other through movement, the expression in their eyes and gestures (which are difficult for fish without hands!). In groups of three, take the characters of either Big Fish, Small Fish or Crab, and try to tell this story in silence through an improvised mime.

Drawing

Using computer graphics, draw your own Small and Big Fish.

Do a sequence of four Big Fish images with only a tiny change in each. Add thought bubbles that show what he is thinking. If you have a suitable program on your computer you can produce digital graphics just like Jon Klassen.

