

**Leon and the Place Between**  
**Written by Angela McAllister and Illustrated by Grahame Baker-Smith**  
**ISBN 978-1-84011-860-5**

*Use the double page spread depicting Leon holding the white rabbit and the crowd cheering.*

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 Grahame Baker-Smith 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 GRAHAME BAKER-SMITH'S ILLUSTRATION...**

What is your initial response to this page?

Is there anything that you notice first of all - how is it significant to the story being told?

How do your eyes travel across the page?

Who do you think is the central character on this page and how has your attention been drawn to him?

How is our attention drawn to Leon? What is Leon engulfed in?

What do you notice about his facial expression, is there anything that puzzles you about it?

Symbols float above a garland around Leon, what do they suggest to you?

Where do the symbols lead your eye?

Who do you think is the source of these symbols and what might they mean?

What is your response to Abdul Kazam?

What do you notice about the shape of his face in contrast to Leon's and those of the other children?

How would you describe the colours on this page?

How would you describe the rabbit Leon is clutching?

Compare the depiction of the rabbit with that of the doves. What do you notice?

How would you describe the style used to draw the characters; realistic, caricature, cartoon, stylised etc?

What is the mood on this page?

How is the sense of magic and mystery created by the illustrator?

How has the illustrator created this?

What is the function of the ladder? Where does it lead your eye?

Why has the illustrator used a 'cut-out' in the page and what does it make you do as a reader?

If you were able to hear sounds from these pages, what would they be? How has the illustrator suggested these sounds? How do they make you feel? In what ways do they help to create the magical atmosphere on the page?

What materials do you think Grahame Baker-Smith has used to achieve these visual effects?

Look at his use of texture, application of colour and use of real materials. What is the impact of using mixed materials and techniques?

Where has he given most attention to detail?

Consider his use of light and shade and the way in which he has used this to focus on the central characters.

Where is the light coming from?

Do you have a sense of the time of day? How is this conveyed?

What is the significance of the stars?

What do you notice about the size of the stars and where they have been applied on the page?

What do you notice about the layout of the text and the different styles of font?  
What do these make you think of? Do they affect the way that you read the words?

In what ways do the words and pictures work together?

## **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?