

Home Learning Branches

The Lost Thing by Shaun Tan

Spelling Investigations

The boy says he is *intrigued* by finding the lost thing. What does *intrigued* mean? What's unusual about the spelling (e.g. – gue)? Can you think of other words that have 'gue' in them (e.g. vague, argue)? Can you sort them into the different ways they are pronounced (i.e. like 'gyoo' or like a hard 'g')

Lots of the words in the book have homophones (words that sound the same but with different spellings and meanings).

Can you find them and identify their homophone and its meaning? *lost, by, saw, sure, hour, knew, current, seem, cool*

How many of the words above can you use in your writing?

Wider Curriculum Links

PSHCE: This book has a theme of *belonging*. What does it mean to belong? Is a sense of belonging more important than physical belongings? Why? Why not?

Geography: This book is set in a dystopian Melbourne, Australia, where the author Shaun Tan lives. Can you think of any other Australian authors or books set in the Southern Hemisphere?

Art/DT – Try creating your own lost thing starting by designing it and then making it, maybe using papier mâché.

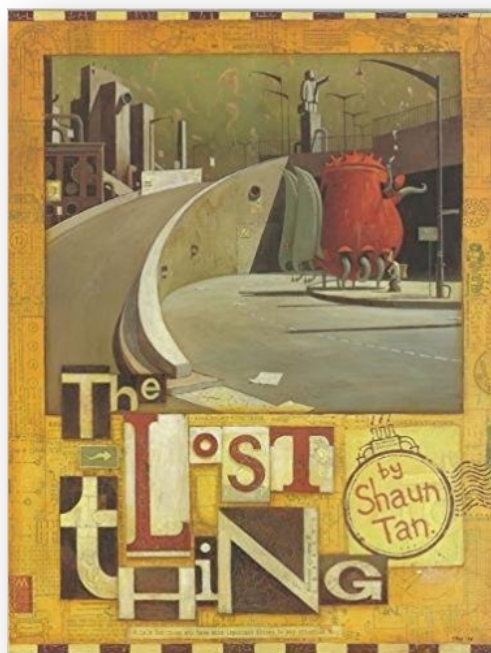
Discussion Questions

Shaun Tan's lost thing was a mixture of a household electrical item and a creature. Can you guess which they were?

Have you ever lost anything that was important to you? Or, have you ever been lost? How did it make you feel? What happened?

Where do you think the lost thing came from? Why was it abandoned? Why do you think no one notices the lost thing? Why do you think they might be too busy going about their day-to-day business?

Why do you think the boy stops noticing lost things at the end of the story?



Key Vocabulary

How many of these words do you know? Can you find the meanings of new words?

belonging
utopia
dystopia
slouched
unconscious
ministry
intrigued
abandoned
empirical
dilemma
profound

Writing Opportunities

1. After finding the lost thing, the boy seeks advice from his friends and family about what to do with the thing... Can you write a letter in role as the boy to a local newspaper's 'Agony Aunt' column asking for advice on what to do?
2. In the story the boy feeds the lost thing Christmas decorations. What else would you need to do to take care of it? Write a guide entitled *Looking After Your Lost Thing* as a guide for other people who might come across one.
3. The boy sees an advert from the *Ministry of Odds and Ends* about what to do with 'unclaimed property'. Can you write your own advert for what to do if you find a lost thing? It could be a poster or a newspaper advert.
4. Can you keep a diary entry or journal for the boy in the story, tracking the main events that happen? Use these headings to guide you: *On the Beach, Asking Around, Feeding Time, Don't Panic, The Search, Utopia*.
5. Design and make your own lost thing that might have existed in Shaun Tan's dystopian world. Now create a 'lost and found' label using a luggage tag including a description of the thing.
6. Can you plan and write your own story based on *The Lost Thing* and using your own lost thing as the main character called *The Abandoned Contraption*?

Further reading

Shaun Tan:

The Arrival by Shaun Tan
The Rabbits by John Marsden & Shaun Tan
The Lost Thing film by Shaun Tan and Andrew Ruhemann
Tales from Outer Suburbia by Shaun Tan

Belonging:

The Boy at the Back of the Class by Onjali Q. Raúf
Belonging by Jeannie Baker
King of the Sky by Nicola Davies
This Moose Belongs to Me by Oliver Jeffers
Utopia:
Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson
Tom's Midnight Garden by Philippa Pearce

Want to find out more? Why not download the full Planning Sequence on our website?



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- 1 The boy in the story needs to ask for help about what to do with the lost thing. Can you think of other words that could be used instead of help in a letter to an Agony Aunt? E.g. *aid, assistance, support, advice*. Place these words in order of their 'strength', e.g. with the most powerful word first and the weakest word last. If you have one, use a colour chart (as shown) to help you organise the vocabulary.

advice
assistance
guidance
support

Use the following modelled writing as a guide for creating your own letter to an agony aunt.

Dear Deirdre,
I desperately need your advice. You see, I've found this abandoned creature by the shore. I'm not sure what to do. I've asked lots of people's assistance but no one knows how to help! I wondered if you could offer any support?
Yours faithfully...

- 2 Think about the different ways we might need to look after our lost thing. Can you think of some different headings to organise your ideas under?

grooming	diet
exercise	habitat

Word Banks

because as since
although whilst
when if

must might can
could should would
will may

Come up with some sentences using conjunctions (such as *because, since* and *as*) to explain your ideas and modals (such as *must, might, can, could* or *should*)

e.g.:

Because it may become unfit, the lost thing must be exercised twice a day.

- 3 Use the following sentence starters to help you plan the questions, commands and statements in your advert...

Are you finding _____?
Do you suffer _____?
Don't _____!
We've got _____.

Use this guide to help you create your advert:

Are you experiencing strange goings on?
Have you discovered bizarre things in your own back garden?
Do not fear!
We've got just the place to store your lost thing.

This could be published as a poster, newspaper advert or perhaps record it as a radio or TV advert!

- 4 Recap on the main events in the story so far and see if you can order the following imaginary subheadings for the story:

The Search	On the beach
Asking Around	Utopia
Don't panic	Feeding Time

Word Bank

intrigued disappointed frustrated baffled desperate concerned
heartbroken confident amazed surprised convinced perplexed

Look at the vocabulary above. Can you organise the words into the section of the story where you might use them? Now write a diary entry or journal for each part of the boy's story using the subheadings for guidance and including descriptions of how he is feeling from the word bank.

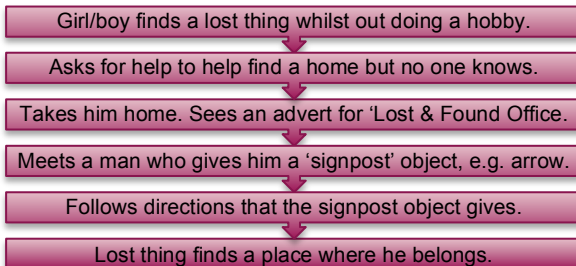
- 5 Lost things are usually made of a combination of a household electrical item and a creature (like a fridge and a lion for example). Can you design and create – perhaps using papier mâché – your own lost thing based on the combination of two items? Use this list to help you decide...

electrical item	creature
boiler	crab
clock	octopus
electric fan	jellyfish
kettle	cat
washing machine	mouse
television	dog
	giraffe



Use a luggage or gift tag to label your lost thing with a description of it. What does it look like? How does it behave? What does it like to eat? Where does it live?

- 6 Look at the plan for the main events that happen in *The Lost Thing*. Can you use a similar sequence of events to create your own story about someone who finds a 'thing' one day? What would you change? Where will they find the thing? What will it look like (why not use your model from session 5)? What will your parents say? Where will it eventually end up? What does its utopia look like?



Can you think of a title for your story? It could be a synonym for 'lost' (*abandoned, misplaced* or *misplaced*) paired with a word for a 'thing' like a 'thingamabob' or a 'whatchamacallit'. Once you've written your story, how about publishing it as a book with illustrations like Shaun Tan's?

