

Teacher's Notes



WORDS THAT TASTE LIKE HOME

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Illustrated by Michelle Pereira

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

primary-aged readers (ages 6-8, grades 1+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - AC9E1LA08
 - AC9E2LA08
 - AC9E1LE02
 - AC9E2LE02

THEMES

- Family
- Language
- Storytelling
- Migrating

SYNOPSIS

Rohan was born into a language as tantalising as the mango pickle his muthassi ('grandmother' in Malayalam) made. It allowed him to understand Muthassi, and share stories with her. But when his family moves to a new country, Rohan leaves Muthassi and has to learn a new language. The more words he learns in his new language, the fewer words he has to communicate with Muthassi.

So, when Rohan's parents tell him they're visiting Muthassi for the holidays, Rohan worries that he'll have nothing to say to her. But as soon as he sees her, familiar words begin to rise to the surface, and, in time, Rohan and Muthassi have no trouble sharing stories with each other again.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Sandhya Parappukkaran left her job as a Food Technologist so she could put her feet up and read. Then she rediscovered her passion for children's books. She writes stories with themes of 'embracing your cultural identity' inspired by her South Indian heritage. Sandhya resides in Brisbane with her husband, three children and a backyard brimming with mango trees, curry leaves and green chillies.

Michelle Pereira is an illustrator who spent her childhood in Nairobi, Kenya and now lives in Melbourne, Australia. She graduated from Monash University with a Bachelor of Communication Design and became a professional illustrator after a somewhat extended, but enjoyable, stint of bar work. She has worked with a range of clients such as Penguin UK, Netflix, the *New York Times* and *Marie Claire*. Her work has won and been shortlisted for numerous awards, including the 2022 CBCA Award for New Illustrator and the 2024 Ena Noël Award.

THEMES

Language

Language can help us fit in because it allows us to communicate with other people and to share parts of our lives with them. Sometimes, when we don't have the words we need to express ourselves, we can feel left out or isolated. How do you think Rohan feels when he doesn't have the words he needs to share how he's feeling with Muthassi? Have you ever felt like this? Discuss other ways that we can share stories and connect with other people in order to overcome language barriers.

Family

Rohan worries that moving away will mean that he has to leave Muthassi and that it will change his relationship with her. What are some of the things he misses about her? Discuss your relationship with grandparents, or with older people in your family. How is this relationship special, or different to the relationship you have with your parents or guardians? What are some of the things you do together that you treasure?

WRITING STYLE

A **simile** is a writing technique that compares one thing with another to make a description more powerful. In the book, Sandhya Parappukkaran uses details from Rohan's life to create similes that also reveal things about his character; for example, 'a language as tantalising as the mango pickle his muthassi made'.

Come up with your own similes to describe your family.

What other writing techniques does the author mention in the book. Find an example for each.

COMPREHENSION

- What does Rohan love doing in the mango grove?
- What are some of the creatures you can see as Rohan works alongside Muthassi?
- Rohan loves the sour taste of mangoes. What other foods can you think of that taste sour?



- What does Muthassi tell Rohan about making pickles?
- How would you describe the relationship between Muthassi and Rohan?
- How does Rohan feel when his parents tell him they're moving away?
- How does he learn a new language?
- What happens to Rohan's first language as he starts to learn his new language? How does this change his relationship with Muthassi?
- What is Rohan's recipe for telling stories to Muthassi?
- How is telling stories similar to making pickles?

WRITING EXERCISE

This book is all about sharing stories with people you love. Write a letter to your favourite person in the world telling them about the best thing that's happened to you this week.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Michelle Pereira uses detailed illustrations to capture all the parts of Rohan's life – even the ones he doesn't have words for. What are some of the things that stand out to you in the illustrations? What do these tell you about Rohan's life?

Why do you think she uses only one colour in some pages? What do you notice about these pages?

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Muthassi shares her mango pickle recipe with Rohan – what are the ingredients? What are the parts of a recipe? Interview someone you love and ask them to share a recipe with you. Write it down and draw a picture to accompany it – share your recipes in a class cookbook.
- Draw ten things that tell the story of your life and arrange them on a page in the style of the illustrations in the book.
- Make a list of any new words you encounter as you read the book and, in your own words, write down what they mean.

RELATED READING

Stay for Dinner

By Sandhya Parappukkaran

Amma's Sari

By Sandhya Parappukkaran

The Boy Who Tried to Shrink His Name

By Sandhya Parappukkaran

The Incredible Shrinking Parents

By Zeno Sworder

The Proudest Blue

By Ibtihaj Muhammad

