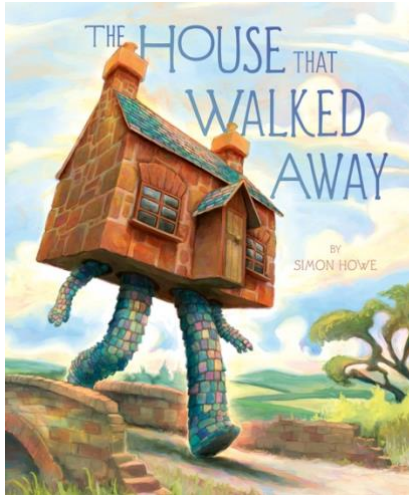


Teacher's Notes



The House That Walked Away

Written and illustrated by Simon Howe

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

These notes may be reproduced for use within schools free of charge but not offered in any part for commercial sale.

Copyright © Hardie Grant Children's Publishing 2026.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

primary-aged readers (ages 4-8, grades Prep+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English, HASS
- General capabilities:
 - Social awareness (Empathy)
 - Social awareness (Community awareness)
 - Critical and creative thinking (generating)
 - Literacy

THEMES

- Home
- Loneliness
- Belonging
- Family

SYNOPSIS

In this simple, surreal and stunning story, a house sets off on a journey to find a home. Dissatisfied and restless, the house wanders from place to place, hopeful but uncertain. Each time it settles down, the comfort is fleeting, and the urge to move on returns.

But everything changes when a curious family notices the house and decides to follow...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Simon Howe is an illustrator and author with a broad appetite for children's literature, animation, storytelling and design. He has worked with many major publishers and his work has been nominated for the Australian Book Industry Awards and the Australian Book Design Awards. His long-time collaboration with ARIA award-winning children's band, Teeny Tiny Stevies, has seen him produce more than a dozen animated music videos for ABC Kids TV. His first authored book, *Shoosh*, was distributed by the Bounty Bag network to over 60,000 children born in Queensland throughout 2022. Simon lives in regional Victoria with his family.

THEMES

What does it mean to really belong? This picture book explores the connected themes of family, home and loneliness as it follows the house's journey to find a place where it belongs. Even though this story is written in simple language, these are complex themes. A significant number of Australians experience social isolation and loneliness. Loneliness can be linked to poor mental and physical health. Anyone can experience loneliness.

Use the following questions to start classroom discussions:

- What are some of the causes of loneliness?
- In the story, even when the house is around people or other houses, it doesn't feel as though it belongs. What do you need to really feel as if you belong somewhere?
- What are some things that we can do to help people in our community who might be experiencing loneliness?

WRITING STYLE

This story has minimal text, making it suitable for a wide age range of readers. The writing is quite literal, describing what the house is doing, rather than what it's feeling. Look at the way the words are spaced on the page, particularly when the house is looking for a home. The isolated text reflects the isolation the house is feeling. Later, when the family has started to follow the house, the sentences become longer and more expressive, and there are more words that describe action and connection.

COMPREHENSION

- Why does the house decide to walk away? What is it looking for?
- What's the difference between a house and a home?
- What are some places the house looks for its new home?
- What does the family do as they walk with the house?
- Why does the family need help?
- Why do you think the house wants to help them?
- What changes do you notice in the house after it meets the family?



- How do you think the family and the house feel when they find each other?

WRITING EXERCISE

This story is told in **third person**, which means that the narrator is describing what happens to the house. In **first person**, we would use the words I/me to tell the story as if we were the house. A first person perspective gives us even more access to a character's thoughts and feelings.

Rewrite the first scene of the story as if you are the house. What are you thinking and feeling the day you decide to get up and walk away?

ILLUSTRATION STYLE


Simon Howe's whimsical illustrations draw out the emotion of this story. Without turning the house into a caricature, the illustrations give the house a personality which allows the reader to emotionally connect with its journey. Invite students to consider the following question:

- What features has the illustrator given the house to make it seem alive?

Howe also uses colour to reflect the house's emotional journey. Notice how the backgrounds become darker as loneliness sets in. Warm yellows and oranges give way to bleak grey. When the house meets the family, the colours start to lift again, first a deep purple with just a hint of brightness, before turning grey once more as the weather turns bad. The spark of colour in this scene comes from inside the house – a streak of orange light peeping out from the doorway to welcome the family inside. After the family and the house have chosen to stay with each other, colour returns to the page.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- What's the difference between a house and a home? Draw a big outline of your house on a piece of paper. Fill the house with things that make it a home (you might illustrate it, or use photographs and magazine cut-outs, or even paste small objects onto the page). Share your home with a partner and discuss the similarities and differences between the two.
- Think of a journey that you've been on. What was the purpose of your journey? Who went with you? How did you feel as you were travelling? Draw a map of your journey and make a note of any significant events that happened along the way.
- Choose a colour for each of the following emotions – happy, sad, lonely, angry. Draw the same picture in each of the boxes below but use colour to change the emotion of each image.



RELATED READING

Lost and Found

By Shaun Tan

Boy and the Elephant

By Freya Blackwood

Once I was a Giant

By Zeno Swords

My Place

By Nadia Wheatley

