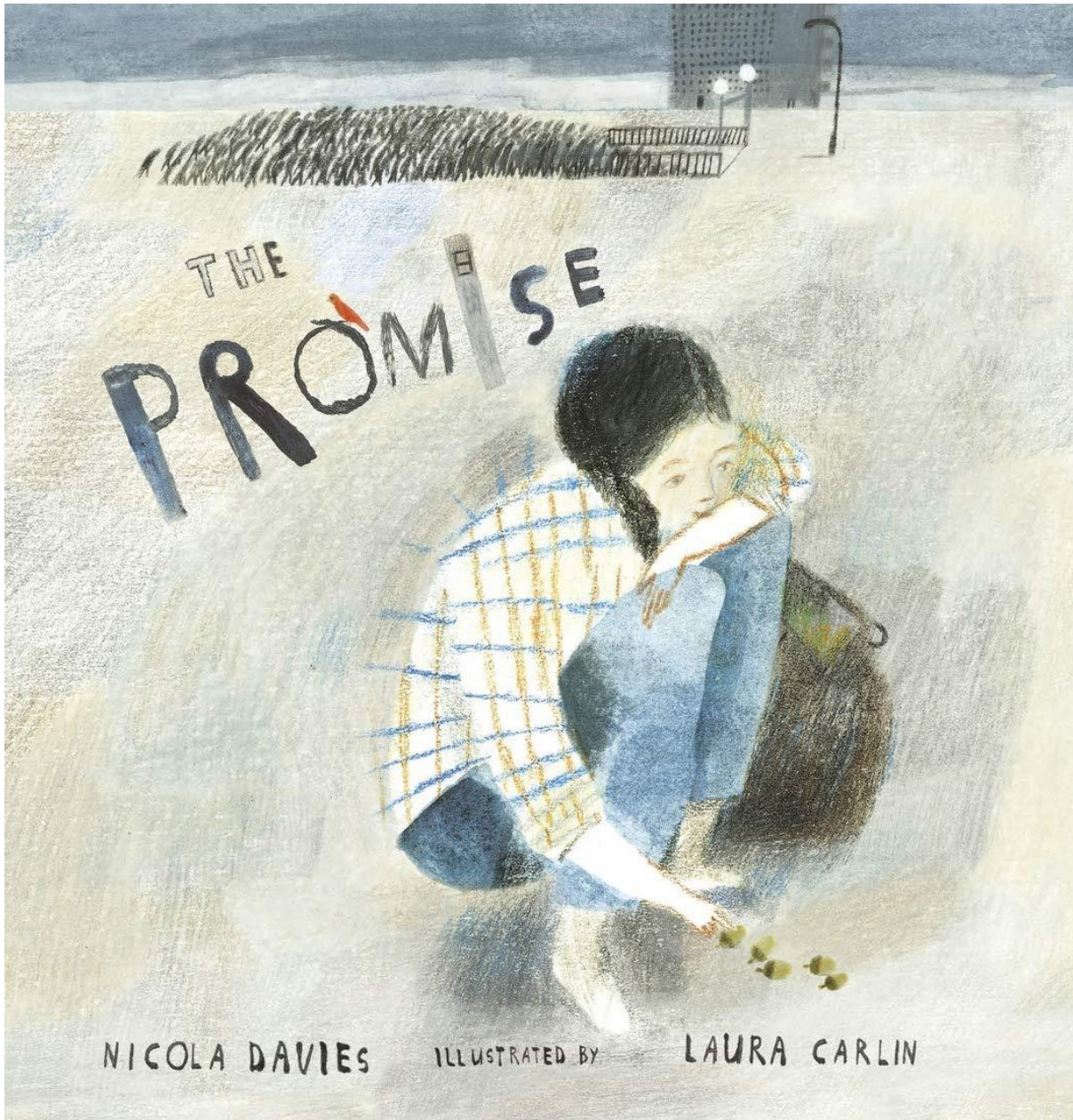


# Picturebook lesson series

## The Promise

Lesson plan by Gail Ellis and  
Tatia Gruenbaum





Text & Illustrations © 2014 Nicola Davies

Illustrations © 2014 Laura Carlin

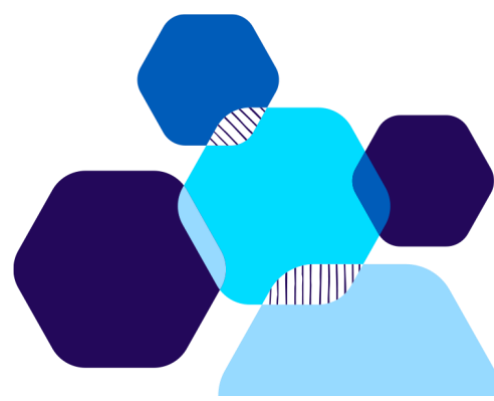
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<https://www.walker.co.uk/The-Promise-9781406355598.aspx>

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# Teaching Notes

<b>Part A</b>	<b>Picturebook information</b>	Part A provides general information about the picturebook such as the publisher's synopsis and background about the authors / illustrators and the teacher is invited to share selected information with their pupils as appropriate.
<b>Part B</b>	<b>Lesson information</b>	Part B provides lesson information about age/level suitability, lesson objectives, cross-curricular links and links to children's rights and world-event days. Part B also includes an A-Z or vocabulary for each picturebook.  Teachers are encouraged to share the lesson objectives with their pupils to make learning explicit and purposeful.
<b>Part C</b>	<b>Lesson plan</b> 1: Exploring the front and back covers. 2: Meet the author. 3: Listen, enjoy and respond. 4: Eliciting learners' voices. 5: My reflection activity.	Part C comprises 5 key steps and pupils are invited to participate by responding to questions with their own personal interpretations and opinions. To add a metacognitive dimension in order to make learning visible, pupils are encouraged to systematically reflect on, review and evaluate their own learning and decide on their personal action. This reflection also inspires pupils to transfer their newly acquired awareness and knowledge from inside the classroom to informed involvement with the world outside the classroom.
<b>Part D</b>	<b>Extra activities</b>	Part D provides suggestions for supplementary activities and links to additional resources. Pupils are invited to choose from the extra activities according to their needs and interests.



The lessons are informed by a story-based methodology (Ellis and Brewster, 1991; 2014) and a story-based e-methodology for video picturebook read-alouds (Ellis and Gruenbaum, 2023). In addition, the lessons are embedded in a children's rights perspective (Ellis, 2019; 2021) and comprises three categories: **Protection**, **Provision**, and **Participation**. This threefold categorisation is referred to as the '3Ps' which we have applied to our picturebook-based English Language Teaching (ELT) lessons to create a pedagogical framework (see below). This framework enables teachers to create a relationship of shared control with their pupils and allows pupils to exercise their agency and participate fully in their own learning. Our picturebook choices link to six Articles from the UNCRC as well as Article 12 which is given prominence throughout the lessons. This article promotes listening to children's views and opinions and taking them into account. The following table offers an outline of the '3Ps' in picturebook-based ELT:

Protection	Provision	Participation
<p>Teachers set up a safe space in a positive, inclusive classroom climate where all pupils are respected and learn with and from each other. Pupils may encounter social issues for the first time in the classroom which provides a window into the lives of people different to their own or may offer children who are experiencing difficult circumstances the opportunity to understand that they are not alone. It is especially important, therefore, to ensure a learning environment conducive to exploring such topics and to encourage empathy and understanding.</p>	<p>The lesson sets provide a structured plan and clear guidelines for pupils to engage with an authentic piece of children's literature, a picturebook, in which both the words and the pictures create meaning. Individual differences in primary and lower secondary pupils are especially marked, but picturebooks can be interpreted on many levels and thus satisfy pupils of different ages and at different points in their English language learning. The lessons provide activities which teachers can select according to the age, language level and interests of the pupils in their classes and provide pupils with stimulating activities to develop their critical thinking as well as their English language skills.</p>	<p>The lessons are structured around four parts which facilitate pupils' agency and active participation. The activities offer opportunities for decision-making and respect pupils' right to an opinion. In return, listening to pupils' views, offers teachers the opportunity to discover pupils' feelings and lived experiences.</p>



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As previously mentioned, each picturebook is linked to Articles from the UNCRC in order to raise pupils' awareness and understanding of the convention and of their rights and responsibilities.

Each lesson provides a children's rights activity which invites pupils to consider potential action they can take.

We suggest you provide pupils with a child-friendly copy of the UNCRC in English or their own language(s). The themes represented in our picturebooks also link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) "No poverty" (#1) and "Zero Hunger" (#2).

We would like to point out that it is not necessary to complete every activity and / or include all the vocabulary and expressions.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt the lessons to suit the needs of their learners. However, we recommend completing the book-cover-based activities to encourage pupils to make predictions about the story from the title and cover illustrations, and to appreciate the picturebook's different features.

## Learning objectives

The general learning objectives for each lesson are to empower pupils to:

- engage with social issues as presented through picturebooks to broaden their outlook of marginalised groups in society.
- develop English language skills.
- develop critical thinking.
- raise awareness and understanding of the UNCRC and of their rights and responsibilities.
- understand the importance of individuals and the community showing kindness.
- make responsible decisions when taking action in order to make a difference.



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## Bias-free language recommendations

In keeping with the category of ‘protection’, we advise teachers to adopt and encourage bias-free language (see glossary below, adapted from Bias-Free Language APA) in the classroom when exploring the social issues presented through the picturebook.

Offensive terms	Person-respecting terms
Poor	People with an income just above or below the poverty line.
Homeless	People experiencing homelessness (ie not having stable, safe and adequate housing, nor the means and ability of obtaining it).
Ghetto / inner-city child	People living in subsidised housing in a city area.
Welfare reliant	People who receive benefits and financial support from the state.
School drop-out	People who did not complete a full education.
Undocumented	People who are living and working without official papers (passports, ID cards, visa, etc.).
Illegal immigrant	People who have entered a country without official papers.



## Part A: Picturebook information

<b>Title</b>	The Promise	<b>Publisher</b>	Candlewick Press
<b>Author</b>	Nicola Davies	<b>ISBN</b>	9780763693039
<b>Illustrator</b>	Laura Carlin	<b>Date of publication</b>	2013

<b>Illustrative style</b>	A gradual shift from black, white and grey tones of the cold, dark city to bright colours representing growth and nature. The use of colour communicates the messages found in the words and conveys the importance of our relationship with nature. A combination of watercolour, pastel and crayon.
<b>Publisher's synopsis</b>	On a mean street in a mean, broken city, a young girl tries to snatch an old woman's bag. But the frail old woman says the thief can't have it without giving something in return: the promise. It is the beginning of a journey that will change the girl's life — and a chance to change the world, for good.
<b>Awards &amp; Nominations</b>	Winner of the 2014 English Association Picture Book award for best fiction. Green Earth Book Award 2015
<b>Behind the book</b>	Laura Carlin talks about illustrating 'The Promise' by Nicola Davies. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HjRgG4M3P8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-HjRgG4M3P8</a> Nicola Davies discusses 'The Promise' <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjtaB2ij2PQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjtaB2ij2PQ</a>



## Part B: Overview (general)

<b>Level</b>	Secondary
<b>Lesson Objectives</b>	<p>The general learning objectives for each lesson are to empower pupils to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• engage with social issues as presented through picturebooks to broaden their outlook of marginalised groups in society</li><li>• develop English language skills</li><li>• develop critical thinking</li><li>• raise awareness and understanding of the UNCRC and of their rights and responsibilities</li><li>• understand the importance of individuals and the community showing kindness</li><li>• make responsible decisions when taking action in order to make a difference.</li></ul>
<b>Cross-curricular links</b>	Science / environment, Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education, Global citizenship
<b>Children's Rights</b>	19. Protection from violence 24. Health, water, food, environment 26. Social and economic help 27. Food, clothing, a safe home 40. Children who break the law
<b>World event days</b>	28 January: Global Community Engagement Day 12 August: World Planting Day





## Part B: A-Z Vocabulary & Expressions

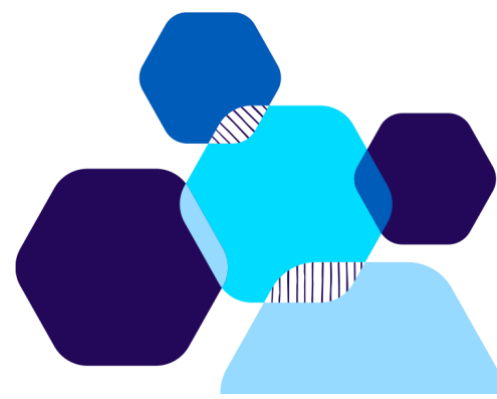
<b>a</b>	to be / feel abandoned acorn alley to be / feel alone	<b>j</b>		<b>s</b>	street to steal, stealing to snatch shoots sad
<b>b</b>	broken bargain	<b>k</b>		<b>t</b>	thief theft threat
<b>c</b>		<b>l</b>	to be / feel lonely	<b>u</b>	ugly to understand
<b>d</b>	dark	<b>m</b>	mean	<b>v</b>	victim
<b>e</b>	to end up in (+place)	<b>n</b>		<b>w</b>	
<b>f</b>	forest frail	<b>o</b>		<b>x</b>	
<b>g</b>		<b>p</b>	to plant to promise to make/keep a promise	<b>y</b>	youth
<b>h</b>	hard	<b>q</b>		<b>z</b>	
<b>i</b>		<b>r</b>			



## Part C | Step 1: Exploring the front and back covers

Front cover (FC)	Back cover (BC)
	

<b>Read, define and personalise</b>	FC: Look at the title and define the word 'promise'. What does it mean to make and keep a promise? Have you made any promises recently?
<b>Read and predict</b>	BC: Read the blurb on the back cover. Why do you think a young person would steal from an old lady? What do you think could be in the bag the young thief snatches from the old lady?
<b>Describe and predict</b>	FC: Describe what you see on the front cover? The setting, the girl, the people, etc.
<b>Notice and predict</b>	FC: Do you think the girl on the front cover is the thief? What is in the bag the girl snatched from the old lady? How do you think the girl is feeling? What do you notice about the title? What do you think the red bird represents?
<b>Predict</b>	FC: What do you think the girl is going to do with the acorns? What do you think may change forever?
<b>Activate your vocabulary</b>	Together with your classmates, think of words related to a city under the following headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings</li> <li>• Transport</li> </ul>
<b>Translanguage</b>	What is the word for 'acorn' in your language(s)?



## Part C: Step 2 – Meet the author: Nicola Davies

Watch the Video: <https://vimeo.com/73026206>

## Part C: Step 3 – Listen, enjoy and respond

1. How is the city described in 'The Promise'.
2. How are the people in the city described?
3. What do you think the old lady meant when she said, "If you promise to plant them, I'll let go?" Why didn't the girl care what she meant?
4. How did you feel when the girl discovered acorns in the bag? What was the promise the girl had made? Why do you think she felt her heart was changed?
5. Why do you think the girl felt lucky and rich? What do you think is meant by a 'leafy vision'?
6. Where did the girl begin planting the acorns?
7. Why did nothing change at first?
8. What did the people start doing once they saw the trees growing?
9. What impact did the growing trees have on the people and the city? How are they transformed?
10. What did the girl do next?
11. Why did the girl let the young thief steal her sack of acorns? How old do you think the girl is at the end of the story?



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## Part C | Step 4 – Eliciting children’s voices

1. How did ‘The Promise’ (the words and the pictures) make you feel? Why?
2. What do you think are the main messages in ‘The Promise’?
3. Who is telling the story? How would you continue the story?
4. Has ‘The Promise’ inspired you to take any action to improve the environment? If yes, how?
5. Tell your partner about a promise you would like to make and keep.
6. How do the illustrations contribute to the narrative? Think about colour, line, shape and space on each page.

### **Children’s rights activity:**

How can you help protect children from youth crime?



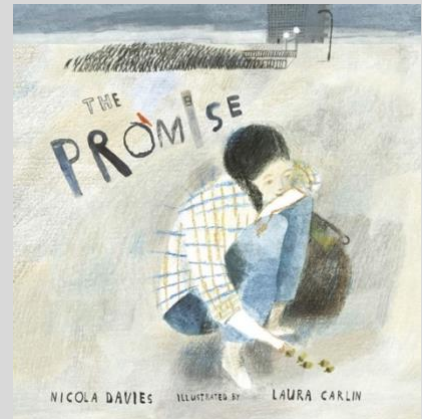
## Part C | Step 5 – My reflection activity

### Part C: My Reflection Activity

#### The Promise

By Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin

Walker Books 2013



#### Personal response

- What did I enjoy most about 'The Promise'?
- What is my favourite illustration?
- How did 'The Promise' make me feel?
- Write down 5 new words or expressions I have learnt from 'The Promise'.

#### Personal evaluation

Colour the jars to show how well I worked:  
 5 jars = I am pleased with my effort and progress.  
 3 jars = I am quite pleased with my effort and progress but could do better.  
 1 jar = I need to concentrate and work harder.



#### Personal action

- What personal action am I going to take to care for the environment?
- What personal action am I going to take to improve my English language learning?



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## Part D: Extra Activities

1. Research: Why are trees important to the environment? How old must an oak tree be to produce acorns? How many seeds are there in an acorn?
2. Planting Acorns: Watch the film to find out how to plant acorns:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K-trSFUMZ-c>

