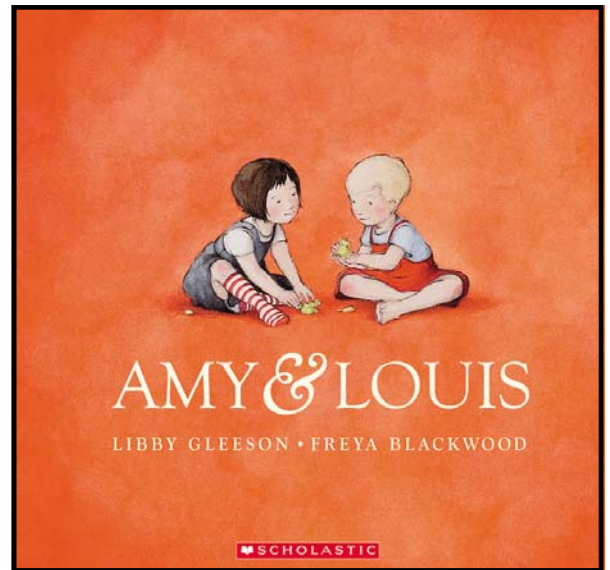


TEACHER'S BOOK NOTES

Amy & Louis

Written by Libby Gleeson & Illustrated by Freya Blackwood



Synopsis

Amy and Louis are best friends. They live next door to each other. When they want to play they call to each other across the room, across the yard or across the fence using a special word Amy's mother taught her - Coo-ee. The games they play are richly imaginative. They build castles out of cardboard and see magical creatures in the clouds. Then one day Amy's family moves house, not just to another suburb but to a city on the other side of the world. They miss each other and the games they shared. Louis thinks that if he calls loudly enough Amy will hear him but his parents tell him that Amy is too far away. Only his grandmother encourages him to try and their special connection is re-established.

Biography

Libby Gleeson is an award-winning writer of novels and picture books for young readers. She grew up in country New South Wales as part of a family of six children and has three daughters of her own. Not surprisingly family and relationships are very important in her stories. She has won numerous awards including the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year in 1997 and Picture Book of the Year in 2002. The *Great Bear* won the prestigious Bologna Ragazzi award in 2000, the first time for an Australian title. Libby trained as a teacher but gave it up to travel and write. She is a regular contributor to academic courses and national conferences. She is actively involved in writers' organisations and chaired the Australian Society of Authors, 1999-2001.

For more information about Libby visit her website www.libbygleeson.com.au or see the author/illustrator section at www.scholastic.com.au

Freya Blackwood grew up in Orange in the central west of New South Wales. As a young girl she was interested in illustrating stories. She studied for a Bachelor of

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Design at the University of Technology in Sydney, focusing on film and animation. She worked as a prosthetic painter on the film of Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy and then returned to her childhood interest, illustrating poems and stories for educational publications. Scholastic Press recognised her talent and offered her the opportunity to work on her first picture book, *Two Summers* (2003), written by John Heffernan, for which she won the prestigious Crichton Award. She has also illustrated two Banjo Patterson works *The Man from Snowy River* (2004) and *Waltzing Matilda* (2006). More books are planned.

For more details see the author/illustrator section at www.scholastic.com.au

Author/Illustrator Inspiration

The idea for the story came to Libby from 'the memory of a little boy at my daughter's preschool who called longingly to his departed friend'. When Louis asks his parents if Amy will be able to hear him if he calls really loudly they are both busy - Mum fixing the car; Dad reading the paper. They give him very practical answers. It is his grandmother who leaves open the possibility of success and encourages him to try. What does this say about the kind of relationships grandparents have with their grandchildren? Libby believes that grandparents can provide 'lots of time and nurturing that follow through on kids' own dreams and fantasies ... they can be really special people for little kids. I like the portrayal of this grandmother - nothing stereotyped about her!'

Freya's illustrations also have their genesis in real places. 'The area where Amy and Louis live is based on Annandale in Sydney ... I thought the houses needed to be cosy and comfortably close to each other ... I just made up the aerial views. I wanted the suburb to be near the sea so the clouds didn't have too far to go! The city that Amy moves to was based on New York ... it's all a little warped and out of scale to show the towering height of the city.'

Freya used watercolour and charcoal for the illustrations. 'The use of charcoal was a new thing for me ... but it gives the drawings contrast'. She found drawing very young children the most challenging aspect of illustrating this story. 'When I first started designing Amy and Louis they looked about twelve years old. With some encouragement I managed to get them looking younger and younger ... The proportions of children are so different to those of adults and so different at each age level.'

The urge to draw and paint started early for Freya. 'There's a good collection of books I illustrated while in primary school, even some from high school'. But it wasn't until 2001 that she started to put a portfolio together with illustrating books in mind. Odd jobs doing single illustrations and book covers led to her first book *Two Summers*. 'I started that in late 2002, which is also when I started drawing full-time.'

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Ideas for classroom activities

Before you read the story

- Do you have a friend who lives near you?
- What kind of games do you like to play together?
- If your best friend went to live in another city how would you feel?
- Does anyone have a friend who has gone to live somewhere else?
- Do you still see that friend sometimes?

While you listen to the story

This is a story about two good friends, Amy and Louis. They like to spend lots of time together. What are some of the things they like to do together? What special way do they have of calling each other?

After reading the story

- Look at the picture of Amy and Louis lying on the grass looking at the clouds. How many colours can you see?
- Now look at the picture of the van leaving Amy's house the day she moved away. How many colours can you see?
- Are there more colours in the picture of the city Amy goes to live in? What is the weather like there? What colour is the sky?
- Look at the last picture of Amy after she has had her dream of Louis. What colour is the sky? What can you see in the sky?
- In the picture of Louis calling Amy: What is the man next door doing? Can you find someone - digging the garden? - walking their dog? - painting their house? - sitting on the grass with a friend?
- What shapes does Louis see in the clouds after he has called to Amy?

Extension Activities

On a day with clouds in the sky take some art materials outside and see what shapes you can see and try to draw them. While you are outside split into two groups and try calling to each other using Amy and Louis's special call - *Coo-ee*.