

These notes are for:

- Ages 4-8
- Preschool-3

Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Art
- Science & Technology
- Math

Example of:

- Picture Book
- Narrative Text
- Cumulative Text

Experience of:

- Visual literacy
- Literary techniques:
anthropomorphism, alliteration

Values addressed:

- Doing Your Best
- Respect
- Understanding, Tolerance & Inclusion
- Responsibility

Themes:

- Creation & Philosophy
- Artistic Process
- Creativity & Innovation
- Individuality & Identity

*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

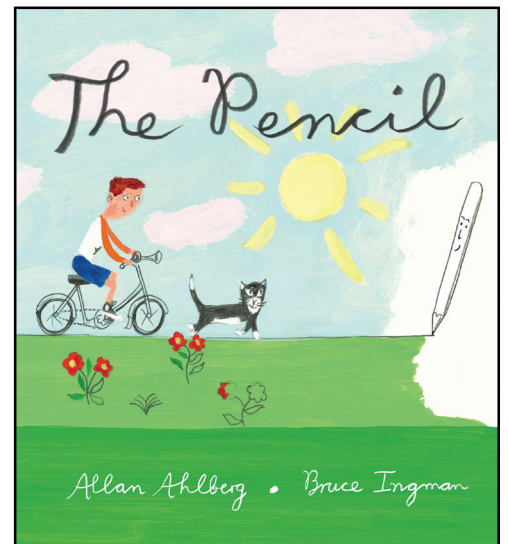
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The Pencil - Overview

The Pencil (pbk)

By: Allan Ahlberg
Illustrated by: Bruce Ingman
ISBN: 978-0-7636-3894-8
\$16.99 (20.00 CAN)
No. of Pages: 48



Outline:

Once there was a pencil, a lonely little pencil, and nothing else. Then one day that little pencil made a move, shivered slightly, quivered somewhat ... and began to draw. The pencil draws an entire world, and then a paintbrush to color it. But not everyone is happy, so the pencil draws an eraser. But the eraser erases too much... where will it stop?

The Pencil is a cumulative tale about creation, individuality and the importance of having an identity. Told in Allan Ahlberg's fun, humorous style and accompanied by Bruce Ingman's simple yet emotive illustrations, this is a picture book that can be used with a diverse age group.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Allan Ahlberg is one of the most acclaimed and successful authors of children's books today. His popular titles (many of which were illustrated by his late wife, Janet Ahlberg) include *Each Peach Pear Plum*, *Peepo!* and *The Jolly Postman*, which, with its sequels, has sold over five million copies worldwide. He has won numerous awards for his books including, the Kurt Maschler Award in 1986, The Children's Book Award in 1987, the Blue Peter Book Award 2001, and The Children's Book Award: Books for Young Children 2002.

After teaching in several colleges of art and illustrating for magazines such as *Vogue*, **Bruce Ingman's** first book, *When Martha's Away*, was published in 1995 to huge critical acclaim. Not only was his book honoured with the National Art Library Award, but Bruce was presented with the prestigious Mother Goose Award as the most exciting British newcomer to children's picture books. Since then, he has written and illustrated several more children's books, including *The Runaway Dinner* and *Previously*, written by Allan Ahlberg.

How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

Praise for Allan Ahlberg's and Bruce Ingman's previous picture books:

The Runaway Dinner

"This fast-paced yarn is full of kooky charm." — *School Library Journal*

"A comic treat. . . Sure-to-be a runaway favorite." — *Publishers Weekly*

"His tone is both confiding and arch, inviting children into the joke, in the way a magician might ask for suspended disbelief with a wink. And opting for feeling over form, the illustrations of Bruce Ingman are the perfect accompaniment." — *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

"Ahlberg takes simple, mundane events and turns them into a whimsical story that is both entertaining and amusing . . . the conclusion has elements of the predictable and unpredictable making it a useful model for writing narrative and circular stories." — *SCAN*.

Previously

"This book is written very skillfully and would be a great book to use to inspire young students to write." — *Library Media Connection*

"*Previously* lends itself to creative storytelling and the book is bound to find favour with teachers." — *The Bookseller*.

"Executed with Ahlberg's brilliant gift for words and lively sense of fun." — *Junior*.

Before Reading the Text Activities:

- View the cover and title. What do you think the story is about? What clues are there?
- View the endpapers. What further information do they give you about the story?
- View the title page. In many books the story starts after the title. In this book it starts before. Why do you think the title page has been placed here?

Writing Activities:

- Read blurbs from books in the classroom/library. What is purpose of the blurb? Discuss.
Based on the information you have gathered from the cover, endpapers and title page, write a brief blurb for *The Pencil*.
After reading *The Pencil*, compare your ideas to the actual story:
How do your ideas compare?
Do think you need to change your blurb?
Do you think the cover, title page and endpapers were effective in conveying what the story was about?
- There are many characters that appear in this story. Using Table 1. in these notes, cut out the different character names (you may like to add some more).
Create a list by ordering the character names sequentially, in the order that they appear in the book.
Re-order the list so that the characters are in order of what you think their importance to the story is. Think about these questions:
What makes something a character?
Is it essential that the most important characters appear early in the story?
- Create a list of 10 inanimate objects from around your home. Give each of these objects a name. Think about why certain names suit certain objects.

Write a scene where two of these objects interact e.g. the sponge and the tap, the knife and the fork, the chair and the table. It can be as realistic or fantastical as you like.
- Create a character profile for the pencil, the eraser and the paintbrush. You will need to make up some of the facts, but some you can get from the book. What age do you think they would be? What would be their likes and dislikes? Where and when were they born?
- Using the reviews listed above as examples, write your own brief review of *The Pencil*.

When you have finished, discuss your lists with the class.

Reading Activities:

- Authors and illustrators need to collaborate to create a picture book. Does the story change if:
You only read the text?
You only view the pictures?
How do the text and the pictures help to tell the story together?
- Research the definitions of the word, antagonist and protagonist. In *The Pencil*, who is the antagonist and who is the protagonist?
- Research the definition of the word “anthropomorphism”. Find other books that have examples of this.

Listening and Speaking Activities:

- The characters in the book start complaining about what they have;

e.g. “This hat looks silly”, “My ears are too big”.

To fix this the pencil creates an eraser. This leads to the characters being erased out.

Should these characters have complained about their appearance?

What does this say about being thankful for what we have? Discuss.

- *The Pencil* shows the creative process of the artist. Drawing, painting, erasing, drawing and painting again. What does this tell us about making something? Is it important to try something again when it doesn't work the first time around?

- Many of the names in *The Pencil* are alliterated. Find examples of these.
- View the kitchen scene. Many of the objects which are not major characters e.g. the cuckoo clock, have been given names on the endpapers. Make a list matching the names to these objects.
- Read *The Pencil*, *Previously* and *The Runaway Dinner*. Discuss which book you thought was the best and why. Using a table, list the similarities and differences between these three books. Look at characters, artistic style, layout, length of text, humor, voice, tone etc.

- What's in a name? Many of the characters in this story want a name. Discuss why it is important to have a name. How does our perspective on something change when it has a name?
- There is only one character in the book that isn't given a name. Which character is this? Discuss the following questions in relation to this topic. What does this say about where names come from? Can we name ourselves?
- Make a brief presentation to the class on where your name comes from. Ask your parents/guardian why you have your particular name and what it means to them. Does your name have a particular meaning in a culture or language? Do you like your name?
- Debate/Discussion Topics:
You should be happy with what you have.
It is important to have self-control.
It is our names that make us different.

Art Activities

- Banjo, Bruce and Mildred don't want to eat their food because it is black and white, so the pencil draws a paintbrush to color it in. Discuss the importance of color in our lives:
How does color inform us? e.g. warnings.
Do you think that Banjo, Bruce and Mildred would have been happy if their food was not its natural colors?
- Bring in a picture from home or find one on the internet of a household object. Cut out this object and draw/paint/collage human characteristics onto it. You might give it legs, a face, hair etc. Using this image create a poster introducing your new character to the class. Include the character's name.

Science & Technology

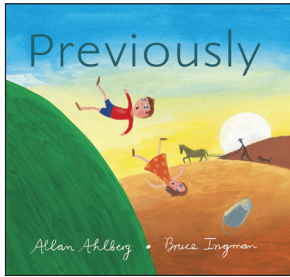
- What is the difference between a living thing and an inanimate object?

Math

- The events in *The Pencil* happen over one day. Using visual cues from the book e.g. the sun, clock, shadows, mealtimes, plot the major events in the book to the hours of the day.

Table 1.

Polly	Uncle Charlie
The Grandpas	The Pencil
The Rubber #1	The Grandmas
The Paintbrush	Banjo
The Cousins	Sebastian
The Rubber #2	Bruce
Mrs	Mr
Mildred	Elsie



Previously
by Allan Ahlberg
Illus. by Bruce Ingman
PB: 978-0-7636-5304-0
\$6.99 (\$8.00 CAN)

Picture Book
Fractured Fairytales
Creation
Word Sequencing
Visual Literacy

- Before reading this book explain to young children the meaning of the word 'previously'. It may help to provide them with an example of what they have been doing for the last hour.
- Ask students to identify the title, author, illustrator and publisher.
- Read the blurb with students. What is the purpose of a blurb? How does this blurb 'sell the book'? What is different about this blurb and how does this give you an idea of how the story might be written? Ask students to re-write the blurb in a more standard and grammatically correct order.
- Read this story with students. Ask them to identify the different nursery story/fairy tale characters. What is added to these stories and what is taken away? What happens so that each story connects?
- On each page there is a clue to the story that is about to come. Ask students to identify on each page how the illustrator has provided this clue.
- How is the sequence of events different in this book to most? The story appears to go backwards. Ask students to re-write some of the text so that the sequence of events is going the other way and reflects more conventional storytelling.
- Ask students to write about their day modelling the style of *Previously* i.e. going backwards. Students should use the word 'previously' to help identify the structure of their story.
- Ask students, in groups, to re-write a classic nursery story, fairytale or favourite picture book modelling the writing style in *Previously*.
- There are many fractured fairytales and nursery stories/rhymes in this book. How have they been changed/adapted? Where do these tales originally come from? Ask students to research classic tales and their origins.
- There are some excellent examples of descriptive language in this story. Students can make their own list as they read through the story or define the following words as they appear: bothered, hurtling, desperate, argumentative, sorrowful, cheerful, slaving.
- Ask students to write a 'previously' story about their own life. This could go back far enough to include their own family history e.g. where they come from, where they're family comes from.
- Does everything come from somewhere? Ask students to research the history of an object e.g. a book – previously it was paper, which was previously a tree, which was previously a seed . . .
- View the page with all the babies on it. Can students match the babies to the characters in the book? Ask students to bring a baby picture of themselves to class. Have a guessing competition about which picture belongs to which student.
- View the first opening spread of goldilocks. She is depicted three times on this page. Ask students to draw their own picture of a character doing three sequential actions, but in the same setting e.g. draw their bedroom – tidying their bedroom, getting dressed, going to sleep.
- View the final illustrated page. What are the different seasons/natural elements that are identified? How do these things help you grow? Ask students to make a list of the things that help us grow e.g. the foods we should eat. What helps plants grow? What helps other animals grow?
- There are characters in *Previously*, *The Runaway Dinner* and *The Pencil* that re-occur. Can students identify who they are? e.g. Mildred the cat, the sausage. Some only occur in two books e.g. the salt-shaker and the tomato. Why do they think these characters re-appear?



The Runaway Dinner
by Allan Ahlberg
Illus. by Bruce Ingman
PB: 978-0-7636-3893-1
\$6.99 (\$8.00 CAN)

Picture Book
Storytelling
Cumulative Tale
Humor
Food

- Read the blurb for *The Runaway Dinner*. This sentence rhymes. What does this sentence tell you about the book? Do you think this is going to be a serious book or a fun book? Can students think of any other words that rhyme with dinner?
- What are all the characters doing on the title page? They look as though they are exercising. Ask students what exercises these characters are doing? Why would they be exercising? How might this help them run?
- What do you have for your dinner? Do you have the same thing every night? Ask students these questions then ask them to report on what they had for dinner the night before. What implements did they use to eat? What condiments were on their table?
- The names of the peas, carrots and fries are alliterated. Ask students what this means and to come up with their own alliterated names for objects in the classroom e.g. Terence, Tilly and Tom the tables.
- View the picture of the little old lady sitting on the little chair. Ask students how long they think the lady has been sitting there. If each frame represents 20 minutes, how long has it been? If each frame represents 25 minutes how long has it been?
- Why are the fries French? Ask students to research foods of different cultures e.g. what is typical Italian food, Chinese food, Japanese food? Then ask students to come up with names for these e.g. spaghetti from Italy could be named Silvio, Sofia or Salvatore.
- Who is telling this story? The narrator is often addressing the audience, asking us questions. What is this type of storytelling? Discuss storytelling with students and how it has been used in different cultures across different eras. Why is storytelling important? What other forms of storytelling are there? Ask students to research a tale/story and recount to the class.
- The author of this story tells us, on more than one occasion, that the story is true. Do students think it could be? The events seem highly improbable but there are actions in this story that could happen e.g. a family having a picnic, a boy having a sausage for his dinner. Ask students to make a list of the things in this story that could really happen and those which definitely couldn't. Ask them to include their reasons why.
- What would your reaction be if your dinner ran away? Ask students to discuss in groups or write a brief paragraph on what they would do if their dinner ran away.
- Have a 'runaway dinner' race at your school. Similar to an egg and spoon race, but give some students small pieces of carrot, peas and sausage. Who comes first without dropping any of their food?
- Ask students to draw their own runaway foods. Color, cut-out and display the attached activity sheet around the classroom. Be sure to include arms and legs so they can run.
- All the characters in this book are given names. What would happen if we didn't have a name and were just called 'people'? How does a name give us an identity?
- This book is illustrated, not photographic yet still the illustrator conveys different emotions through simple facial expressions. Ask students to identify when the characters are happy, surprised or scared. Then create their own facial expressions chart, with pictures for all the different feelings we might have.
- Sometimes the text in this book gets bigger. Ask students why it might be bigger in some places. How does this add emphasis to the story? Ask students to write descriptive words, in a style that represents them. E.g. "quiet" might be written very small, "loud" might be written very big.
- After reading the story create a character list with students. Who are the main characters of this story? Who are the secondary characters?
- When you have finished reading *The Runaway Dinner* ask students to write or tell the story of Joyce the Plum Pie. What do they think happens next?
- Write a review of *The Runaway Dinner*.

