



Running with the Horses by Alison Lester

Publisher	Viking, Penguin Group Australia
Readership	Mid primary to junior secondary
Awards	American Booksellers Book of the Year 2010: Shortlisted Best Designed Picture Book
Genre	Historical adventure
Setting	Vienna and Austria during World War II
Structure	There is a reasonable balance of written text and illustrations, with more space given to the illustrations. The illustrations are opposite each page of written text, sometimes occupying more than the page and spreading across the gutter onto the page of written text. Where the illustrations remain on one page, there is a black and white vignette under the written text.
Language	The language moves the momentum of the journey forward. It is also descriptive.
Illustration	Digital images including photographs; watercolour, charcoal and wax crayon drawings
Themes	Journey; horses; loyalty and perseverance
Motifs	Birds, leaves, pine trees and needles, bare trees, snowflakes etc. What do these represent? (e.g. seasons) Find other books by the author where the seasons are defined (e.g. <i>My Farm</i>).

Synopsis

Nina loved to watch the white stallions performing at the Royal Academy of Dancing Horses in Vienna where her father, Viktor, was the stable master. World War II has forced people to leave the city and Viktor has almost left it too late. Nina cannot leave old cab horse, Zelda, behind. It is Zelda who finds the way out of the collapsing city but can the old mare keep up with the other horses on their journey to safety?

Teaching Applications

- **Visual Literacy 1.** How are the illustrations constructed? What media is used? Students make their own illustrations using these techniques. Compare the style and technique used in *Running with the Horses* with Alison Lester's other books. Then, students illustrate a page of text from the book using a different technique. **2. Light Sources** Find where the light is coming from? (e.g. lamps, cottage windows) What purpose does this achieve? **3. Motifs** The motifs (see above) also have a decorative function. View these then sketch them using coloured pencils.
- **Illustrated Books** What is the difference between an illustrated book and a picture book? Find examples of both. Which is *Running with the Horses*?
- **Sense of Place** Which features in the illustrations and written text indicate that this is set in Vienna, and then in the country? (e.g. lamps, cobblestones, narrow alley) Students select features of their own city, town or place and time and design a poster showcasing these. Significant building, landmarks, statues, parks etc could be used.
- **Coloured Ink** Why are different colours used at the start of each page of written text? (They match a significant colour in the illustration.) Create a story map of the journey. Colour-code the journey on the map using similar coloured inks.
- **Outside In** The reader has a sense of looking in, and being on the outside, at different times. Find these (e.g. Nina looking in through the glass panels of the door at the horses. Incidentally, the panels are used as 'frames' here.) The outside of the stable also shows windows and doors. How are the characters and the reader positioned? (outside) Write about the effect this has. Make a building, such as a stable or the cottage, to show 'outside' and 'looking in'. Feature windows and doors and position model characters to show their status. Adapt a template, such as <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/Paperhouse.shtml>.
- **Read** *The Journey Home, Isabella's Bed, Imagine, Magic Beach, My Farm, Yikes, I'm Green and I'm Grumpy* and *Are We There Yet?* by Alison Lester.

Display

- **Merry-Go-Round Horses** Re-read descriptions of the horses, such as 'tails swishing silver', 'dancing on top of the world' and 'horses floated like angels'. Make a merry-go-round toy or mobile, creating horses with these descriptions. <http://parenting.ivillage.com/gs/gslearning/0,,hk5k,00.html>; <http://chestofbooks.com/crafts/children/The-Jolly-Book-Of-Boxcraft/How-To-Make-A-Toy-Merry-Go-Round.html>

Author/Illustrator Website <http://www.alisonlester.net/index.htm>