

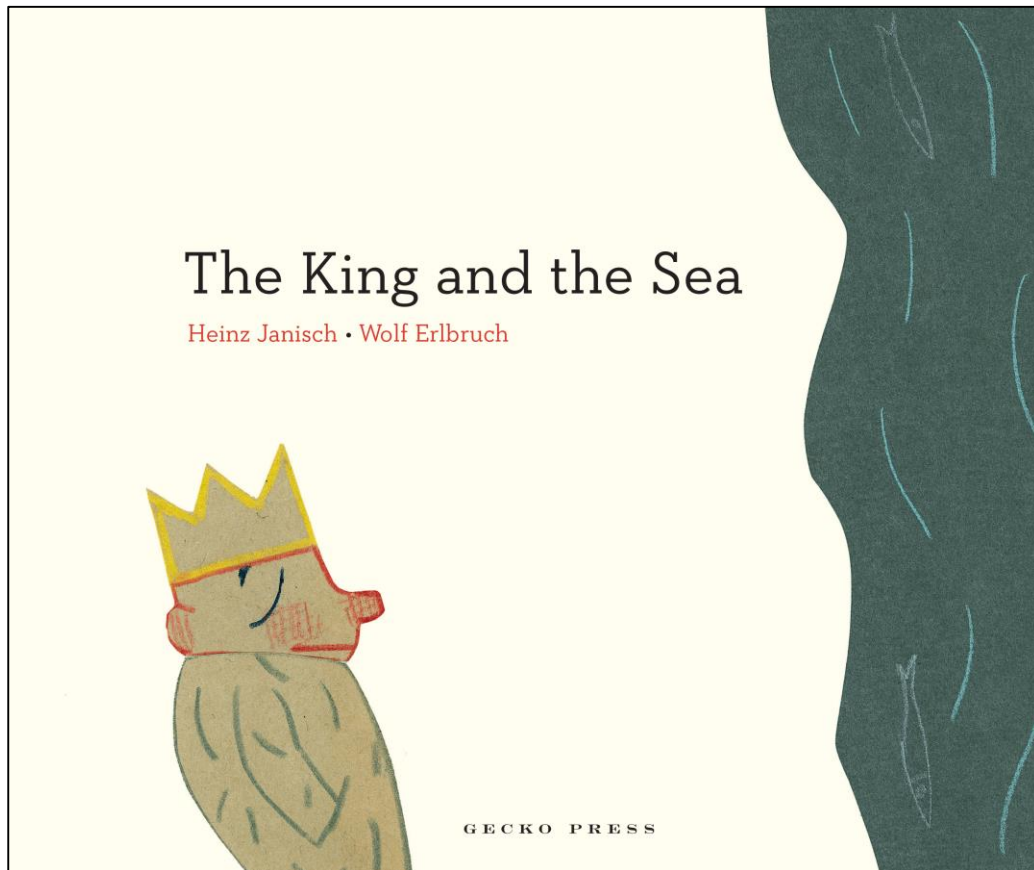


GECKO PRESS

Teaching Notes

The King and the Sea

by Heinz Janisch and illustrated by Wolf Erlbruch



Synopsis

These ultra-short stories are seemingly simple but ultimately profound tales and in each tale the king has an encounter with an object, animal or force of nature which he tries to rule over. But the rain doesn't stop just because a king orders it, and tired eyelids can be much stronger than a king's will. The king sees that his power has limits; the world is diverse and much of it operates under its own rules.

The Author

Heinz Janisch is an Austrian children's book writer whose books have been published in more than a dozen languages. He has been honoured with the Austrian State Prize for poetry for children, the Austrian Children's Literature Prize, and the Bologna Ragazzi Award.

The Illustrator

Wolf Erlbruch is a celebrated and inimitable German author and illustrator. Winner of the 2006 Hans Christian Anderson Medal for Illustration, he has received many other awards. Erlbruch is recognised for his witty and winsome stories and his sophisticated synthesis of collage and drawing. He wrote and illustrated *Duck, Death and the Tulip* (published by Gecko Press).



Themes

These stunningly illustrated short stories, full of humour and wisdom, have several themes.

The main theme throughout the stories is that of power. The little king constantly tries to exert his power over all he encounters, with varying levels of success.

As the stories and the king delve into the diversity of the world the theme of enquiry is evident. He soon realises that animals, objects and elements of nature he deals with have their own unique place, actions and value in the world in which they all inhabit together.

Determination is another theme illustrated as the king is determined to make sense of his emotions, actions and his place in the world, even when sometimes his actions to do so appear childish and stubborn.

Another theme is that of humour. These consistently funny stories not only entertain but also offer the reader a reflection on the natural world and finding your place in it.

A final theme evident in the stories is the king's eventual delight, wonder and appreciation of the world around him.

Activities

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this book might be about.
2. *The King and the Sea* is a collection of illustrated short stories. After reading all of the stories, discuss and choose your favourite story and character. Then write a plot summary and character study.
3. Anthropomorphism is when gods, animals or things are depicted with human attributes and behaviours. Find five examples of this from the stories. Find other books where animals are depicted in this way, for example, *Wolf and Dog* (Gecko, 2013) and *The Day No One Was Angry* (Gecko, 2014).
4. There are many language features in the stories, for example, similes, metaphors, onomatopoeia, adverbs or adjectives. Find the definition and an example of each of those listed above from the stories.
5. Exclamation marks, question marks, speech marks, ellipses, full stops and commas are all types of punctuation found in the book. Find and list an example of each from the book as well as their grammatical purpose.



6. Examine the illustrations in the book. Do you like the style? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text. Find another book illustrated by Wolf Erlbruch. Compare and contrast the illustrations. Are there many similarities or differences?
7. Choose one of the short stories. Write a personal diary entry about the event from the king's point of view. Think about how you would describe the physical scene and your feelings about the incident.
8. In pairs, choose one of the short story titles as inspiration to write a longer story. Then illustrate and bind in a children's picture book format. Remember to include a back cover blurb.
9. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What do you like about the book? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.
10. In groups, adapt one of the stories for a performance in your classroom. Devise a script, create scenery, choose music and make costumes or puppets to represent each character. Act your adaptation out for your class. If you have access to a video camera, tape it.