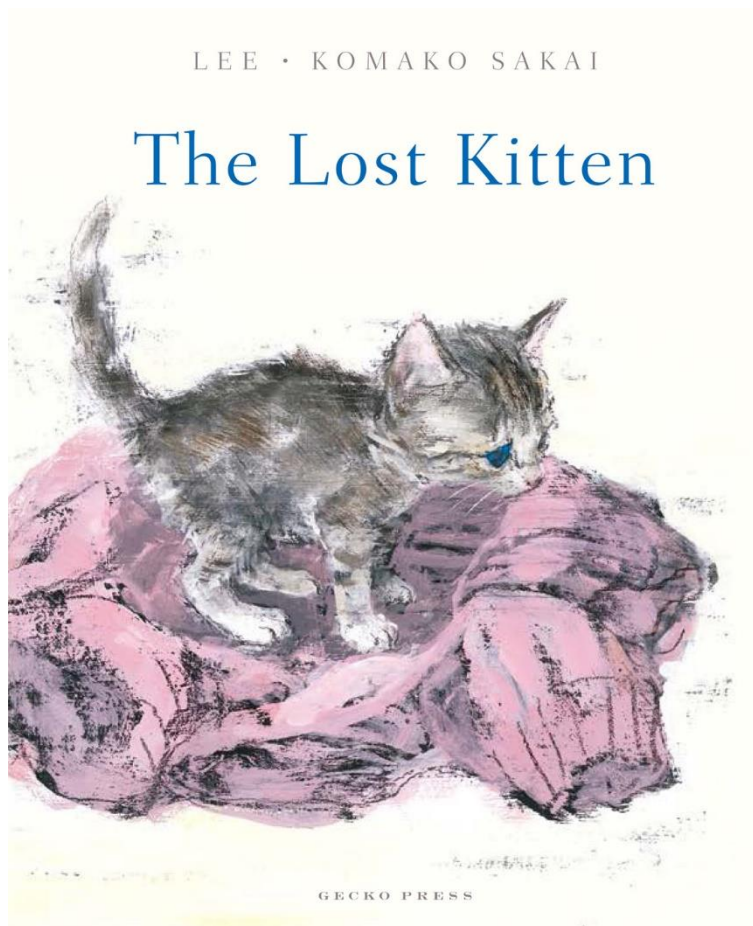


Teaching Notes

The Lost Kitten

by Lee & Illustrated by Komako Sakai



Synopsis:

When a tiny stray kitten turns up on their doorstep, Hina and her mother take it in. Hina makes a home for the kitten and learns about caring for a living creature. Then one day the kitten goes missing and Hina fears it may be lost forever.

Author:

Lee was born in Tokyo in 1964. This is his first book.

Illustrator:

Komako Sakai lives in Japan and studied art in Tokyo. She is one of Japan's most popular children's illustrators and is the winner of the Japanese Picture Book Prize. Her books are published throughout the world.

Themes:

This picture book, with a simple story accompanied by atmospheric illustrations that are filled with grace, has several themes.

These include love and empathy. Hina's mother takes in the kitten as she feels sorry for it and its mother. While Hina is dubious at first of the scruffy kitten she grows to accept and love it.

Another theme explored is the relationship between mothers and their offspring. The kitten's mother is willing to leave her baby at Hina's home so that it will be taken care of. Hina's mother understands the motivation behind the cat's sacrifice and takes care of it, while she patiently helps her own daughter Hina to accept and care for the kitten.

The themes of being lost and found also feature in the book. It is only when Hina fears that she has lost the kitten and remembers what it feels to be lost herself that she realises she has come to love the kitten. She is in turn relieved when she finds the lost kitten safe and sound in her home.

The theme of acceptance and naming is also illustrated in the book. Hina's acceptance of the kitten is expressed by her choosing a name for it, as well as appealing to the kitten to be her friend forever, as she finally welcomes the kitten into her home and heart.

Activities:

1. Before reading the book, look at the cover image and title. Discuss what you think this story might be about.
2. In pairs, or with an adult to help, take turns to read the story aloud to one another. Discuss which is your favourite page and why? Do you agree with your partner's choice? Why/why not?
3. Write a plot summary of what happens in the book.
4. There are many adjectives in the book. What is the definition of this figure of speech? Find five examples of this figure of speech from the book.
5. Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech for a word which imitates a noise or action. What examples of onomatopoeia can you find in the book? Think of more examples that could have been used to describe some of the other action in the book.



6. Figurative language is used to convey ideas that might otherwise be difficult to express. One example of figurative language is simile. An example of this is when 'Hina stroked the kitten as gently as if she were touching butterfly wings'. Think of two examples of similes you could use to describe the kitten's appearance and/or how Hina feels about the kitten.
7. Examine the illustrations in the book. What attracts your attention to a particular picture? What colours are used? What kind of lines and textures are used? Do the pictures mirror the text or go beyond what the story tells you? Choose two illustrations from the book. Carefully study each of the characters and their expressions. What range of emotions is evident? How has Komako Sakai achieved these feelings in the illustrations? (Think about colour, size, composition, etc). Draw your own picture that expresses another emotion, such as sadness, happiness, fear or love.
8. Examine the illustrations in the book. Do you like the style? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Choose your favourite illustration from the book and create your own artistic interpretation of it, for example, a painting, drawing, photograph, model, poem, etc. Or, design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text.
9. Choose your favourite illustration from the book. Either describe the scene orally in pairs or write a descriptive paragraph or poem based on what you can see.
10. Find another book illustrated by Komako Sakai, such as *The Bear and the Wildcat* (Gecko Press, 2011) or *Hannah's Night* (Gecko Press, 2013). Compare and contrast the illustrations. Are there many similarities or differences?
11. Hina and her mother take in the kitten who is described in the book as being skinny and scruffy with big, blue eyes. Write a description and draw an illustration of your own pet or a pet you are familiar with.
12. Do you like Hina as a character? Why/why not? What do you think about her initial reaction to the kitten and what do you think it tells us about her and her personality? Does she change her mind about the kitten? What does this tell us about how she develops and changes as a character throughout the book?



13. Imagine you are the kitten. Write an account of arriving and being left at Hina's house. Think about how you would feel, how you could describe the physical scene, as well as your feelings about Hina.
14. Hina had been lost once. Use her experience, or a time when you have been lost, as inspiration to write, illustrate, bind and publish your own children's picture book about a lost person or animal. Include in your book a message about how to stay safe and/or what to do if you get lost.
15. Hina and her mother organise the house in order for the kitten to stay with them. Create an instructional pamphlet about how to care for a pet.
16. Write a reader's review of the book. Include what you liked/disliked about it and why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.