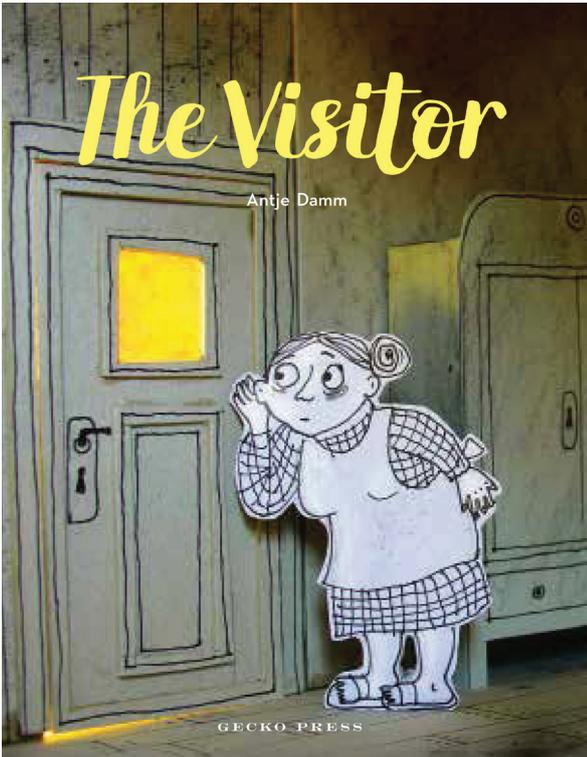


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Teaching Notes



## The Visitor

Antje Damm

### Synopsis

Elise was frightened—of spiders, people, even trees. So she never went out, night or day.

One day a strange thing flies in through the window and lands at her feet. And then there comes a knock at the door. Elise has a visitor who will change everything.

This is a gentle, sympathetic story about a child who unwittingly brings light and colour—literally—into a lonely person's life.

### The Author

Antje Damm is a celebrated children's writer and illustrator. Born in 1965 in Wiesbaden, Germany, she now lives with her husband and four children near Giessen. She has worked as an architect and has written and illustrated over a dozen books for children.

### Themes

Themes in *The Visitor* include fear and unexpected friendship. This is a hopeful – and increasingly colourful – tale of how an unexpected visitor brings light, confidence, and renewed joy and curiosity back into the life of a woman who has remained at home for many years, too scared to leave.

# Activities

## Level One – Text (Before and While Reading)

1. Before you read the book, look at the cover (front and back) of the book. What can you tell about the story from the title, font, illustrations, and blurb? Think about the colours and style of illustrations and what they might tell you about what sort of story this is.
2. Look at the very first image inside the front cover, which is in black and white. How does this image make you feel about this room? Who do you think lives here?
3. Either on your own or in pairs find the definition of the following words that appear in the story and then use them in a new sentence:
  - Unbelievable
  - Scooped
  - Urgent
  - Patiently

## Level Two – Responding to the Text and Reading Between the Lines (While Reading)

1. Look at the second picture in the story when the paper plane (dart) flies in the window. What do you notice about the colour of the sky outside the window? How has it changed from before? What do you notice about the colour of the dart? What do these colours make you think and feel might happen in the story? Are they warm (happy) colours or cold (sad) colours? As you read, pay attention to the light and colours in the pictures and how they change.
2. As a class discuss how you would survive if you never left your house. How long do you think you could stay in your house before you had to go out? Do you know anyone who never – or hardly ever – leaves their house? Why is this? Do they have other people to support them?
3. When the boy chooses a book, we learn that “It was a long time since Elise had read to anyone.” What clues does this give us about how Elise’s life was before she was scared? Who do you think she used to read to? How do we know from the picture that Elise enjoys reading to the boy?
4. In small groups of 3-4, discuss what frightens you. Are some of you frightened of the same things? Can you remember when and why this fear began? What could you do in the future when you are faced with this fear? Together, aim to come up with a solution to manage each type of fear.

## Level Three – Creating Based on the Text

1. Role play. In pairs imagine that one of you is Elise and the other is the boy. The boy is going to help Elise leave the house for the first time in a very long time. Before you begin, think about where the boy is going to take Elise (maybe the park) and how he would reassure her that nothing bad will happen. What will they do if Elise gets scared and panics when they leave the house? Present your role play to your class.
2. Diorama. Author and illustrator Antje Damm made dioramas, which she then photographed to create the pictures in *The Visitor*. A diorama is a three-dimensional scene. It can be miniature or life size. Make your own diorama of a room using a shoe box or other similar sized box. It could be a room in your house or it could be your dream room. Think about what colours you want in this room and how you would want others to feel if they could visit.
3. Role Play. Pretend that you are Emil (the boy) and you are explaining to your parents where you have been. What would you tell them about Elise and her house.

## Level Four – Beyond the Text

1. Elise is frightened of many things, including spiders, people, and even trees. Another word for being frightened is phobia. Phobia is an extreme or irrational fear of or aversion to something, and there are many different types. For example, arachnophobia is a fear of spiders. In pairs, using the Internet, dictionary, or other search tools, find the names of five different phobias you had never heard of before. Share with your class.
2. As a class, make darts using coloured paper then hold a dart throwing competition. Who can throw their darts the furthest? Is there a best way to fold the paper so that the darts fly a long way? Make sure there's a prize for the winner!
3. Origami is the art of paper folding. In small groups construct an origami mobile to gift to someone. First, find instructions for how to make origami cranes or other simple objects. Then, make between 6-10 colourful cranes (or other objects). These can be different sizes and coloured or patterned paper. The more colourful the better! Next, create a mobile on which to hang your origami. String, sticking tape, and thin sticks (such as bamboo) could be used. Finally, gift the mobile to someone who cannot leave their home for long periods of time.



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[info@geckopress.com](mailto:info@geckopress.com)

Teaching notes prepared by Emily Duncan