

## 2016 Kate Greenaway Medal shortlist: Visual Literacy notes

**Title:** Sam & Dave Dig A Hole

**Illustrator:** Jon Klassen

**Author:** Mac Barnett

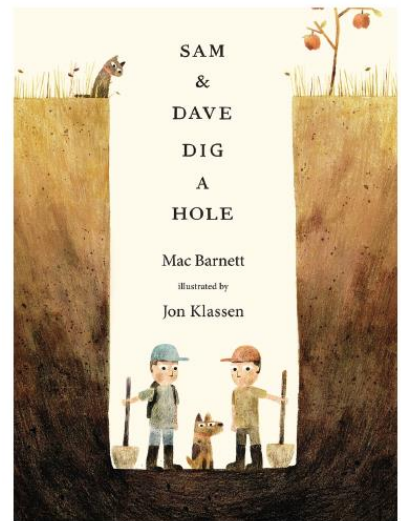
**Publisher:** Walker Books

### First look

Whatever age they are, share the book with the whole group by reading it aloud to them. Give an uninterrupted read, without making comments and holding it up so that everyone can see the pictures as they listen.

Go through the book again page by page concentrating on the visual text. Look closely at every picture and ask the group to comment on anything that strikes them as interesting.

Chat in pairs or as a group about the first experience of the book. Did you like it? What did you like or dislike and why?



### Look again

When the group have discussed their first responses, return to the book; look, think and talk more about the artwork.

Would the book make sense if there were no pictures? Try reading the printed text without looking at the pictures. What essential information about the story would be missing if you only had words and no pictures?

#### *Pictures making meanings*

Jon Klassen's artwork is produced using digitally presented images. Sometimes a character looks exactly the same from page to page although slight changes occur in his characters' expressions to give a clue about what they are thinking. Sometimes the changes are tiny – such as a minor change to the position of eyes. Look closely at the eyes. Which character do you think shows most through the position of their eyes: Sam, Dave, the dog or the cat?

#### *Colours are important*

The colours Jon Klassen has used often reflect the colours of the earth through which the boys are digging. There's also some pink and blue but these are very toned-down colours even when used on the hidden jewels. What effect does the use of these colours have when you read the book?



The CILIP Carnegie  
& Kate Greenaway  
Children's Book  
Awards

### *Space*

Look at the empty space on every page. Does it have a purpose? Look how the words and the pictures are placed on each page. Can you see any reason for the different shaped spaces?

### *Look at everything*

Talk about any visual aspect of the book that interests you, i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. Do these 'extras' to the story contribute to the overall impact of the book?

## **Interpreting the texts**

It is always beneficial, when studying a book, to find ways to get youngsters to fully engage with the whole text. This can be achieved through exploratory tasks and creative responses such as drama and art. The following suggestions may help young readers to become absorbed in the book.

### *Words*

The dog is in every picture. The dog's eyes and behaviour show that he knows more than the boys. What do you think the dog is thinking? Choose a couple of dog pictures and add a speech bubble to show what he might be thinking.



### *Art*

Try using some of the techniques used by Jon Klassen in the book. You could try working straight on to a computer if you have a suitable art programme. Or you can use pencil crayon to produce your original images before scanning them on to the screen.

### *Spot the differences*

At the end of the book Sam and Dave seem to have got back to where they began ... but have they? Find differences between the title page at the beginning of the book and the pages after the boys and dog fall through the hole. Is it the same place? There are four obvious differences.

### *Visit a website*

Visit the USA website of the School Library Journal [www.slj.com](http://www.slj.com) and put *Sam & Dave* 6 theories into the search box. Find an article called: 'Six theories on the ending of *Sam & Dave Dig a Hole*'. Now you have looked closely at the pictures, which theory do you think is true?

