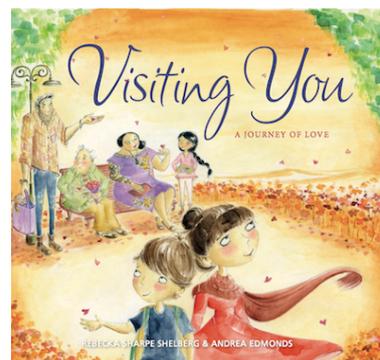


Title: Visiting You
Subtitle: A Journey of Love
Author: Rebecka Sharpe Shelberg
Illustrator: Andrea Edmonds
Publisher: EK Books
Price: \$24.99
ISBN: 9781925335668
Publication date: 1 March 2018
Audience age: 3-8



SYNOPSIS:

Setting out to visit their loved one, a child curiously asks a fellow commuter, 'Who are you going to visit', and in answer to this simple question, the child learns about the love and loss in the life of a stranger.

A father who lives apart from his small daughter, a husband who has lost his wife, a granddaughter who is forgotten by her grandfather, and a mother who fears for her son's recovery. After each conversation, the child understands that the other commuter has someone in their life that they love 'as much as I love you' and it is this understanding that allows the child to explore the most universal of human experiences: the power of love in the many different forms that it can take.

Visiting You explores a sense of community. Under her mother's supervision, a young child reaches out and connects with the people around them, they're not scared of strangers, or people who might 'look' scary, or people who are different to them. Sometimes it can take conscious decision and determination to look past outward appearances, *Visiting You* encourages us to find the similarities between people instead of focusing on differences, to recognise some part of ourselves in the life of a stranger.

THEMES:

- Community
- Tolerance
- Diversity
- Love
- Loss
- Hope

SELLING POINTS:

- Inspires children to look beyond appearances and to focus on similarities rather than differences. A sensitive exploration of diversity and acceptance.
- Teaches children about the power of love and hope in the face of adversity and life's challenges.
- Encourages children to use their imagination to decide who the child in the story is visiting.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE: Watercolour and pencil

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

Rebecka Sharpe Shelberg

Librarian, children's author, craftivist and general book enthusiast, Rebecka lives in Sydney, Australia, with her bearded husband, her small mischievous children, two fluffy dogs, and a bearded dragon. Though she is obsessed with books of all kinds, she is particularly enamoured with picture books and would happily spend an entire day (and a year's salary) in a good book store.

Andrea Edmonds

Andrea has always loved drawing, and expressing herself through art. Working in traditional mediums, Andrea is inspired by nature, wildlife, people, art, music, and humour. When not working on a project, she loves to develop her own story and character ideas, surrounded by her picture book collection, a stash of dark chocolate and countless cups of tea. She lives in Sydney, Australia.

INTERVIEW:

AUTHOR

What is the inspiration for this story?

On my daily train commute to work, I used to see all the people getting on and off the train and wonder what their lives were like, who they loved, what they worried about, what was going on behind their blank commuter stares.

I remember thinking that it is so easy to judge a stranger on their outward appearance, as this is the only information about them that is available to us. It was with all this in mind that *Visiting You* began to take shape.

As the story developed, I particularly wanted to make the focus not on whom the child was going to visit, or even the child themselves. Instead, I wanted the focus to be on the people that the child met on the journey. I wanted the child to be able to innocently delve beneath the outer appearances of the commuters and discover the universal element that ties us all together: the love we have for those closest to us. I wanted to explore and acknowledge the idea that love comes in many different forms, and that it is tremendous and powerful in all.

The 'you' that the story is addressed to was deliberately left open, as I wanted the book to be relatable to any child's own personal experience. Initially, I imagined that it was addressed to a newborn baby in NICU or a younger sibling being treated at a children's hospital. Other readers thought it was a grandparent in nursing home and I even had one reader imagine that it was a father in prison.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Seeing the characters that I'd written come to life through Andrea's illustrations and witnessing the increased depth that she was able to add to the story with each detail and interpretation. It was quite a magical experience.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

I find that the submission process of any project is the most challenging. My initial draft was written in 2010 and it has finally found a home with EK Books in 2018. The slowness of the process and the challenge to find the right home is always my hardest obstacle, but the reward of having that beautiful finished book in your hand makes it more than worth it!

ILLUSTRATOR

What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.

The artwork for *Visiting You* was created with watercolour and pencil on Arches watercolour paper 300gsm.

My process began by first reading the story quite a few times, as many visual ideas came to me, which I kept in my sketchbook — some of these ideas were further developed, and used in the final illustrations. I then moved on to sketching ideas of what each character would look like. It was wonderful collaborating with Rebecka and our publisher Anouska to eventually come up with our final characters.

Sketching a rough idea of the page breaks was next, and reading the story aloud to see if the pace of each page read well before the page turn. This was important, as it was then easier to move on to the storyboard (which lets us see if the illustrations will flow well in a book), and eventually illustrate the story. A colour palette was chosen for the illustrations, and then the final illustrations were commenced.

I tried to illustrate each spread using a variety of angles, close-ups, vignettes and aerial views, so each page would create drama, meaning, and look interesting to the reader. As each commuter the child meets reflects on their own experience with a loved one, making those spreads a sepia tone, to give a nostalgic feel, fitted the story well.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

When I read *Visiting You* for the first time, I felt emotionally moved, and I immediately connected to the story. The most rewarding part was creating meaningful characters and images that would complement the melancholy, bittersweet tone of the story. I also enjoyed the experience of collaborating with Rebecka and Anouska, and bouncing ideas off each other.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

Submitting my first sketches, to see if they would resonate with Rebecka and Anouska. Thank goodness they did! I then felt more confident developing those initial ideas.

TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

Before Reading

Before opening *Visiting You*, look closely at the cover of the book and identify the following:

- The title of the book
- The author and illustrator
- The publisher
- The blurb.

Think about the following:

- From hearing the title, what do you think the story might be about?
- After looking at the cover illustrations, have your ideas changed?
- How do you think the title and cover illustrations relate to each other?
- What is the purpose of a blurb?

Activities:

- Write your own story using the title *Visiting You*.
- Use the blurb as a story starter.
- Teacher: Read the book aloud to the class without showing the illustrations. Ask the students to imagine what the words are describing. Read the book again, this time showing the illustrations. How do the illustrations change the story? Discuss whether the images were similar or different to what each student had imagined.

Exploring the Text

Focus: Relationships

There are many kinds of relationships depicted in *Visiting You*.

Think about the following:

- What kind of love exists? (i.e. Love between parent and child, love between siblings and other family members, love between friends, romantic love)

- Can you identify some of the relationships in the story? Discuss the relationship each commuter has with the person they are visiting.
- How does the child relate to each commuter?
- Who do you think the child and their mother are visiting? Why are they visiting this person? Why are they taking different modes of transport? Could they be visiting more than one person? Write down your thoughts and then share your thoughts with the class. There is no incorrect answer to these questions — the author and illustrator intentionally left this open to reader interpretation.

Activities:

- Write a follow up story to *Visiting You* where we see who the child and mother are visiting.
 - Illustrate your story in a similar style to *Visiting You*.
-

Focus: Transport

There are a number of different modes of transport used throughout *Visiting You*.

Think about the following:

- What modes of transport are depicted in the book? Have you used each of these?
- What public transport is available in your community?

Activities:

- Write a story about an important time you used one of these modes of transport.
-

Focus: Community

Throughout *Visiting You* the child interacts with a number of strangers who are members of the wider community.

Think about the following:

- The child describes each commuter with two adjectives ('He looked scruffy and gruff...'). What are some other adjectives the child could use to describe each commuter?
- The author has linked each commuter with a shared adjective (i.e. 'scruffy and gruff ... gruff and grouchy'), why do you think she has done this?

- On seeing each commuter, the child declares 'I wasn't scared'. What is it about each commuter that might be scary to other travellers?
- What does the child discover when they are brave enough to ask each commuter 'Who are you going to visit?' How does each commuter's demeanour change once the child speaks to them?
- The child gives each commuter a small gift as they part. What are the gifts? How do you think this makes the commuters feel?

Activities:

- Discuss as a class how you participate in your own local community.
 - As a class, create a list of small acts of kindness that you can safely participate in that would enhance your community (can include school community, sporting groups, churches etc)
-

Focus: Loss

Each of the commuters have experienced loss in their relationships (i.e. a father who doesn't live with this daughter; a widower; a girl whose Aja has memory loss; and a mother whose child is in a coma).

Think about the following:

- How has loss affected each commuter's life? Discuss how sharing their memories makes each commuter feel. Do you think sharing memories of someone they miss brings them comfort?
- Discuss how the mother is feeling throughout the story based on the text, her facial expressions and body language. Compare that to how you think the child is feeling. Why might they be feeling different things at different times?
- Is *Visiting You* an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? How can you tell?

Activities:

- Write a letter from the perspective of one of the commuters to the person they are going to visit. What would the commuter say about their meeting with the child?
 - Draw a picture of one of your own memories that brings you comfort.
-

Exploring the Illustrations

Think about the following:

- How has the illustrator taken inspiration from each mode of transport in the spreads where the commuters share their memories?
- Examine the facial expression and body language of each commuter when they first meet the child and when they part. How do you think the commuter is feeling and how do their emotions change? What do you think causes this change?
- The illustrator has included a wordless speech bubble as the child and each commuter part. Why do you think she has done this? What do you think is being said in each wordless speech bubble? How does this link to and enhance the text?
- Based on their appearance and memories, what is something unique you can determine about each commuter's background, culture or family history? For example, the man on the train's clothes, the man on the bus's religion, the girl on the tram's memory box, the woman on the ferry's tattoos and necklace.

Activities:

- Illustrate your own picture with a wordless speech bubble. Discuss as a class what each speech bubble might be saying.
 - Read the description of each commuter again. Use your own imagination to illustrate a different version of one of the commuters.
-

Think about the following:

- Endpapers are the spreads that are attached to the inside front and back cover. Compare the front and back endpapers, how are they different? What do you think this symbolises?
- The illustrations on some spreads take up the entire page, while illustrations on other spreads only take up a small area and are surrounded by white space. Find examples of these and discuss why you think they were illustrated in this way.
- Choose a spread from *Visiting You* and discuss how colour is used to convey mood, setting, character and time.

Activities:

- Design your own endpapers for *Visiting You*.



- Choose another picture book and compare the composition of the spreads, the text and the white space with *Visiting You*. How are they similar and how do they differ?

Character worksheet:

	Who are they visiting?	Why are they visiting them?	Describe their relationship	What are they carrying? Why are they taking it?	What gift does the child give them?
Man on the train					
Man on the bus					
Girl on the tram					
Woman on the ferry					