

CHARLOTTE AND THE QUIET PLACE

BY DEBORAH SOSIN ILLUSTRATED BY SARA WOOLLEY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Charlotte likes quiet. But wherever Charlotte goes, she is surrounded by noise—her yipping dog, Otto; the squeaky, creaky swings; the warbling, wailing sirens. One day, Otto leads her on a wild chase through the city park. There, Charlotte discovers a quiet place where she never would have imagined.



Sometimes children need a break from our noisy, overstimulating world. Most picture books about meditation or relaxation include technical instruction or an adult teacher. Some mention a “quite place” as a physical location. *Charlotte and the Quiet Place* shows how a child discovers mindful breathing and experiences the beauty of silence, where creative possibilities can grow and flourish. Children will relate to the unfolding adventure and message of empowerment. Parents, teachers, and caretakers of highly active or sensitive children will find this story especially useful.

Charlotte and the Quiet Place is a delightful read-aloud story for children of all ages. Adult readers can approach a discussion with kids in numerous ways, from simple to complex, depending on their age and level of sophistication. Some suggestions are listed on the following pages.

Deborah Sosin and Sara Woolley are available for school and community visits and interactive workshops with children of all ages. To arrange an author visit, please contact debbie@deborahsosin.com. To arrange an illustrator visit, please contact sara@sarawoolley.com.

DISCUSS THE THEME

- Why do you think Charlotte puts her hands over her ears?
- Do you live in a noisy or a quiet place? Do you like it when there's a lot of activity at home, school, or in your neighborhood? Why or why not?
- What helps Charlotte to cope with all the noises in the last part of the book?
- What do you notice in your body when you breathe slowly in and out? In your mind?
- Do you have a quiet place where you can go to calm down?
- Do you have a quiet place inside yourself? If not, what could you do to find one?

DISCUSS THE CRAFT ELEMENTS

SETTING

Where does the story take place? If the setting were changed, how might the story be different?

MOOD

Can you guess what Charlotte's emotions are on different pages using feeling words (happy, sad, mad, frustrated, calm, etc.)? What do you think Otto is feeling? Do his feelings change? How can you tell? What about the squirrel?

LANGUAGE

What do you notice about the author's choice of words, especially for the noises? (Point out rhythm, repetition, rhyme, alliteration, assonance.)

PATTERNS

What do you notice about the appearance of the "hoo ahhs"? What do you think the author was trying to communicate by changing the number of letters and phrases for "hoo ahh"? Do you notice other patterns?

HOW TO HELP KIDS FIND A QUIET PLACE INSIDE

Children and teachers today rarely have a moment to reflect as they rush from one activity to the next. Silence is vital to growth and learning. Teachers might want to introduce "quiet time," perhaps first thing in the morning, just before a transition, or after a challenging lesson. (It is important not to impose "quiet time" as a disciplinary measure.) A simple technique is to ask children to take three long, deep breaths on the count of five and exhale slowly on the count of five. Some children like the image of a balloon growing and shrinking as they inhale and exhale. Or teachers might ring a chime or bell and ask the children to remain silent until the sound disappears. Repeat three times.

DISCUSS THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Remember the picture of Charlotte and Otto in their neighborhood?

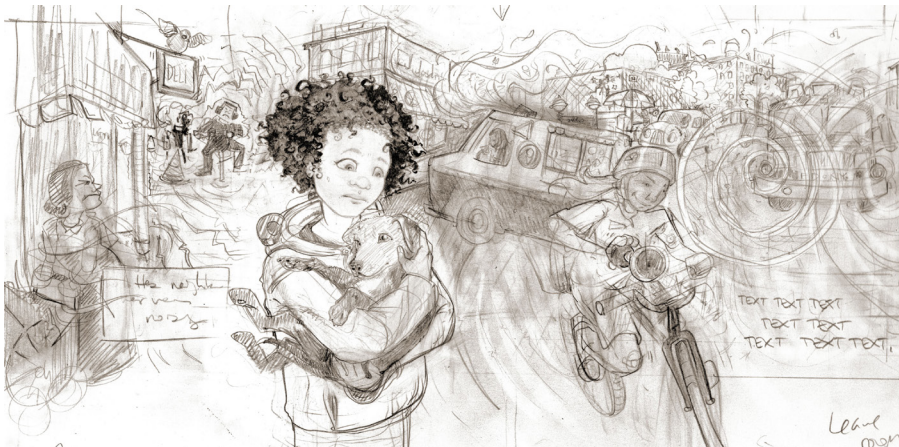


To make this picture, illustrator Sara Woolley first wandered around her own neighborhood taking photos of things she thought would belong in Charlotte and Otto's neighborhood.



Then Sara made the photos into a collage to create a noisy city neighborhood. Next she scribbled in Charlotte and Otto's images to see where they would look just right.

Next, Sara made more sketches of the neighborhood, refining the elements of her picture with each new sketch.



If you walked around your neighborhood collecting images to put in a picture, what kind of people, animals, and things would you see?

Why do you think the illustrator made so many preliminary sketches before painting the final picture?

What differences can you see between the pictures?

What do you notice about all of the artwork in the book?

What are the main colors the illustrator chose? Why do you think she chose those colors?

Are there repeating images and patterns?

What about the point of view (from above, from below, angled, etc.)? Why do you think the illustrator used different points of view throughout the book?

What important things do colors and point of view tell you about the story?