

## ABOUT THE BOOK

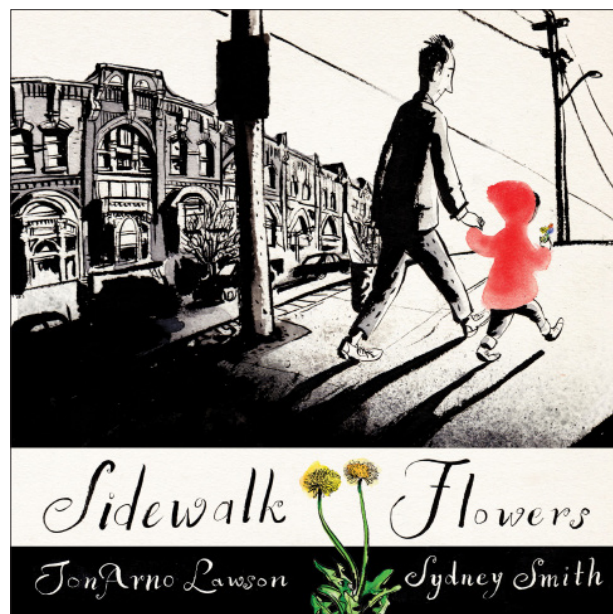
✦ WINNER OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S LITERARY AWARD FOR CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATED BOOK

✦ A NEW YORK TIMES BEST ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE YEAR

In this wordless picture book, a little girl collects wildflowers while her distracted father pays her little attention. Each flower becomes a gift, and whether the gift is noticed or ignored, both giver and recipient are transformed by their encounter.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A four-time winner of the Lion and the Unicorn Award for Excellence in North American Children's Poetry, JonArno Lawson is the author of numerous books for children and adults, including *Enjoy It While It Hurts*, *Down in the Bottom of the Bottom of the Box*, and *Think Again*. He lives in Toronto with his wife and three children.



*SIDEWALK FLOWERS*

By JonArno Lawson

Illustrated by Sydney Smith

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Sydney Smith was born in rural Nova Scotia, and has been drawing since an early age. Since graduating from NSCAD University, he has illustrated multiple children's books, and has received awards for his illustrations, including the Lillian Shepherd Memorial Award for Excellence in Illustration. He now lives in Toronto and works in a shared studio space in Chinatown and goes to the library or the Art Gallery of Ontario on his breaks.

978-1-55498-431-2 | Hardcover | \$16.95

978-1-55498-432-9 | PDF | \$14.95

978-1-55498-855-6 | FXL | \$14.95

978-1-55498-856-3 | KF8 | \$14.95

32 pages | Ages 4 to 7 | Grades K to 2

## FROM THE AUTHOR

Shortly after the publication of *Sidewalk Flowers*, I started to hear from teachers (or to see tweets from them) about how they used the book in their classrooms. When I saw the wide scope of possibilities teachers were discovering for the book in a school setting, it occurred to me that it might be interesting to assemble some of them, along with some ideas of my own, in one place as an educational resource.

There seem to be more wordless books than there once were — although of course cave and rock art (i.e., the Lascaux cave paintings) might be viewed as the oldest evidence of wordless storytelling.

The ideas gathered here can be used to help teachers meet curriculum expectations in Art (creation of still lifes, studies in color), Character Education (development of compassion and sharing), Environmental Education (the study of habitats and plant structures), Language Arts (study of story structure, creation of simple narratives, creation of poetry/haiku, journal keeping, study of point-of-view), Social Studies (exploration of neighborhoods) and also second-language courses (the development of verbal fluency). Mostly, though, I hope they are interesting and enjoyable in their own right.

## MY OWN IDEAS

1. After reading *Sidewalk Flowers* with the children in your group — or after they have read the book on their own — ask them to write words to go with Sydney Smith's pictures. These could be the thoughts of the people or the animals; even of the flowers. They could also be the words to a song the girl is making up in her head as she goes along.

You could start by asking concrete questions. Who is the girl? What's her name? What are the names of her younger siblings? How old is she? Does she have grandparents?

2. Another interesting discussion point might be the nature of distraction and attention. Does anyone in the book notice what the girl is doing? Does it matter? What happens when other people are distracted and you try to get their attention? What happens when you're distracted, and someone tries to get your attention?

3. When I have presented the book to children, the pages that show the dead bird, the man sleeping on the bench, and the dog have generated a lot of discussion.

Is the bird actually dead? Some children think it might be taking a nap. Others think it might be stunned, or injured, but that it will fly away later. You can have the children vote on this. And then tell them that, in the end, no one knows — it's a matter of opinion.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Most Ministries of Education provide online links to their curriculum and resource guides. One teacher pointed out that *Sidewalk Flowers* works well in conjunction with almost any Environmental Education component — and in Ontario, approaching almost any other subject from environmental angle is increasingly popular:

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/environ18curr.pdf>

One teacher told me that a student questioned whether the girl should even be picking the flowers. What sort of impact did it have on the environment of the sidewalk? This is a good question, and might be a good discussion point to consider.

## IDEAS FROM TEACHERS

### TANIA BALADI, Teacher

What I find interesting when I use this type of book is that the roles are reversed between the person who reads and the ones who listen. So rather than the child occupying the passive position of the listener/audience, the child is in the active role as the one who tells the story. When I read a picture book without text with only one child, I like to talk about the characters while pointing with my finger and inventing words and sound effects. I then invite the child to do the same, which means that a dialogue ensues and together we build a narrative.

### SIMONE BENDER, Teacher/Librarian in K-6 School

Simone Bender used the book as a jumping off point for outdoor sketching. After reading the book with her students, and having them look at the details in the pictures, they went out into the playground and searched for things to draw that connected in some way with the book.

## **ELIZABETH PASTERNAK, Grade Five/Six French Teacher**

Elizabeth Pasternak told me that she uses the book to get her students to tell a story in French in order to improve verbal fluency. She asks, What do you see? What is happening?

The book might be used in exactly the same way for any second-language course.

## **MATHEW TOBIN, Senior Lecturer in English and Children's Literature at Oxford Brookes University**

Matthew Tobin thinks that *Sidewalk Flowers* can be used in almost any curriculum subject. He suggests teaching through the book, using it as a channel to explore other topics. His activities are aimed at 7 to 8 year olds, but he believes that the book can be used for both younger and older readers.

### *Language Arts:*

Have your group write poetry, using scenes from the book to support their creative process. I love the idea of a haiku for each page in order to explore the themes of the story or a shape poem in the form of the young girl explaining how she sees the world and then a shape poem in the form of her father explaining how he does.

You could also have the children in your group write a diary extract from the point-of-view of one of the characters who the girl gives a flower to and how it changed their day.

### *Art & Design:*

Have the children try to imitate the style of the book's illustrations. They might use photos of people and places around them as inspiration and use bright colors to celebrate the natural landscape (trees, flowers, moss, etc.). Your group could also do still-life studies of flowers in both urban and rural landscapes, and then come together as a group to talk about the differences.

### *Design & Tech:*

Have the children in your group design a wildflower area for their school. They will have to use mapping skills to plan the area so that the school can enjoy walking through it while keeping the area interactive and supportive of local habitats for bugs and small animals.

## **DIANA FEDORA TUCCI, Forest School Practitioner, Naturalist, Educator**

Diana Fedora Tucci suggested having the children gather flowers to press them.

This link has detailed information about how to preserve wildflowers:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/kids/activities/preservewildflowers.shtml>

But before you have your group press their flowers, have the children look closely at their wildflower bouquets, searching for numbers (counting petals, or leaves) and looking for patterns (again with numbers, but also with colors). If a local wildflower guide is provided (i.e., *Wildflowers of Ontario*, or online guides for wildflowers wherever you are in the world), plant identification can also be a great deal of fun.

## **LINDA WOLFE, Teacher/Librarian**

I wanted my students to have an opportunity to find and share something beautiful. Due to our very responsible and hard-working maintenance crew, there are no struggling flowers sprouting from concrete on our campus, so I decided to make the flowers myself. Remembering that the flowers did not have to be big or showy, I pulled out my tissue paper and searched Pinterest for instructions for making paper flowers. I made enough so that each student would be able to find three flowers. That way they would have some to share and still have one to keep.

Before the students entered the library, I “planted” the paper flowers in the non-fiction room. When a class came to the library, they sat on the story rug and I had them help me talk our way through the incredible illustrations in the book. I explained that much to my distress, there were no sidewalk flowers on our campus, and then I asked the students how we could do something kind without leaving campus or spending money. Many of the ideas were what I had hoped — they included helping other students pick up fallen work, greeting people you pass on the street or hallway, or smiling when someone looked sad.

I then talked about the “library flowers” that I thought I had seen earlier in the library. I told the students that if they found flowers on our library walk, they could “pick” three. We looked high and low before we finally made our way to where the flowers were blooming, and the students cheerfully made their own small bouquets.

I led the students back to the story rug and asked if they thought they were a little like the girl in the story. I told them that the flowers they had in their bouquets were theirs to keep, but that they were welcome to share their joy with others if they chose. Many children shared flowers with their teacher, their parents and even their librarian. Some children chose to keep the flowers themselves, and, as promised, I did not interfere with either choice.

Later, I received emails from teachers and parents telling me their child had shared a flower with them.