

TEACHING RESOURCE PACK

FOR AGES 9+

ALL FOUR QUARTERS of the MOON



SHIRLEY MARR

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***All Four Quarters of the Moon* is a beautiful, heartwarming story about one family's move from Singapore to Australia. This teaching pack explores some of the important themes within the book using spotlight extracts, discussion questions, cross-curricular activities and ideas aimed at 9+/KS2 readers.**

ABOUT THE BOOK

Everything so far, if Peijing had to sum it up, was a string of small awkward experiences that she hoped would end soon.

The night of the Mid-Autumn festival, making mooncakes with Ah Ma, was the last time Peijing remembers her life being the same. Now facing a new home, a new school and a new language, everything is different. Peijing thinks everything is going to turn out okay as long as they all have each other. But cracks are starting to appear in the family.

Biju, lovable but annoying, needs Peijing to be the dependable big sister. Ah Ma keeps forgetting who she is; and Ma Ma and Ba Ba are no longer themselves. Peijing has no idea how she's supposed to cope with the uncertainties of her own world while shouldering the burden of everyone else.

If her family are the four quarters of the mooncake, where does she even fit in?

A big-hearted, magical story about sisterhood and a family finding their way in a new place.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Shirley Marr is a first-generation Chinese-Australian author living in sunny Perth. Shirley describes herself as having a Western mind and an Eastern heart and likes to write in the space in the middle where both collide, basing her stories on her own personal experiences of migration and growing up. Arriving in mainland Australia from Christmas Island as a seven-year-old in the 1980s and experiencing the good, the bad and the wonder that comes with culture shock, Shirley has been in love with reading and writing from that early age.



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SPOTLIGHT 1

CHAPTER TWO: p. 18-21

THEMES: Emigration; Change; Travel; Creativity; Sisterhood

“Tomorrow morning, we wake up early. We put all of the Little World into my suitcase.”

Peijing knew it didn't matter if the Little World was placed into one or the other of the pull-along suitcases Ba Ba had bought for the two girls. But for some reason Peijing felt that, being the eldest, the honour needed to be hers. She thought about that new suitcase – supposedly tough enough to be thrown around in a plane, but startlingly fragile-looking in bird-egg blue – and she felt scared.

But the Little World was something familiar. Something safe. Something to escape into. Where minutes could become hours and hours grow into days. Where, in the blink of an eye, ecosystems could grow and flourish and collapse again back into the ocean, and large herds of beasts that only existed in your mind could cross from one continent to another. Where something you made yourself could be your home, even just for a while.

“Will the Red Barn go into the suitcase first?” asked Biju, her loud voice small now.

“Yes, of course it will,” replied Peijing good-naturedly, even though she was annoyed at Biju for having to even ask the rules.

“Is everything going to fit?” Biju put her hand on top of the box and gave it a gentle push. The Little World had grown so vast it was threatening to spill out.

“It will fit,” Peijing reassured her sister.

She had stuck to packing the bare essentials into that pull-along suitcase: an old special blanket and a new book on space. Sacrificed a pillow, a drawing kit and a warm fuzzy pair of socks. Although she had never been on a plane before and these seemed like things she might possibly need, the Little World was more important.

“None of the animals will be hurt?”

“Of course not.”

All the animals were made of paper, after all.

“Can I look at them one last time?”

Peijing rather preferred that the Little World stay exactly where it was. She had her superstitions too.

But the Little World was a shared world so very carefully, under her supervision – parts of it were allowed to be taken out and unfolded onto the floor. There were zoos and farms and a network of underground burrows and branches of trees made of many pieces of paper sticky-taped together.

There were oceans, rivers and lakes too but, as some of them were so big they stretched from one side of the room to the other, they stayed in the box.

In the centre of it was the Red Barn, with its great double door.

And all of it was populated by tiny individual animals that were carefully cut out, cherished and placed into their homes.



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SPOTLIGHT 1

CHAPTER TWO: p. 18-21

THEMES: Emigration; Change; Travel; Creativity; Sisterhood

VOCABULARY



1. What does the phrase 'good-natured' mean?
2. Can you think of a time you have 'reassured' someone or someone has 'reassured' you?
3. Can you define the phrase 'bare essentials'?
4. What does it mean to 'cherish' something? Can you think of something you cherish?



RETRIEVE

1. What colour is Peijing's suitcase?
2. What items has Peijing packed in her suitcase?
3. Can you describe what the Little World looks like?
4. What is the Little World made from?



INFER

1. How do you think Peijing feels about travelling to Australia?
2. Why has Peijing 'stuck to packing the bare essentials' in her suitcase?
3. Who do you think made the Little World?
4. Why do you think Peijing and Biju want to take the Little World with them to Australia?
5. Can you infer what Peijing's interests and hobbies might be from this extract?
6. What three words would you use to describe Peijing's character based on what you have read so far?



EXPLAIN

1. What impression do you have of Peijing and Biju's relationship?

PREDICT

1. Predict how Peijing and Biju will feel when they are on the flight to Australia.



SUMMARISE

1. Summarise everything you know about the Guo family from the story so far.



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SPOTLIGHT 1

CHAPTER TWO: p. 18-21

THEMES: Emigration; Change; Travel; Creativity; Sisterhood

ACTIVITY

Peijing plans to take the Little World with her in her suitcase when she moves to Australia. If you were moving to another country, what would you take with you in your suitcase? Choose five items and draw them in the suitcase below. Next to each item, write down why you have chosen it. Perhaps it helps you feel calm or it reminds you of a special person? When you have finished, explain your choices to a partner.



How do you think it would feel to leave your home behind and move to another country?



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SPOTLIGHT 2

CHAPTER SEVEN: p. 70-72


THEMES: Starting a New School; Feelings and Emotions; Welcoming Newcomers



The sight and sounds of all the other students flooding through the school entrance felt magnified and too close, too real. She hurried off to find her classroom on legs that felt like jelly, trying to count to five over and over in her head.

As Peijing had suspected, she could not help comparing everything to her previous school. This new school was in fact old, with discoloured rusty patches on the weatherboard classrooms. Her old school had actually been new. She looked at the patchy grass and the giant trees with flesh-coloured skin that peeled off in great sections. The weirdly confident birds that eyed her and gave low warning cries. She moved warily away from them. 

It felt as though the inside of her head was spinning around like the colourful shapes inside one of those cardboard tubes you put your eye against. It had been mid-autumn when they had left Singapore and here it was spring, heading into summer. But according to the books she had read, the leaves on the trees were supposed to be turning orange and falling off as it neared Christmas. None of these trees looked like their leaves were going to fall off regardless of the season.



Peijing located the classroom. Her new teacher, Miss Lena, introduced her to the students as Peijing stood there awkwardly hoping there was nothing out of place on her face or her hair or body. She kept worrying whether there was sleep in her eyes or a loose eyelash on her face or if her shirt was properly tucked in.



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SPOTLIGHT 2

CHAPTER SEVEN: p. 70-72

THEMES: Starting a New School; Feelings and Emotions; Welcoming Newcomers

VOCABULARY



1. What does it mean if something is 'magnified'?
2. The author describes how Peijing moved 'warily' away from the birds. What does it mean to do something 'warily'? Can you act out how you think Peijing moved?
3. Can you find a simile in the first paragraph? Why do you think the author uses this simile?

RETRIEVE



1. How is Peijing's new school different to her old school?
2. What season was it in Singapore when the Guo family left?
3. What season is it now in Australia?
4. What is Peijing's teacher's name?



INFER

1. Why do you think Peijing counts to five over and over in her head?
2. Do you think the birds Peijing sees are the same species as those found in Singapore, or do you think they are different species? Look for evidence in the text to support your answer.
3. Underline any words, phrases or sentences that show how Peijing feels.
4. Imagine you are Peijing standing in front of the class as your teacher introduces you. Use your body language, posture and facial expressions to show how you are feeling.
5. Can you identify with Peijing in this extract? Have you ever experienced being a newcomer? Perhaps when starting a new school, class or sports club? How did it feel?



EXPLAIN

1. Can you explain why Peijing is confused about the leaves on the trees? What do you know about the seasons in Australia?



PREDICT

1. Predict what will happen during Peijing's first day at school. How will she feel when it gets to home time?



SUMMARISE

1. Can you sum up Peijing's first experience of her new school in three words?



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SPOTLIGHT 2

CHAPTER SEVEN: p. 70-72

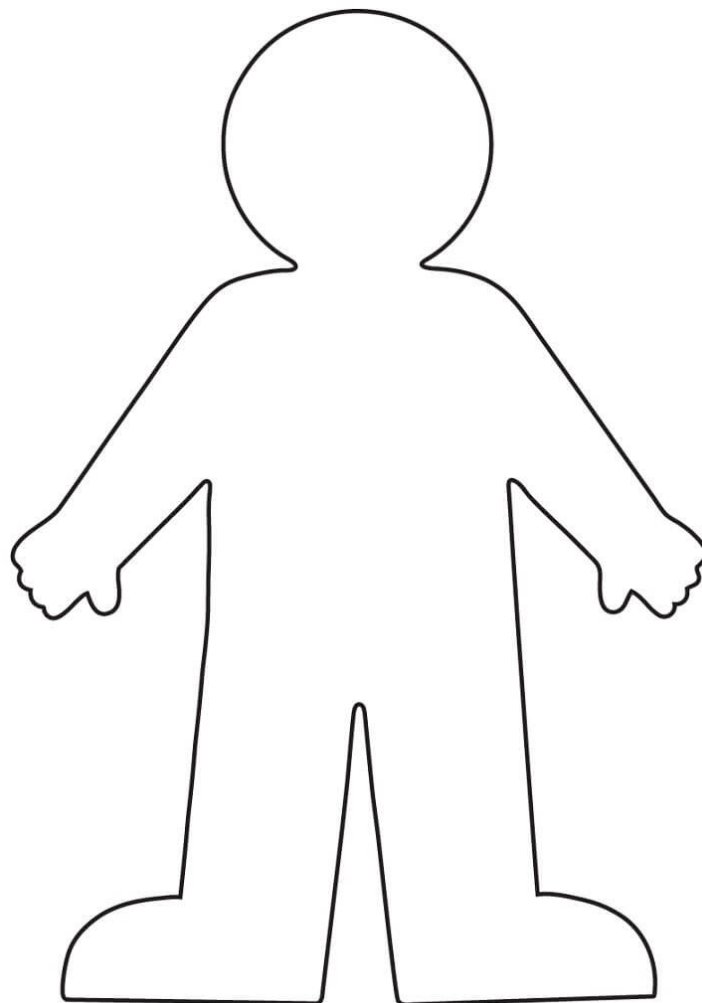
THEMES: Starting a New School; Feelings and Emotions; Welcoming Newcomers

ACTIVITY

How does Peijing feel as she starts school? Using coloured pencils, draw how Peijing feels in her body in the outline below. You can use different colours and shapes to illustrate different feelings.

Now, think of as many words as you can to describe Peijing's feelings and emotions. You might like to use a thesaurus to help you generate good descriptive words. Write your words inside the outline too.

Finally, think about things that you would say or do if you were in Peijing's class to help her settle in. Write or draw your ideas around the outside of the outline.





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SPOTLIGHT 3

CHAPTER ELEVEN: p. 116-118


THEMES: Family; Culture; Tradition; Adapting to a New Country




“It is so unfair! What makes Ma Ma think she can set the rules? Why is she always right? If she is so right, how come not a single person in my class eats with chopsticks?” Biju was a small typhoon. “And you know what? I am sick of Ma Ma’s cooking! Do you know what I want to eat? What everyone said they were having for dinner when we went around the circle today. Fish and chips! Chicken nuggets!”

Peijing let Biju’s feelings all come out, until Biju was lost for words and became quiet again.

“Ma Ma doesn’t want you to forget how to use chopsticks, that’s all. I think that’s reasonable enough,” said Peijing. She knew they had only been in Australia for two weeks, but life’s lessons seemed like they faded so easily. She was sure she had forgotten already what the symbol on the top of Ah Ma’s mooncake looked like.



“Who cares? I don’t care if I never use them again! I’d rather use my fingers first! And eat a double cheeseburger.”



Biju flopped down on the bed and stared at the ceiling. “Maybe one day,” said Peijing with a sense of wistfulness, thinking of what Ah Ma would say, “you will look back and wish for something that you used to have. But it would be too late then.”


Biju kept staring at the ceiling. “I wish we were back home,” she said.

Peijing did not have a counterargument for that because she missed home too.



“Let’s get into our pyjamas and have a teeth-brushing contest! Whoever can hold the foam in their mouth longest wins,” she said, changing the topic.

Biju concentrated all her energy into the contest as she was very competitive. Peijing tried to put the same effort into it, but her heart just wasn’t there. She was glad she had distracted Biju. But come tomorrow her sister would forget all about what utensil she was supposed to use for dinner. She’d use her chopsticks again and be looking for her next challenge; the next fight to pick.



Peijing on the other hand knew that she would carry this memory inside of her for a long time. She thought about the last time when things felt right, back on the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival. It felt so long ago.



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SPOTLIGHT 3

CHAPTER ELEVEN: p. 116-118

THEMES: Family; Culture; Tradition; Adapting to a New Country

VOCABULARY



1. Can you describe what a 'typhoon' is? Why does the author use the word 'typhoon' as a metaphor to describe Biju?
2. What do you think it means to have 'a sense of wistfulness'?

RETRIEVE

1. Highlight the words Biju speaks in one colour and the words Peijing speaks in another colour. Can you act out this scene with a partner?
2. Why is Biju cross?
3. What activity did Biju do at school today?
4. Why does Ma Ma want Biju to use chopsticks rather than a knife and fork?
5. How does Peijing distract Biju?
6. How long have the Guo family been in Australia?

INFER

1. Why do you think Biju wants to eat fish and chips or chicken nuggets instead of Ma Ma's cooking?
2. Can you underline any parts of the text which suggest that Peijing is worried about forgetting things from her old life in Singapore?
3. In what ways do you think Peijing and Biju are similar and in what ways are they different?
4. Based on the story so far, can you think of three things you think Peijing misses about her old life and three things she likes about her new life?
5. How do you think Peijing feels at this point in the story?

EXPLAIN

11. Explain how Peijing helps and supports her little sister.

PREDICT

1. Can you predict what Biju's 'next fight' will be?

SUMMARISE

1. Summarise Peijing's worries and concerns at this point in the story.



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SPOTLIGHT 3

CHAPTER ELEVEN: p. 116-118

THEMES: Family; Culture; Tradition; Adapting to a New Country

ACTIVITY



Put yourself in Peijing's shoes and write a letter to one of your friends back in Singapore. Tell them all about your time in Australia so far. How is Australia different to Singapore? How are you and your family adjusting? What are your worries? What are your hopes for the future?



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SPOTLIGHT 4

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN: p. 283-285

THEMES: Family and Friendship; Sharing; Gratitude; Love

Joanna watched intently as Ma Ma ladled Leftover Stew over her bowl of white steamed rice. Fish balls, carrot, baby corn spears and a chicken drumstick tumbled out with the broth, along with the pungent smelling mustard greens. A spoon and a fork was set out for her, but Joanna noticed that everyone else had chopsticks, so she asked for chopsticks too.

The family watched as Joanna performed strange acts of baton twirling with them. She finished one bowl and then asked for another. Peijing was ravenous too and she found herself taking care as she ate her portion, surprised and then thankful when she found a whole steamed wonton hidden in the middle. Leftover Stew had always been, well, Leftover Stew. But seeing how much Joanna liked it made her think of it in a new light. It was a reminder of what was good in life; of things being rescued and repurposed and of things that didn't seem compatible coming together and tasting all right. She couldn't help but be fond of Leftover Stew.

Ba Ba retold a story about his first ever day at work in Australia that had an unusual and funny twist. Ma Ma smiled and said that when she started work on Saturday she hoped she'd come home with an even funnier story to tell. That spark in Ma Ma's eyes, that competitive streak that hadn't been seen since the night of the mooncake, had come back. Ah Ma remembered with surprise that Leftover Stew was her recipe, and Biju showed Joanna how to lever the chopsticks up and down, up and down.

"You are so lucky," Joanna whispered to Peijing quietly.

Peijing looked at Ma Ma, Ba Ba, Biju and Ah Ma in turn and she knew that, despite what they were not, she loved them for what they were.



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SPOTLIGHT 4

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN: p. 283-285

THEMES: Family and Friendship; Sharing; Gratitude; Love

VOCABULARY



1. What does the word 'pungent' mean?
2. Can you think of a synonym for the word 'ravenous'?
3. What does it mean to think about something 'in a new light'?
4. Define the word 'compatible'.

RETRIEVE

1. Imagine you are sitting at the table with Joanna and the Guo family. What can you smell, taste, see, hear and touch?
2. What are the ingredients of Leftover Stew?
3. What utensils does Joanna use to eat her stew?
4. How many bowls of stew does Joanna eat?

INFER

1. Can you underline any words or sentences that suggest Ma Ma is feeling more positive?
2. Why does Peijing start to think differently about Leftover Stew?
3. Peijing says that Leftover Stew is a reminder of 'things that didn't seem compatible coming together'. Can you think of another example from the story of 'things that didn't seem compatible coming together'?
4. Can you think of three words to describe Joanna's character?
5. Why does Joanna think that Peijing is 'lucky'?

EXPLAIN

1. Explain how Peijing's feelings have changed since she first arrived in Australia.

PREDICT

1. Do you think Peijing and Joanna will see each other again after Joanna goes to live at her grandmother's house?

SUMMARISE

1. Summarise the impact Peijing and Joanna have had on each other's lives. How have they helped and supported each other?

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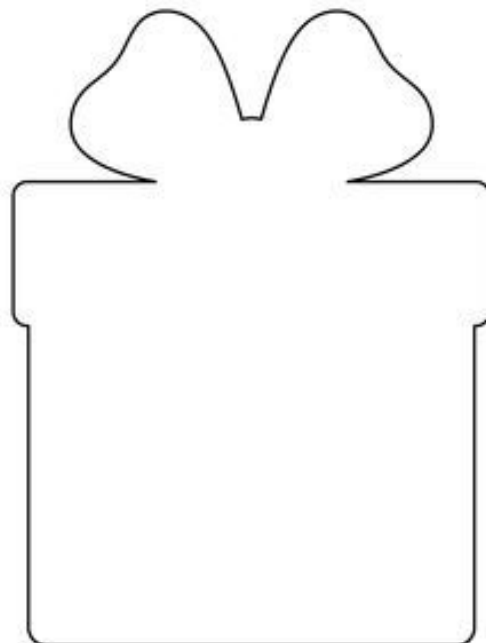
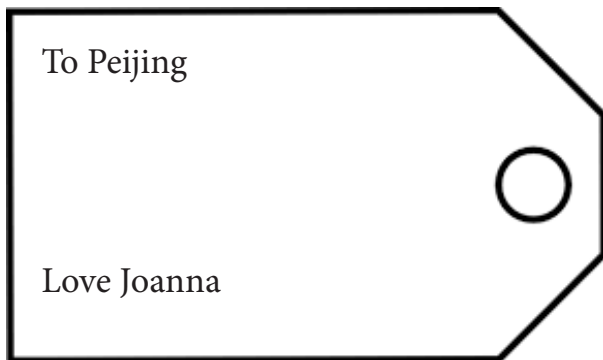
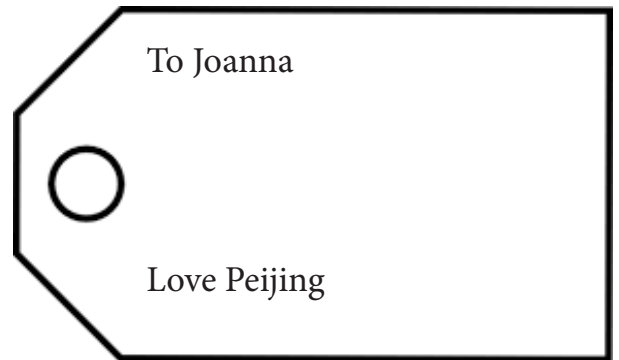
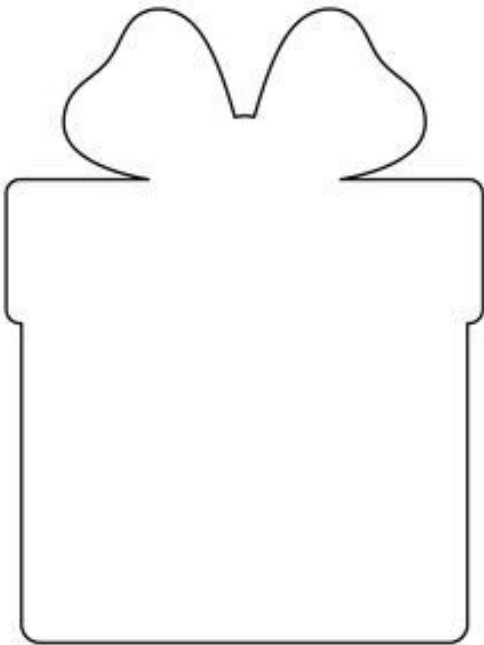
SPOTLIGHT 4

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ACTIVITY

In spotlight 4, Peijing and Joanna share a meal with the Guo family before Joanna goes to live with her grandmother. If Peijing and Joanna were to give each other leaving presents, what do you think they might give each other? Think about each character's interests and hobbies and the times they've spent together. Draw a gift from each character to the other in the template below and write a goodbye note. What do you think Peijing and Joanna would like to say to each other?



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Thank you for using these resources!

We would love to see any work you have created,
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A Glasshouse of Stars!