**THE STORY**

*Norman, Speak!* unravels a comical yet thought-provoking story about a boy and his family who adopt a dog that just can’t seem to learn the things other dogs do. Overwhelmed by dogs in need at a local animal shelter, a young boy chooses Norman, the stray that’s been there the longest. But, upon bringing him home, the family soon learns that Norman won’t respond to commands. He doesn’t even know his own name. During a chance encounter with another dog owner in the park, the family is very surprised to learn the reason for Norman’s confusion; he “speaks” Chinese instead of English! And so the family enrolls in a language class, determined to understand their uniquely loveable pet.

**THEMES**

- Relationships with pets
- The value of cultural diversity
- Lessons about patience, tolerance, as well as intercultural understanding
- How to work together as a family towards a goal
- “Smartness” is not necessarily the same as understanding

**AUTHOR PROFILE**

Caroline Adderson is the author of award-winning books for adults and young readers. She has been nominated for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, two Commonwealth Writers’ Prizes, the Giller Prize, the Governor General’s Award and the Rogers’ Trust Fiction Prize. Her children’s books include *Jasper John Dooley*, *Left Behind* (named a Best Children’s Book of 2013 by Kirkus Reviews), the picture book *Norman, Speak!* and her middle-grade novel, *Middle of Nowhere*, which won the Sheila A. Egoff Children’s Literature Prize and was shortlisted for the Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children Award.

Qin Leng lives and works as a designer and illustrator in Toronto. She has published numerous picture books in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Sweden, Hong Kong and South Korea. She has also illustrated for Save the Children and UNICEF.

**WEB RESOURCES**

**EXTENSION**

- Diversity resources for teachers: https://www.teachervision.com/diversity/teacher-resources/33631.html

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Caroline Adderson’s website: http://www.carolineaddersonkids.com/books/norman-speak/
- Publisher’s website: http://www.houseofanansi.com/Norman-Speak-P2286.aspx
DISCUSS

• Who are the main characters?
• Who is Norman? Where was he found?
• Why did the boy choose him?
• Was Norman able to learn anything? What did the family think?
• What happened in the park? What did the family discover?
• Why did they sign up for Chinese lessons?
• What were the first words they learned in Chinese? How would you say “Hello” in Chinese?
• What does “smartness” and “understanding” mean?
• Who decided to quit taking Chinese lessons? Why?
• What did the boy learn? Did it help him with Norman?
• How did the story end? What lessons have you learned?
• How would you describe ways we love our pets? Our friends?
• What if your pet wasn’t smart enough? Or your friend was less intelligent than you?
• What does “diversity” mean to you? Do you have friends from different cultures?
• Why shouldn’t we pre-judge others?
• What did the main character learn?
• What did you learn from reading this book?
• Why did the author choose the title of the book?

SUGGESTED READINGS

By the same author:
• Very Serious Children, 2007
• I, Bruno, 2007
• Bruno for Real, 2007

By other artists from Wordfest 2014:
• Dan Bar-El, Audrey Cow
• Ricardo Liniers, The Big Wet Balloon.

Other books and movies on related subjects:
• Lisa Bullard, Rashad’s Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr

ACTIVITY SHEETS

October is Diversity Awareness Month. Teach students to respect differences among people in their community and around the world by using the resources below for elementary, intermediate, or high school students. You’ll find printables that promote tolerance and understanding, and lessons about immigrant families. Art, reading, and writing activities will help familiarize students with the history and traditions of different religions and ethnic groups.

Activity sheet #1: Use these questions to help your students interview someone from another culture about a holiday that they have celebrated. Holidays you could focus on include Jewish, Muslim, and Christian holidays. (View this activity sheet)

Activity sheet #2: Teach students how to say “thank you” in many different languages. This printable materials provide an excellent activity for the Thanksgiving season, during which you can teach your students to appreciate and give thanks for their blessings. However it is appropriate any day of year! (View this activity sheet)

Activity sheet #3: New Year’s Day, Cinco de Mayo, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and birthdays are covered in this booklet. (View this activity sheet)
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

English Language Arts

General Outcome 2: Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.

The student uses prior knowledge:

- Understands that stories, information and personal experiences can be recorded in pictures and print, and can be listened to, read or viewed
- Expects print and pictures to have meaning and to be related to each other in print and other media texts
- Understands that print and books are organized in predictable ways.
- Knows that each story has a beginning, a middle and an end
- Can identify what characters do or what happens to them in a variety of oral, print and other media texts

The student experiments with language

- Demonstrates interest in repetition, rhyme and rhythm in shared language experiences, such as action songs and word play

Art

Students will interpret artworks literally.

- Art takes different forms depending on the materials and techniques used.
- An artwork tells something about its subject matter and the artist who made it.
- Colour variation is built on three basic colours.
- Tints and shades of colours or hues affect the contrast of a composition.
- All aspects of an artwork contribute to the story it tells.

READING LEVEL

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<th>FIRST READ</th>
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<td>First semi-independent reading; Simple characters, situations and dialogue; Simple vocabulary; Simple sentences; Some illustrations to support text and content.</td>
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