

At the Crossroads

Rachel Isadora

Julia MacRae Books, ISBN 1-85681-122-0

For a mother this story may tug at the heart as it is about children waiting to celebrate their fathers' return, after 10 months away as migrant workers on a mine. The story offers a look at life in a squatter camp as another way of living.

The book is beautifully illustrated by Rachel Isadora and will inspire some of our budding artists!



Memory verse

Hebrews 10: 35 "You need to persevere..."

Copywork

Our fathers have come. "Wake up, Zolani. Our fathers are here! Our fathers are here!"

Bible - Perseverance

The Bible tells us to persevere in our faith. Read Hebrews 10:35-36 to your children. Draw your children's attention to how Zolani, Zola, Sipho and Nomsa persevere in the vigil of waiting for their Father's return. Also read the parable of the 10 brides with their oil lamps in Matthew 25:1. Five of the brides waited and were prepared and five were foolish. Talk about the meaning of this parable. The five who were prepared were rewarded just as Zolani and his companions.

Bible – Value of families

The family is the beginning of the social circle for children and strong families make a strong country. This story shows reuniting of the family after a period of separation. Encourage your children to say a prayer for families who are not able to be together. Think about something you can do together as a family to begin building a family tradition, which will provide your children with good memories.



The Young family

Social studies - Squatter camps

On the first page there is a two-page spread of the artist's impression of the squatter township of Crossroads in the Cape. Crossroads is an informal settlement that arose due to apartheid. After the old system of 'influx control' was abolished, people from rural areas who wanted to work in the cities were free to do so. However, it was estimated that in the year 2000, that there was a housing shortage of about 3 million houses. As a result, the new arrivals built shacks and informal settlements arose on the edges of towns and cities. These facts are more for you than your children.

Ask your children to look carefully at the picture mentioned above and do not tell them that what they are looking at are homes. See if they are aware of what they are looking at. With some gentle introduction, you can tell them that many people do not have homes like we do. Most of our homes are built with brick and mortar. Perhaps you know someone who lives in or near to a squatter camp.

Ask your children to look beyond the homes to the poles that stick up. Tell them that this is how some homes get electricity, although most squatters' homes do not have the luxury. On the right hand page there are rugby goal posts. See if your children notice this before you point it out to them.

The following page shows the mothers collecting water from a single tap. Ask your children why they need to do this. It may come as a surprise for them that in a squatter camp there is no running water into the homes. The mothers would have to exercise a certain degree of patience as they line up and wait for their turn for water.

When you turn the page the children will see how children in a squatter camp have their baths. Ask your children to describe how they would feel if they had to stand in a shallow basin of cold water for their morning wash. This is not to create a feeling of guilt but rather to stir feelings of empathy towards those who are poor.

Help the children to locate Crossroads (or Cape Town) on the map. Place your picture disc there. Crossroads is situated alongside the N1 near to Cape Town International Airport.

Social studies - Migrant workers

The story is about the children in Crossroads waiting for their fathers to return home from the mines. For your younger children explain that a mine is a place where men work the ground to get out precious metals, stones or fuels. If they show an interest in this aspect of the book, then investigate it further at your library. This topic will be covered again in **Foorprints on Our Land**.

Migrant workers are either men or women who have to travel long distances to their place of employment. The children's father travelled from Cape Town to the Witwatersrand, we assume, to work on the mines. Other migrant workers leave their homes to go to the sugar cane plantations in KwaZulu-Natal. Some domestic workers are also classified as migrant workers.

Mark the following with your children on your map.

- Cape Town - Crossroads
- Natal – Sugar Farming
- Gauteng – Gold mining
- Kimberley – Diamond mining

Let them see the distance that the fathers would have to travel for their annual homecoming.

Discuss with your children how they would feel if their father was gone for one or more nights. Try and help them understand how these little children in the story would feel, seeing their fathers again after 10 months.

Maths - Passing of time

Time is an abstract notion for many young children. Around 8 years of age they begin to notice passing time. If you have a photo album take it out and show them pictures of themselves over the last 10 months. Talk through some things that they have achieved in this time. Also point out some highlights that Dad would have missed if he were away over the last 10 months.

Art - Water reflections

You will need: paper and paint or crayons

On the page where the children are all dressed and ready for school, draw your children's attention to the puddles of water on the ground. Using either crayons or paint if you prefer, ask them to draw a picture where they create a reflection. They will have to invert their picture. We found it easiest to draw a tree and a lake then turn the paper around and draw the tree in the water again rather than draw upside down. They may like to add clouds and birds to their picture.



Reflections

Singing - Hymns

Many schools no longer allow the singing of hymns in the morning assembly like we had when we were at school. Can you remember any of the hymns you sang as a child? It may be that you belong to a church that still sings hymns rather than the more contemporary choruses. Either way, find a hymn that you enjoy and teach it to your children. In the front of one of our nature journals is the following hymn:

“When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
It were and offering far too small,
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all.”

Another well known hymn is *Amazing Grace*.

Craft and Music - Making a band

In celebration of their father's imminent return, the children put together a home-made band of instruments. Here are musical instruments that you can make with your children:

Tambourine shaker

You will need: two paper plates, paint, glitter glue or koki pens, streamers or ribbons, stapler

Decorate two paper plates on the undersides with paints or glitter glue or khoki pens. Staple some long streamers around the edge of one. Place some kidney beans in the centre. Now invert the other plate and staple it closed. This is a "tambourine-shaker".

Shaker

You will need: small plastic bottle with a lid, pasta, rice or beads

Fill up a small bottle with rice, pasta or beads to shake.

Drum

You will need: bowl, fabric

Make a drum by stretching a piece of fabric very tightly over a large bowl. Drumsticks can be made with any stick and sticky tape wound into a knob at one end.

Guitar

You will need: empty ice-cream box with lid, empty paper towel roll, rubber bands, glue

A guitar, similar to the one used by the children in the book, can be made by glueing a 2 litre ice-cream container. Seal the lid and then cut circular hole in the lid. Add an empty paper towel roll to the short end of the ice-cream container with tape. Use elastic bands to stretch from one end over the hole to the other end of the container.

Castanets

You will need: two identical metal bottle tops, cardboard, scissors, glue

Cut a strip of cardboard about 15 x 4 cm. Fold it in half. Glue the bottle tops with the top upwards to each end of the inside of the folded strip so that they touch each other exactly.

Geography - Sunset

On the title page of the book, there is a truly brilliant picture of a setting sun. This image is repeated later in the story. One evening, make a point of watching the setting sun with your children. During this time you can explain the following to them.

In the air, even though we may not see them, are many millions of dust particles. The sun's rays are split as they bounce off these dust particles. Sunsets are generally red in

colour as this is the last visible colour as the sun goes down. Encourage the children to notice further colour changes after the sun has set, until the onset of darkness.

Read the poem *The Sun in A Baobab is Big*.

Art - Sunset

Encourage the children to paint a sunset in their nature notebooks.

Language - Storytelling

To keep awake whilst waiting, the children tell stories to each other. Our children love hearing us tell stories from our own childhood. There is an art in telling an oral story as you have to rely on word pictures to hold your children's attention, instead of pictures on a page.

Get into the habit of telling them stories when you are driving or sitting quietly. Tell them stories that will encourage them, build up their moral awareness and social consciousness. As homeschooling families we have the blessing and privilege of being with our children often, so let us use this time purposefully.

Set aside a story night and each take turns telling stories. Get your husband involved in this as well – is there a story he can tell of a pet he once had or a game he used to play? Grandparents are also wonderful 'storehouses' of good stories. Add some hot chocolate and a fire in winter and you are all set for a memory making evening.

Uncle Bill's Bedtime Stories by Bill Mc Dougall is a collection of short, true-life stories written by an 87-year old grandfather, that reflect God's hand in his own life and those of others on a daily basis. This book is available from **Footprints on Our Land**.

Geography - Shadows

On the last three pages of the book, the pictures are drawn with long shadows. It is dawn when the fathers arrive, so the sun is low in the sky. This creates long shadows.

Take your children outside during the morning and let them see the length of their shadows. Trace around them with chalk. At midday, return to the same spot and trace the shadows of each child again with another colour chalk. Return again during late afternoon and trace their shadows for a third time. Ask for their observations.

When they have pondered this for some time and offered you their explanations you can add as much of the following information as is necessary. Each day the Earth rotates on its axis as moves around the sun on its annual circuit. This rotation causes sunrise and sunset. At sunrise, the angle of the sun striking the earth is small - we call this an *oblique* ray. This casts long shadows. At midday the sun is overhead and this causes a short shadow. Again at the end of the day, the rays are oblique and create a long shadows but this time, in the opposite direction.