



## **A Cardboard Palace – Allayne Webster**

**Teacher Resource – Written by Andy Altamura B.A. B.Ed. Sp.Ed.**

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*A Cardboard Palace* is Allayne's fifth novel. Set in modern day France, it is intended as a **middle grade fiction**. It explores the themes of relationships, adolescence and coming of age, centred around a group of youths who have been trafficked to France.

This resource has been designed for middle years teachers and is aligned to ACARA. Each chapter begins with comprehension questions, followed by extension questions. At the end the novel study there are cross-curricula links to enable teachers to use this novel as a part of a multi-disciplinary study.

### **Pre-reading Activity**

- Look at the cover. What do you predict the book will be about?
- Why do you think your teacher has chosen this novel, how might it relate to relationships, adolescence or coming of age?

### **Chapter 1**

#### **Comprehension Questions**

- What are your first impressions of Bill?
- Does Bill care for the children? Use examples from the text to support your views.
- Jorge describes the cake he likes best. Choose a food you like and describe it.

#### **Extension Questions**

- How is the coming of age in France different to Australia?
- On a map locate the places of importance in the story – Metro, Eiffel Tower, The Louvre, River Seine, Arch de Triomphe, Jardin Du Luxembourg, Notre Dame, Rue de la Cité, La Brasserie Napoleon,

Basilica, Canal Saint Martin, Rue Bonaparte, Gare du Nord, Promenade Plantée, Pyramides Station, Sacré –Coeur Basilica, Catacombs.

- How has the author set the story in modern day France?
- Where do street people/homeless people live in your area or state?
- Trafficked. What does it mean? Why is trafficking easier in Europe compared to Australia?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- Why might Jorge’s parents have allowed him to go with Bill?
- How does Bill make money?
- How do other street people make money?

### **Extension Questions**

- Think about your neighbourhood or state. Are there richer and poorer suburbs? Is there a no-man’s land?
- Discuss the idea of morals. What things do you think you would never do? What might you do if you were poor, hungry or desperate?
- How different would your life be if you lived in a shed like Jorge – consider your education, recreation, bathing, sleeping, washing clothes, cooking and eating.
- What clues does the author give to suggest that domestic violence is not uncommon in Ada and Gino’s family?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- Who are the easier targets according to Jorge? Why?
- How does Bill control the group when he can’t see them all the time?
- Use a graphic organizer to record each child character, their age and information about them.

### **Extension Questions**

- Look at the language used to describe the homes being removed. Emotive language is used to affect the reader. What words or phrases does emotive? How do the words or phrases you’ve selected affect the reader? What emotions are they designed to evoke?
- Are Jorge and Bill ‘bad people’ for stealing? What does the author want you to believe? How does she tell you this?
- Think about your day. How different is it to Zabahn’s, Jorge’s and Abel’s? Consider the use of technology, food, time spent on self-interests.
- What are basic human rights? Who is responsible for make sure they are met?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- How does Jorge describe the guard's face? What other descriptive words could be used.
- How does Pierre react to homeless people entering his restaurant?
- Why do you think Jorge makes a decision to be honest with Sticky?

### **Extension Questions**

- Research Joan of Arc. Why does the author use the story of Joan of Arc, How does it help us understand Jorge?
- Authors make us like or dislike characters by the way they write them. Compare Bill and Sticky. How has the author influenced your feelings towards them?

## **Before Chapter 5**

- Predict how Bill would react if he found Jorge not working, or if he found him eating?

## **Chapter 5**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- Why do you think Jorge didn't tell the police officer the truth when she asked if he was okay?
- How do Ada and Gino make their money?
- What makes Ada and Gino different to the other children? (parents present, often work together, don't steal)
- Is Jorge an honest or dishonest person? Justify.
- What do you think the author's message might be?
- Why does Ada steal from the boutique?

### **Extension Questions**

- Bill is called a controller. What would you call him if you were the author?
- Is honesty an important quality in people?
- Consider how many people are affected by Jorge's stealing.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- What needs to change in the children's lives so that they don't have to resort to stealing as adults?
- Who has sold Cheri? Why?

### **Extension Questions**

- Can being honest be turned on and off?
- Can behaviours be changed from one day to the next?
- Do you think change is as easy as making a decision to make things different?
- What ingredients are needed to be successful?
- Why will Jorge be free in a few years?
- Is the author a pessimist or an optimist? Explain using examples from the text.
- Why do the other adults support the selling of a girl into marriage?
- What is an arranged marriage?
- How old do you have to be to legally marry in Australia?
- Why would a parent sell their child?
- What rights are these young people being denied?

## **Chapter 7**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- Which child character is the strongest? How has the author conveyed this?
- Which character do you identify with most in the story? What do you have in common?
- Refer to the discussion in the text about Kali's health. Is Bill being honest with the group? What words or phrases indicate this?

### **Extension Questions**

- Think about Jorge's living conditions. How might they affect his health? (rodents, rubbish and waste disposal, washing facilities, exposure to weather, access to food, access to water)
- What do you think happened to Kali?
- Why doesn't the author tell you exactly what happened? What's the author's reasoning?
- What diseases can you get from a rat bite?

## **Chapter 8**

### **Comprehension Questions**

Research Marie Antoinette. Use a Venn diagram and from Jorge's perspective state how he and Marie are similar and different.

### **Extension Questions**

- Make a gallery of the art in the story (Ramesses the second, Easter Island head, Venus de Milo, Medieval Moat, The Seated Scribe, The Card Sharper, The Turkish Bath, Mona Lisa, Marie Antoinette, Cupid and Psyche). Which is your favourite? Explain why.
- Examine photos of the Louvre. Do you think they should have added the pyramid?
- How has the writing style changed in the passages within The Louvre? (Jovial interaction between characters, more child-like and carefree.) Why has the author chosen to change the style?

## **Chapter 9**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- How does Jorge have 'fun'? How does this compare to you?
- How are Abel and Jorge's views different to the other males in the camp?
- Why doesn't Jorge go to the police for help and tell them what Bill has done?

### **Extension Questions**

- Is cock fighting legal in Australia? Do you think it is entertaining?
- Research old games, quoits, knucklebones, marbles. Teach a classmate how to play.
- Henny says, "If Ada comes back..." What might happen to cause her not to return? Why is Henny calm and not fazed about this?
- What is your opinion of arranged marriage?
- What things do you think Abel worries about? What worries you?
- Do you think Bill has any intention to return Jorge to his family? Explain.
- What makes a good citizen?
- Jorge talks about there being different types of people: people who push, people who curl into a ball, people who fight. Do you agree with this? What other people can you think of?

**Before Chapter 10**

Prediction. What do you think Jorge plans to do? How will it make his life different?

**Chapter 10****Comprehension Questions**

- How does Pierre's reaction to Jorge change? What words or phrases tell you this?
- What does Pierre want Jorge to do rather than react as he did?

**Extension Questions**

Imagine you are the boy at table 28. What are your thoughts to Jorge's action?

'People are not born bad, Jorge, If you ask me, people know good from bad and they make a choice' Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Why does the author choose to include this? What is her message for the reader?

Is it important to know where you came from? (\*heritage)

- How does being removed from your family, culture or birthplace affect people? Consider the Stolen Generation as an example.
- In what different ways can people show affection towards each other? How many are inexpensive?
- Jorge shares a lot of his life with Honey and then stops. What do you think causes him to suddenly stop? What do you think Honey will do with this information?

**Chapter 11****Comprehension Questions**

- How are Bill and Reuben similar?
- What do you think the padlock Bill has is for?

**Extension Questions**

- Why do you think no adults approach Bill's car when he pulls into camp?
- Why is Bill spelling the word 'speak' incorrectly significant? Why did the author include this? Does it change or affect your impression of Bill?
- Do you think Bill would like to be associated with Reuben? Why/why not?
- Do you think Reuben would like to be associated with Bill? Why/why not?
- Why is getting a good price important to Reuben?
- Brainstorm why many adults walk past people who are begging?

- Research the black market organ trade. What is your opinion on this topic? Would your opinion change if you knew someone who desperately needed an organ transplant?
- Why doesn't Abel cry out in your opinion?
- Why is Jorge sorry?

## **Chapter 12**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- Abel allows Henny to care for him. How many other examples are there of adults caring for children in the novel?

### **Extension Questions**

- Why did the author make the reporter a female and not a male? Would it change the impact of the reporter character?
- Why does the reporter not want to talk to Reuben? Why might Jorge be a better choice?
- What 'bad things' could Bill threaten Jorge with? Imagine yourself in Jorge's shoes and list them.
- What information did the reporter get from Jorge? Write up your notes imagining you are the reporter.
- The author suggests a lot of possibilities about what happened to Cheri. What do you think? What evidence is there in the novel to support your ideas?
- Why do you think the author chose to have the reporter enter after Bill and exit before Cheri's incident?
- Cheri has stolen in the past for Bill. Who did she steal for this time? Explain.
- Is life valued the same all over the world and across all economic groups (rich and poor)? How have lives been celebrated or mourned in the novel? How different is it to what you know or have experienced?

## **Chapter 13**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- Which of the children are vocal about not wanting to work for Bill forever? How do they differ in their plans for the future?
- If you needed to make money like the characters in the novel whose method would you choose? Why?

### **Extension Questions**

- What do you think Bill does with the money? Bill speaks of a shortfall – can he rely on a set income each week? Is stealing a reliable and consistent form of income?

- Do you think it's true that everyone and everything is for sale, that it's only a matter of price?
- Why do you think Jorge runs when the president recognizes him?

## **Chapter 14**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- Does the police officer believe that Jorge's parents are in the camp? What in the text suggests this?
- Everyone has a price, what is Jorge's?
- Words can be powerful. Compare the words Bill uses with Jorge in Chapter 1 and how they make him feel, with the words Sticky uses in Chapter 14.

### **Extension Questions**

- Who do you think informed the police? What makes you think that?
- Are the children in the locked shed connected to Bill?
- If Bill did get locked up what do you think would happen to Jorge, Abel and the others?
- Why does Jorge feel guilty about the three children found in the shed?
- Why do Jorge and Zabahn wish sometimes that they would be caught?
- 'Someone cares.' Is having someone care about you necessary for you to be happy and healthy?
- Do you have to have a relationship with people that care, for their efforts to be significant? (consider donations)
- What difference can it make telling Sticky about the problems?
- Where can children get help in Australia?
- In your life who's words lift you up? What do they say?
- Draw a mud map of the camp using information from the novel.

## **Chapter 15**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- Think about Henny. What type of character is she? (strong/weak, ally/enemy, trustworthy/untrustworthy). Use examples from the text to support. How do you feel about her?
- How are 'brides' celebrated on their wedding day in the novel?
- How is Jorge regarded by the other adults in the camp, at the wedding?
- List the ways Jorge tried to help Ada.

### **Extension Questions**

Why wouldn't Reuben let Ada play with Jorge?

Why don't other people speak out? Do you think they all agree with selling daughters into marriage?

Jorge was worried about how Bill would react about the TV interview. How did you imagine Bill would react? Why has the author chosen for Bill not to make a big scene?

Why does Ada call out, 'Jorge, please, no! Stop!'?

How important is giving your word? To Jorge it means a lot and he tries to save Ada as he promised her he would.

## **Chapter 16**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- When Sticky says most Australian are like him what qualities, skills or characteristics do you think he is referring to?

### **Extension Questions**

- How do you think the story will end? What will happen to Jorge, Abel and the others? Will the police catch Bill? What happens to Reuben's family?

## **Chapter 17**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- What is different about Jorge's life? How has he changed? How can you tell?
- Zabahn hugging Jorge is a rare display of affection. Why do you think the boys hug? What are they each thinking?
- How do you feel that Bill is back? Did you think Jorge was rid of him?
- Why does Sticky encourage Jorge to say something to Bill?

### **Extension Questions**

- Chapter 17 opens with Jorge working and learning in the restaurant. Why is Jorge not at school?
- What are you scared of? Which of these do you think Jorge may fear too? Why?
- Jorge imagines what the bones might say if they could speak. If you were offering a word of advice to teenagers of the future what would it be?
- How did the author lead you to feeling that Jorge was secure and safe? What did she include, what had she removed?
- What will happen now? Is it all too late for Jorge?
- The author has deliberately given Bill a hood. Which image des she try to get the reader to imagine? Why has she chosen this? How does she want the reader to react?
- Does Bill really believe that he and Jorge are like family?

- What does the comment, 'Eat cake' refer to?

## **Chapter 18**

### **Comprehension Questions**

- In the final chapter there are a number of characters that smile, but the smiles mean different things. Identify each character and state what their smiles are conveying.

### **Extension Questions**

- Listen to and read news articles. Where are there problem in the world currently? Where are people moving from? Where are they moving to?
- What was the author's final message? Did your predictions about what the message was change during the reading of the novel?
- Authors paint pictures with words to help us connect to the characters and the location. Create a representation (model, picture, collage) of the characters in the novel.

### **Cross-Disciplinary Links**

#### **Civics and Citizenship**

##### **Year 7**

What are the values of the street kids?

How do they perceive tourists, police, the controller, café owner?

How is Jorge perceived by the controller (Bill), café owner (Pierre), chef (Sticky) and other street kids?

How do Australian perceive homeless people? (consider Spencer Street Station, Melbourne 2017).

What supports do you know of for people in need? How do people get help?

Why might people not ask for help?

Australian society promotes giving a 'fair go'. Do you think all people get a fair go? What need to change for all people to get a fair go? Consider metropolitan vs regional, socio-economic, access to education, opportunity for work, access to healthcare, ability to communicate, physical ability.

##### **Year 8**

What does it mean to be you, a young person in Australia? What does it mean to be Jorge a young person in France?

Are you a typical Australian youth? Is Jorge a typical French youth?

Make a collage of 'Australian' images – discuss the similarities and differences between the collages each student makes.

Discuss, does your culture and heritage influence which images you chose?

As a young person how do you get to 'have a say'? How does Jorge get to have a say?

### **Year 9**

What is your view of homelessness? How have you developed this view? What has influenced you (affect of range of media including social media).

What do you want to know about homelessness?

[www.homelessnessaustrali.org.au/index.php/about-homelessness/homeless-statistics](http://www.homelessnessaustrali.org.au/index.php/about-homelessness/homeless-statistics)

Homelessness and children factsheet

'France sees steep rise in deaths of street children' article.

### **Geography**

#### **Year 8**

Consider where 'slums' are built. What geographical features would make them attractive? Consider access to resources, land terrain, proximity to urban development.

What problems do slums pose for the wider community and governments?

Consider health concerns, dangerous structure, lack of sanitization, clean drinking water, waste disposal, rodents.

#### **Year 9**

How have the slums affected the environment? Consider what is different due to human occupation of the land versus if it were a vacant block. (soil erosion, disposal of rubbish and human waste, trampling and removal of vegetation, reduction in native flora and fauna, introduction of species, introduction of electricity via spliced cabling).

How would a built environment or housing development differ to a slum if the council were involved? (building inspection, disposal of waste, regulations regarding building materials, building size, proximity to neighbours and the amount of recreation space, and consideration of safety eg. roads wide enough for emergency vehicle access.

Think about the push and pull factors. What pushes someone out of an area? What pulls someone towards an area?

## **Business and Economics**

### **Year 7**

Why do individual work? What type of work would you like to do? What skills do you possess that make you likely to succeed? In what ways in the novel do the characters derive an income?

What type of work does Jorge want to do? What skills does he have to do it? What obstacles will he need to overcome to achieve his goal?

What makes a job a job? Is stealing a job?

Do you think phone calls from people posing as Microsoft employees saying there is a problem with your computer is a job?

### **Health**

How does someone's birth or circumstances affect their lives? Can you be more than you were born to be?

What is potential? What is resilience?

Is it good to have goals that are so different to your life? Is there anything as an unrealistic goal?

Why does the author let Jorge dream about being a chef when he doesn't even have a house to live in and his basic needs aren't being fulfilled?

### **Maths**

#### *Measurement and geometry*

The tiny house movement is growing in popularity. What are the advantages of a tiny house? (cost, environmental footprint, use of resources, economically achievable)

'We the tiny house people doco' [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDeVRVA4bSQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDeVRVA4bSQ)

Design your own tiny house.

### **English**

#### **Comparative text – *The Thief Lord*, by Cornelia Funke**

*Set in Venice the fictional novel follows two young boy Prosper and Bo who are befriended by a group of street children, are being chased by a detective eager to close his missing person case.*

#### *Comparative Activities*

Compare the reasons the children in each novel have for becoming street children.

Compare the places the children sleep between the two texts.

Compare the characters of Jorge and Prosper. How are they similar and different?

How are Bill and the Thief Lord similar and different?

Compare the message of each author. Which one do you connect with more?

Compare the style of writing of each author.

Compare the ways each author let you know her story was set in modern day Europe.

Compare and contrast the role of adults in each novel.

What are the similarities and differences between each street gang?

For further information about the **author** of *A Cardboard Palace* visit:

[www.allaynewebster.com](http://www.allaynewebster.com)

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