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Russell Hoban , Alexis Deacon (Illustrator)

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A touching story about a boy in hospital, who dreams wild and extraordinary dreams as he faces a life-saving operation.

Jim is in hospital. He's frightened. What if the doctors send him somewhere that he can't find his way back from? Nurse Bami tells Jim that he must go to his "good place" and there, his "finder" will come looking for him. Everyone has a finder. And so, deep in Jim's dreams, he finds his: a lion. In *Soonchild*, Russell Hoban's final piece of fiction before he died, Alexis Deacon met the spirit and wit of Hoban's vision head-on – brilliantly capturing the dark magic that lay at the heart of this fable. Since then, it feels almost impossible to imagine a better match for Hoban's words than Alexis' art.

Jim's Lion Details

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Author : Russell Hoban , Alexis Deacon (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Jim's Lion for online ebook

Ellie Labbett says

It is stories like these that remind me of how literature really is such a work of art. Jim's Lion is an incredible book, completely abstract and a highly interpretive text that could be read in so many ways. To me, Hoban and Deacon speak of a young boy's journey of summoning courage- perhaps even finding the strength to allow oneself to BE courageous, and discovering what lay inside all along. The beauty in this narrative lies in the gaps between the text and picture, fused together to build a story with a depth and complexity that is difficult to articulate. A book that deserves to be read again and again; I first encountered this text a couple of months ago and am not surprised how much seemed to have changed for me and how small details felt far more significant.

Katy Noyes says

This looks like a picture book, but the author's name indicates that this is one for older children.

The protagonist is in hospital, we aren't told exactly what is wrong, but find out that he's very sick, and needs an operation but that it's risky. A nurse talks to him about how she copes with problems, and the boy uses his own fantasy world to cope with his illness.

I read this thinking "how would I share this with a child?" - a lot of it isn't text but comic-like pictures with no words, with admittedly-clever themes that run into each other and tell a story of Jim starting off feeling scared of his 'lion', and eventually taming it and accepting his help to overcome pain and fear.

Some of it I really didn't know how to interpret, or how I would describe it to a reader, so I would recommend this for older children who can read it for themselves, or who can interpret the pictures with less parental input, though I would want to read it alongside them.

The operation scene, which we see mostly through Jim's hallucinations were quite moving, the ending touching.

It's a book that could be read over the course of a single bedtime, and would, like A Monster Calls, be a story that might be brought out to help a child cope with a hospital stay or illness.

One for slightly older children, I would say ages 7+

Julia M says

This is a very graphic book about the fears a child would have to face the fears of going through a very difficult situation and that is exactly what the reader has to bring into the story – the experience of facing fear. The book is marvellously illustrated. The use of warm/dark colours do bring about a sombre mood making the reader feel the same tension and worry the character is feeling. The illustrations are not always

consistent. There are different styles (how it's painted/ drawn) between the pages which give a different atmosphere to every scene building the story up introducing different climaxes throughout the story (dream/nightmare) Jim is having.

I think this book would best be suited for KS 2 children although it is a picture book. The images/ illustrations could be distressing for some younger children and interpreting these pictures can also be a challenging task.

However like many novels, before using this book I would have to get to know my entire classroom. As said previously, the images can be very distressing and one must consider if it will be appropriate to use if children have to or have had an operation.

You could use this book across the curriculum, maybe Art, Re and Geography, exploring different cultures in reference to the character Bami and her view on fighting fears.

Ophélie says

The last book I had to read from my #listofbetterment and probably the best one. It was absolutely fascinating, captivating, compelling, and overall very emotional.

Jim's Lion is about an ill child who, thanks to his nurse, learns to escape from his sickness in his dreams.

The mix between pages with only illustrations, or only words, and also both, makes it really interesting. Sometimes I even found that some illustrations were more powerful than the narration.

It is a tough subject, the illustrations are sometimes graphic, I think that this book should be given to older children, but most of all should be read with the help of an adult in order to engage a conversation once it is finished.

RhiannaH says

A story full of adventure and bravery. Requiring a certain amount of inference from its audience in order to narrate some elements of the story. This requirement of the book can be implemented into the classroom as an introduction to the usefulness of inference and how to apply it.

John of Canada says

Lovely positive story for kids and adults.

Beth says

This is an intermediate hybrid graphic novel. The text was originally a separate story written by Russell Hoban in 2001, but illustrator Alexis Deacon created the images to go along with the text to cross the genre into graphic novels in 2014.

NOTE: While the reading level for this book is 3.4 it most definitely is NOT for younger audiences. While the story line is exceptional in its depiction of fear of the unknown, potential life and death illness and operation, and an internal and external battle for life, the images that make the text visual are very powerful. The recommended age level for this book is 9-12 but I would put it somewhere in the 12-14 age range or a very mature 10-12.

The story also portrays a powerful message of peace amongst chaos and looking within one's self to find strength. But it also reminds us that we are never truly alone. Someone will always be there to help us through the darkness if we only have the mind to look beyond the fear. The graphic boxes and text are set apart throughout most of the novel only appearing on the graphic boxes occasionally. Most of the text follows traditional novel prose, but occasionally shifts to mirror true graphic novel format.

This book has many potential applications for individual students who have lost a love one, or in conjunction with another story or novel where the protagonist is faced with extremely challenging circumstances and must decide which path to take. It could also be used to teach lessons on looking for help but also being there for others in a reciprocal role and helping others who are facing challenges.

It could also be used in a book bundle with other books like Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls*, Guadalupe Garcia McCall's *Under the Moon*, and the Native American myth *The Earth on the Turtle's back*.

Andrea says

Litres of tears! Delightful pictures: Deacon succeeded to portrait Jim's dreaming setting in a thrilling way. On the other hand, Hoban wrote a simple story rich in sensitivity. The two parts follow one another perfectly: a lovely dichotomy!

PSHE: it would enrich children's empathy towards animals. An interesting written/artistic session could be set up: firstly transforming Deacon's pictures into words and then Hoban's words into pictures.

Jess Hancock says

This is the first book I've read by Hoban. It's a dark, emotive and compelling graphic novel. Deacon's illustrations are incredibly deep and powerful throughout the book. On my first read, the darkness made me frantically read, as the tension rose, I needed to know if Jim would survive. I read the book again for a second and third time to absorb more.

Bami appears as Kim's guardian angel, her message is clear, being in your 'happy place' with a 'finder' and your 'don't run stone' will give you power and strength to fight. I like the 'finder' auditions, not in a funny way, but this added a child like element to the story. The illustrations highlight the torment and trauma Jim's body is going through, and a sequence of pictures shows us, he is literally holding on to life by a string at one point.

I perceive Jim's lion to be his parents, or parent. The lion isn't 'finding' him, he is fiercely protecting him, fighting for him, battling for him, never willing to stop until they are together again.

The last pages are captivating as Jim himself turns into a lion. He displays his strength and fierceness by scaring away the by standers (illness?) and is reunited with Jim's lion (his parents?)

A very powerful read.

Mathew says

THE best book I read this year.

Jason Bootle says

I don't recall many books that I have cried at the end of but this one brought a tear to my eye. What a magical, beautiful, moving story. So exquisitely told and illustrated. I'm moved.

Ayesha Hussain says

Probably the only thing I can reply to this is OMG what did I just read ! Using the words with the pictures really make the story come to life.. The book is about a boy which is seriously ill which need to make major surgery, however the boy is to scared to take the operation. With the assistance of a Bani a nurse the child finds the courage to go to his "good place" in which he faces his finder. The finder is the lion which is shown on the front page, I think the lion is representing God? With the moral of the story being if you have faith anything can happen. However what I would like to know is if the lion is used to represent god why did the illustrator use a scary looking lion .. Rather than an animal which is associated with peace such as a bird. May be the lion is used because the lion is known as the animal of power like god..

What I found particularly interesting was the book was written for an older audience and was picture book! From what I have believed was picture books only work with children books however this book changed my thinking :)

Beth says

This story follows the journey of a young boy who has a life threatening illness, and his internal search for strength and courage. Its hard to know where to start with this book, its unlike anything I've ever read before. I feel like it is one of those books where each time you read it, you interpret it in a different way or see a tiny detail that you perhaps didn't notice before. I really loved it, especially the Alexis Deacon illustrations representing Jim's dreams.

James Benham says

The story of a young boy finding his courage and determination. While I didn't understand every part of the story, I think that's part of its beauty. So much of it is abstract it is possible to form your own opinions and ideas about Jim's trials. And although pictures play a huge role in telling the story in this book, it is by no means just for young or less advanced readers. The text gives just enough information for context while

sticking with the real world being told in words and the world of dreams portrayed through images. I particularly liked some of Jim's perceptions of the real world in his dreams, such as the spider-like medical contraption. I also loved that Jim is initially scared of the lion (which in my eyes was a metaphor for being brave and the struggle to WANT to be so). Incredible book, accessible to all levels of readers.

Melki says

"People who have what I have, mostly die, don't they?" said Jim.

Wonderful novel for children about finding strength and courage within yourself.
