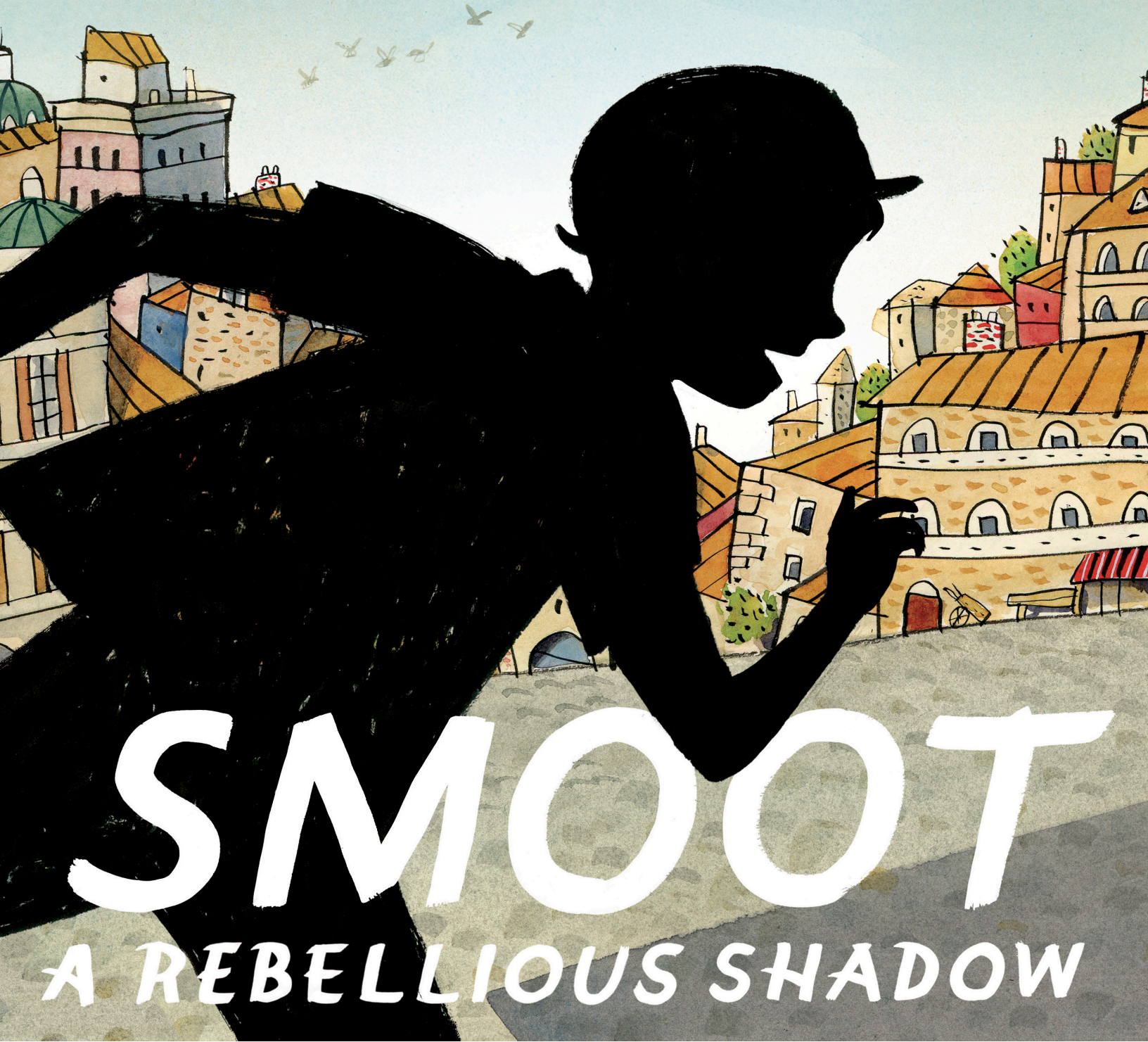


TEACHER'S GUIDE

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SMOOT

A REBELLIOUS SHADOW



Penguin
Random House
TUNDRA BOOKS

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Smoot the shadow has been living a yawn-filled life for years. His boy never laughs and never leaps, so Smoot never does either . . . until the day he pops free, and decides to hit the road in search of the life he dreams about. And as he enjoys his first colorful day—singing, dancing and playing—other shadows watch him, and they become brave too. The frog’s shadow takes the shape of a prince and the dragonfly’s shadow, a dragon. Even the rock’s shadow gets in on the excitement. But what will become of the timid beings their shadows have left behind? Will they finally be inspired to find their own daring?

Teachers can use the book in a number of ways including exploring concepts and themes such as connection, change, following your dreams, new experiences, bravery, emotions and feelings.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle Cuevas was born in 1982 in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. She graduated from Williams College and holds a master of fine arts in creative writing from the University of Virginia, where she received the Henry Hoyns Fellowship. Her hobbies include drawing, watercolor painting and bird watching. Some of her favorite books are *The Velveteen Rabbit*, *The Giving Tree*, *Charlotte’s Web*, *Le Petit Prince*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and poetry collections by Shel Silverstein, James Tate, Mary Oliver and Billy Collins.

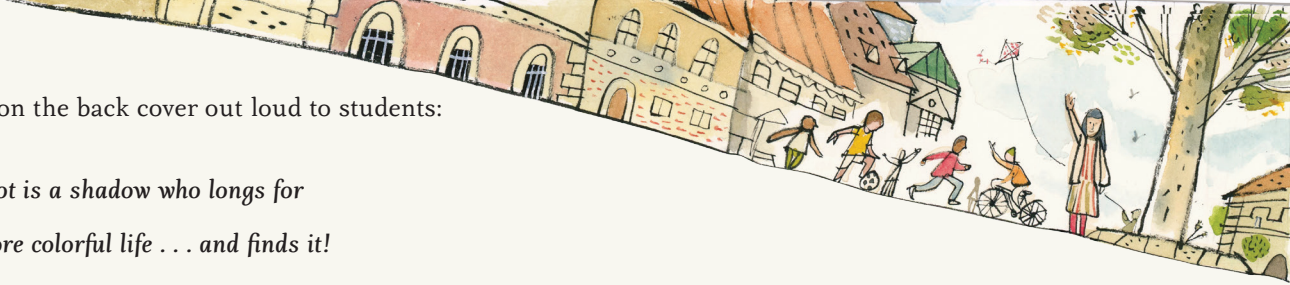


ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Sydney Smith was born in Nova Scotia and has a BFA in drawing and printmaking from NSCAD University. He is an award-winning children’s book illustrator whose work can sometimes also be found in magazines and on festival posters and album covers. Sydney also plays a little banjo, stands on his hands and can ride his bike really fast. He lives in Toronto, Ontario, with his wife and baby son.

BEFORE YOU READ

- *Lead a discussion about what makes a shadow. Take students around the classroom, school or playground to look for different shadows.*
- *Ask students to think about and share something they have always dreamed about doing.*
- *Ask students what their understanding of the word “bravery” is and record their ideas on chart paper or the board.*
- *Lead a discussion about the title of the story, *Smoot: A Rebellious Shadow*. What does the word “rebellious” mean? What is unusual about this title?*



Read the description on the back cover out loud to students:

*Smoot is a shadow who longs for
a more colorful life . . . and finds it!*

Ask students to predict what will happen in the story. Record their predictions on chart paper or the board and revisit their predictions after reading.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When Smoot came unstuck from the boy, he thought, “This is my chance!” What did he see this as a chance for?
- What was the turning point in the story where Smoot’s life starts to change?
- What kinds of things did Smoot do after he became unstuck from the boy?
- The dandelion’s shadow was the first of the shadows to unstick himself after seeing Smoot, and flew away. The shadow was said to look like a baby storm cloud, smoke from a dollhouse chimney and a butterfly made of mist. What do you think the shadow looked like?
- If you were one of the animals or objects whose shadow had come unstuck and begun to do unusual things, how would you feel?
- What was the significance of the shapes and activities the shadows of the cricket and the grasshopper, the frog, the dragonfly and the rock chose to be and do when they became unstuck?
- Why was Smoot worried about all of the shadows roaming free?
- Smoot came up with a plan of how to tame the wild shadows. How did he convince the shadows to stick back to their animals/objects?
- Who was the last person to be rejoined with their shadow? How did this happen?
- What does your shadow dream about doing?

SMOOT, THE UNNAMED BOY AND THE OTHER SHADOWS

Smoot is the main character in the story. We do not learn the name of the boy he is connected to. Ask students, why do you think this is?

Ask students, if your shadow had a name, what would it be? Why?

In partners, ask students to discuss how the unnamed boy attached to Smoot changed from the beginning of the story to the end of the story and what caused this change.

DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE

The author uses a lot of descriptive language to tell her story. Some examples of descriptive language include:

*If life is a book, then Smoot the Shadow
had been reading the same yawn-colored
page for seven and a half years.*

The music they played sounded like cool shade on a hot afternoon.

He sang canary-yellow songs. He did a dance colored wildflower red.

One day, while wishing for sky blue-colored freedom . . .

Revisit the pages in the book with this descriptive language and talk about the literal meaning behind the use of this language with your students. Consider re-reading the story to your students all the way through a second time, and ask them to listen carefully for other examples of non-literal language.

Lead a discussion with students about why they think the author chose to often write descriptively rather than literally. Older students may be able to identify that descriptive language can appeal to the reader's senses. Use the following example as a way of prompting a discussion about the importance of language and the effect it has on a reader.

*"The music they played sounded like cool
shade on a hot afternoon."*

vs.

"The music they played sounded nice."

The author uses a lot of language that has to do with color.

*"But shadows can dream.
And when they do, the dreams
are filled with color."*

Ask students to think about what they know about shadows and what the significance is of presenting the idea that shadows dream in color.

Ask students to think about an example of one thing they could do to lead a more "colorful" life.

BRAVERY

Revisit the students' ideas about what the word bravery means from the pre-reading discussion. Ask students to connect what was talked about before they read the book with the characters and events in the story.

The other shadows were emboldened by Smoot's actions:

Other shadows watched Smoot.

The sight made them brave.

"If he can follow his dreams, we can too."

Ask students, why did Smoot's actions make them feel brave? And because they were feeling brave, what did it lead them to do? As a class, make a list of the animals/objects in the story and their corresponding shadows' dreams. Encourage students to think of the dreams from the shadows' perspective and explain why each of the living things/objects would dream such things.

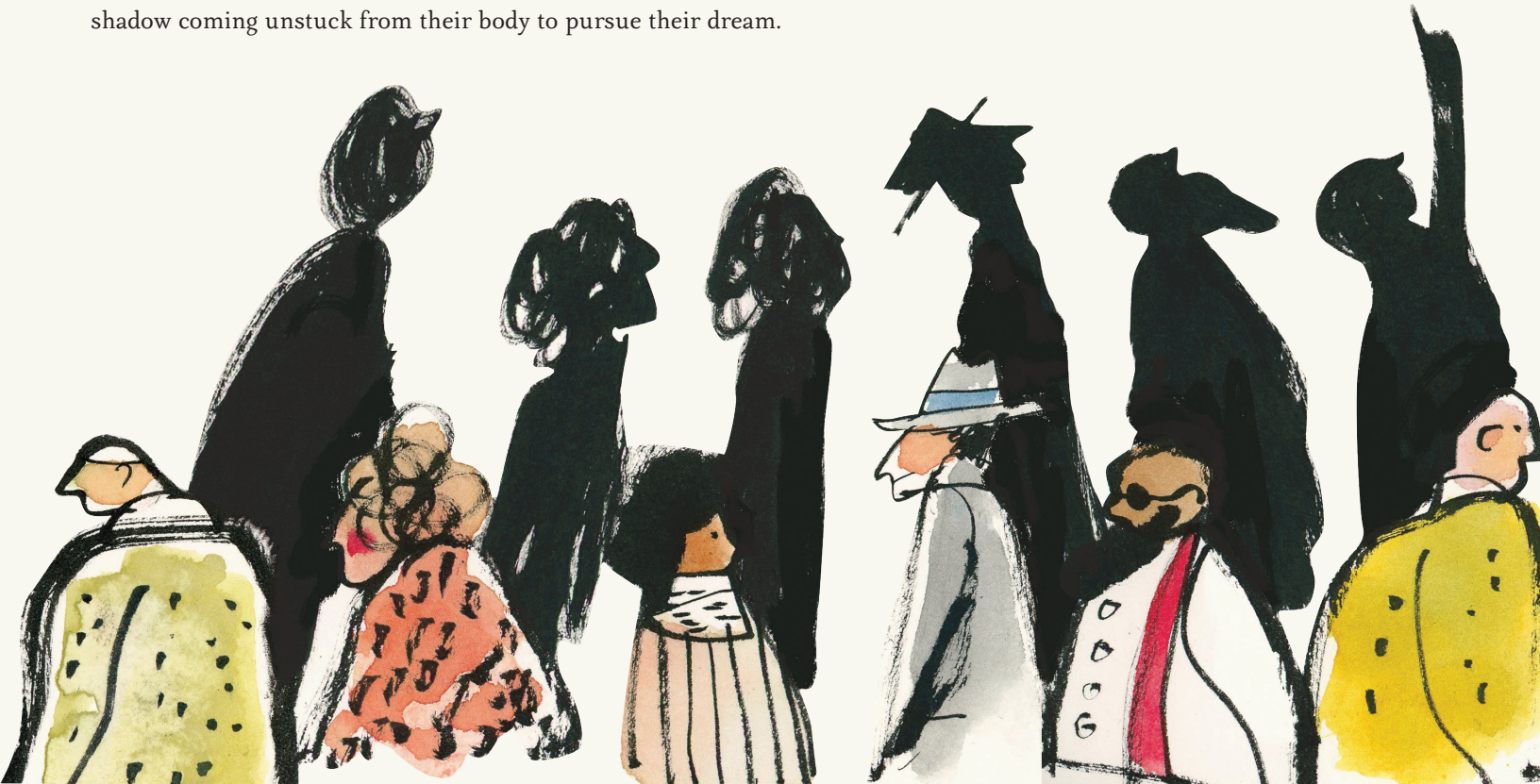
Ask students, if you had to choose one character in the story as being the bravest of all the characters, who would it be? Why? Have students draw a picture of their choice of bravest character and write one to three sentences below the picture explaining why they thought this character was brave.

In a journal-style piece of writing, ask students to write about the bravest person they know.

Lead a discussion based on the following question: why is it sometimes difficult to try and do the things you dream about?

TRACE YOUR DREAMS!

Turn off the lights in the classroom, and in partners with one student holding a flashlight, have students experiment making different shadows with their bodies. Have their partner trace around their shadow on mural paper while their partner poses in a way that shows something they have always dreamed about doing. Ask students to then write a short story about their shadow coming unstuck from their body to pursue their dream.



MATCH THE SHADOW TO ITS DREAM

Draw a line between the living thing/object and its shadow as it pursued its dream.

