

SLAP HAPPY LARRY PRESENTS

The Artifacts

Teaching Notes

Lesson Ideas

Related Resources

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A universal story app
for middle school
readers and above.
For Apple mobile devices

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‘The Artifacts’ Storybook App

TEACHING NOTES

With the help of an adult guide, *The Artifacts* can be read and enjoyed by a wide range of ages, from emergent readers through to early high school. Following are detailed notes on the artwork and story. Depending on the teacher’s choice of key questions, this story can extend any young student of literature.

THE APP ICON: The icon depicts Asaf with his head in a box. Students may see after reading the story that this is a visual metaphor; a person’s expansive mind (memories, experiences, thoughts) cannot possibly fit inside a box because they cannot be treated like objects. (A visual metaphor is an image that suggests a particular association or point of similarity.)

TITLE: *The Artifacts* is a play on words – The ‘Arty Facts’. Asaf manipulates facts (and figures) creatively in his mind. The latter makes him ‘arty’. ‘Artifacts’ can also be spelt ‘artefacts’. (Both are correct.)

MAIN MENU: The music which plays in the main menu includes instrumentation that sounds like notes coming out of a 19th/20th century musical box.

Middle graders are likely to know many of the symbols which float out of the box upon touch. Others will be unfamiliar:

- € Euro
- £ Pound
- ¥ Japanese yen
- ± plus and minus
- ≥ greater than or equal to
- ≤ less than or equal to
- ∞ infinity
- β Lower-case beta in the Greek alphabet. Used widely on the Internet and in software circles to mean the ‘not-finished version’ of a work in progress.
- π lower case pi in the Greek alphabet
- Ω Omega (upper-case) in the Greek alphabet;
- ∫ indefinite integral or anti-derivative in math; pronounced ‘sh’ in the IPA
- ∩ intersection
- Σ sigma in the Greek alphabet; in math, the sum of all values
- ≈ approximately equal to
- α is proportional to
- ☉ This is a solar symbol, representing the sun, among many other uses. Search for ‘circled dot’ on Wikipedia. (Dan Brown fans may know that it’s also called ‘The Lost Symbol’.)
- γ the Euler-Mascheroni constant
- ※ This cross with four dots around it was often found on Greek vases. Traditionally it has also been used in certain types of cartography (map making) to indicate ‘stone bottom at the water’s edge’. (The four dots represent water.) In Greek, it is called an ‘asteriskos’. It can be used when editing to mean ‘Swap the location of this line with the line marked by obelus’. (Also known as the division symbol.)
- ♊ Capricorn (zodiac sign)
- ♋ Cancer (zodiac sign)
- ♊ Gemini (zodiac sign)
- ♉ Taurus (zodiac sign)
- ♌ Leo (zodiac sign)
- ♎ approximation in math; also Libra (zodiac sign)

Although brains are often referred to as ‘grey matter’, healthy brains (i.e. not stored in a jar for scientific enquiry) are pink. The brain that comes out of the box is therefore pink, not grey.

PAGE 1: The main character of *The Artifacts* is called Asaf. Asaf means 'Gatherer' or 'Collector' in Hebrew. When a character in a story has a name which seems to fit their role in that story, this is called an '[apronym](#)'. -onym is a suffix which means ‘word’ or ‘name’.

Key Questions: Can you think of any favourite characters from books who have apronyms? (More dangerously, they may even know some real-life apronyms.) Can you think of any other words ending in ‘-onym’? (For a long list of such words, see [here](#).)

PAGE 2: This page (as well as the overhead shot of the transition page) shows that the story is set in the suburbs. Don't forget to tap for the wind chimes and the yappy little dogs. The model of the car parked in the driveway indicates when it was set – sometime in the last ten or twenty years.

Key questions: Is this an urban, suburban or a rural story? When do you think this story was set? How do you know? What country does this look like?

PAGE 3: That brown material that archetypal sacks are made out of is called ‘hessian’. In the USA it is called ‘burlap’. Asaf collects things such as sizing tags off shop coat hangers and other throwaway items.

Key Questions: Do you have collections of your own? What sorts of containers do you keep your treasures in? Do you have a hiding place? If you had something really valuable in your house, where do you think you should keep it? (Somewhere you don't think burglars would look.) What do you think is the difference between ‘collecting’ and simply ‘gathering’, or ‘amassing’?

Collecting requires discrimination. A collector's pleasure is enhanced by knowledge of the objects that he collects; he practices something of the artist's restraint in rejecting things that will detract from his collection's overall effect. Thus he imposes order by selection upon the chaos that is the universe of things.

William Bryk, NY Press

PAGE 4: An illustration of Asaf's bedroom.

Key Questions: What does your room look like? Are you more or less tidy than the rest of your family? Do you think it's better to live with someone who's tidier than you, or sloppier? Why? What are your philosophies on knowing what to save and what to throw out?

PAGE 5: The sound effect on this page was made by recording a Border collie eating kettle fry chips.

Key Questions: Have you ever collected insects? Do you mind touching insects and caterpillars, or do they give you the heebie-jeebies?

PAGE 6: Caterpillar in a jar. This page is designed to get young readers to ponder the ethical treatment of animals.

Key Questions: If you were locked inside an enclosed space for an entire day, and could only eat one thing, what would it be? Do you think insects know it if you pick them off a tree and put them in a jar? What rights should be extended to the smallest creatures? What about larger creatures? Where should we draw the line?

PAGE 7: The Announcement

Key Questions: Have you ever moved house, or have you lived in the same house your whole life? If you could live anywhere in the world, in any kind of house, where would that be? How would you feel if your parents gave you no warning whatsoever about an impending move? What if someone threw out your most precious things?

PAGE 8: A transition page. (The physics engine is such that no matter how long you try, you won't be able to prevent the car from getting over the hill!)

PAGE 9: Now that Asaf has a new room, the colour scheme has changed from warm ochres to blues and greys.

Key Questions: What do you notice about the colour scheme and how it has changed? Why do you think Asaf's parents don't want him to collect things anymore?

PAGE 10: Asaf seems to be living in a larger house now, though less cosy. This suggests he's probably moved from the suburbs to a more rural area. Asaf hears footsteps on the stairs, but no one is climbing them. When we sleep in a new place and are feeling unsure, we sometimes notice every little sound during the night. Asaf's parents seem oblivious to their son's distress, clattering away in the kitchen as if nothing has changed. The yellow light coming out of the kitchen/dining area symbolises their cheery disposition by contrast, even though Asaf is feeling generally 'blue'.

Key Questions: Have you ever spent the night in an unfamiliar place and been startled/scared by a sound in the night?

PAGE 11: This is the first page in which Asaf has retreated entirely inside his own imagination. By imagining the footsteps on the previous page, he'd started to imagine things that weren't there, and now he has decided to turn that ability to his advantage. When you touch the top third of the screen, witches fly across the sky, laughing like maniacs. (Don't forget to rub the cliff face to reveal Asaf asleep in the wizard's dungeon.)

Key Question: When you are alone/bored/sad, do you have a place in your head where you can go? Do you imagine lots of different places, or is it always the same one?

PAGE 12: Asaf's imagination is not entirely separated from his real world situation. The sound of the rain outside leads him to think of water, hence he is lost at sea. Asaf is 'lost at sea' in both the imaginative sense and in the emotional sense.

PAGE 13: Now Asaf imagines himself in a log cabin, somewhere in the woods. Notice that he is still alone. Except for the bears, of course. As in dreams, our reveries can sometimes surprise us. We can imagine absolutely anything we want to; enter a chicken. Don't forget to touch the dark edges of the screen to find blinking eyes and hear spooky noises.

Key Questions: Strange things can happen in dreams. Do you remember any of your own dreams, in which really weird, disconnected things occurred? Was this at all related to real life happenings? Why do you think people dream? What's the scariest dream you ever had?

PAGE 14: The background of this page is a public domain photograph: a panoramic view of part of [Orion Nebula \(M42, Messier 42, NGC 1976\)](#) by Hubble Space Telescope.

[There is no sound in space](#). But fictional depictions of space often feature sound effects. ([Star Wars](#), [Star Trek](#) included.) This is probably why Asaf imagines sound in space. Earth-bound individuals such as ourselves find it impossible to imagine the scale of time and space in the universe. When we imagine 'small planets', we almost imagine we could walk around them in a day. Our imaginations fail us when it comes to space, time and dimensions. [Brainpickings](#) collected [some visualizations to help us grasp the scale of the universe](#).

PAGE 15: The words which fly out of Asaf's brain x-ray are from a list of 100 items of vocabulary that someone thinks all English speaking high school graduates should know. For advanced younger readers, if teachers would like to base vocabulary activities around these words, words with their meanings (and flashcards) are [here](#).

PAGE 16: Asaf likes to write his stories down. Notice that the chicken from the bears in the woods page make a reappearance. Smells can be particularly evocative of memory. The teacher may like to prepare various smelling items (Garam masala, well-known perfumes, big-brand lotions, WD-40 etc.) and ask students to first identify the smell, then for any memory associations.

PAGE 17: Shadows can be particularly problematic for young people sleeping in an unwelcoming place.

Key Questions: When you were little, were you ever frightened by shadows coming through your window, or other imagined creepy-crawlies? Do you think people grow out of this, or do the nightmares of adults morph into something more sinister?

PAGE 18: Asaf's mind tends to wander when he's brushing his teeth. Some people find that they are at their most creative when in the bath or shower, or while taking a walk. The negative emotions coming out of the left tap are coloured blue, whereas the words coming out of the hot tap are coloured red, again making use of colour symbolism.

Key Question: Is there a regular time of day when your mind tends to wander?

PAGE 19: The books Asaf reads in the library have ridiculous titles which, as far as the author knows, don't really exist.

Key Question: Can you think of some equally ridiculous book titles, perhaps books you *wished* exist? Do you enjoy being in the library, or would you always rather be somewhere else? Libraries are full of books. How many books would you estimate to be in your school/local library? If you read a book a week, and lived to be 80, how many books can you expect to get through in your lifetime? Should students have to read books they don't really want to read, or should they be allowed to choose books for themselves every single time?

PAGE 20: Another visual metaphor: the lightbulb is a well-known symbol for 'bright ideas'. Fire flies are bright too, and because they're living things, they can 'swarm and multiply'.

Key Question: Can you explain the visual metaphor on this page?

PAGE 21: Now Asaf is grown, leaving home to make his own way in life. There are a number of visual metaphors on this page. The path itself represents his path through life. The sky is clear. He has no idea what to expect. After rubbing to reveal the night-path, you may now notice that on the other side of the forked road stand a flock of sheep. Sheep are popular symbols for following rather than leading, or in a more negative sense, symbolise failing to think for oneself. Asaf has chosen the other path. He has a large, original, broad-minded perspective and has chosen to 'go his own way'. Black birds cross his path in the distance, boding trouble – his life won't be entirely plain sailing, no matter which path he chooses. On the mountains in the distance stands a castle. This may not be a real castle – it may be something Asaf has imagined for himself. But the fact that he can see it in the distance almost means it might as well be real. Such is the power of imagination.

Key Questions: How old do you think you'll be when you leave home? What will you take with you? Explain the significance of the sheep. What do you think the path represents? Do you think the ending is hopeful or sad?

LESSON IDEAS

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Make a playlist for *The Artifacts*. (Students don't need to own their own music in order to have access to it: YouTube.) Students arrange 5 to 10 tracks which match the emotions and themes in the story.

Imagine *The Artifacts* is a movie/stage play and design a poster to advertise. [The Poster Collective Tumblr Blog](#) is an excellent source of poster inspiration.

What do you think happens *after* the final page? Design and write an 'epilogue' screen. What do you think happened to Asaf after he grew up? What does he find in the distance?

Take one of the pages that depict Asaf's imagination, and use that setting to write your own short story. For example, we see Asaf asleep in the dungeon of a wizard's castle. How do you think he got there? How did he escape?

Apart from *The Artifacts*, what else might this story be called? If picture books were published with sub-headings, what would be a good sub-heading for *The Artifacts*?

ORAL LANGUAGE

First, the teacher brings along their own collection from home. (If the items are too impractical, photos will suffice!) Perhaps it's a collection from childhood. Show-and-tell your collection. Like Asaf, most students have probably collected something at one time or another, even if they don't call it a 'collection'.

- Music albums
- Book series
- Golf balls
- Dolls/Action figures
- Stickers
- Etc.

These collections tend to align with strong interests. Also, by bringing along something to take the focus off themselves, less confident students will enjoy using props. Students might instead choose to share someone else's collection – a cousin's impressive book of pressed leaves, spices from the pantry at home (which the audience might be able to identify through smell) or photographs of granddad's workshop, with explanations of what the tools are used for.

ADVERTISING

Many companies shift product by appealing to the 'collector instinct' in consumers. Some examples of this:

- When printing books, publishers sometimes make the 'spine art' of each book form a picture, which is only complete when an individual owns every part of the series. In a less obvious way, the spine

art of books in a series tend to work well together and look decorative on a shelf. (Most people recognise the Harry Potter spines even from a distance.)

- Cold cereals often come with cards/games/plastic toys
- Fast food outlets such as McDonalds appeal to the 'collect-them-all' instinct by offering toys with Happy Meals.
- Large chain stores and credit card companies encourage consumers to collect 'points', appealing to both frugality and the collecting instinct.
- Game designers encourage heavy usage of their software by appealing to the human need to collect points, 'gold', [virtual food pallets](#) and other non-tangible things, which can offer the player nothing more than prestige and personal satisfaction.

Students are then encouraged to come up with specific examples of this kind of marketing from their own experiences.

- What do they think of this marketing practice?
- Should food corporations be permitted to sell junk food to children by appealing to this instinct?
- To what extent do they feel compelled to collect every item in a series?
- Can you own a part of a series and still be content with that?
- What sorts of items become inherently better once a consumer owns every single one of a series?
- Why do you think humans like to collect things?
- Do you think computer games can be addictive? What makes them so?

For a great list of resources to teach basic advertising techniques to middle grade students and older, see the post: [As Seen On TV! Media Messages Unmasked](#), from Teach With Picture Books.

THE NATURAL WORLD

Students gather information, read for key points and report on an animal that gathers or collects.

Here are some examples of animals that collect, or [hoard and cache](#):

- **The male satin Bower Bird** is a wonderful example. David Attenborough introduces us to this collecting bird in the BBC Natural World, Birds of Paradise episode. Attenborough is also interviewed by Robyn Williams on The Science Show (ABC) about bower birds. You can find the audio as well as the transcript [here](#).
- **Crows** collect shiny things. Joshua Klein delivered a [TED talk](#) about the intelligence of crows, and other '[synanthropic species](#)', which are species which have adapted specifically for human ecology. (Rats, mice, cockroaches and so on.) Crows are thriving along with humans, and have made some amazing adaptations.
- [Pack Rats](#) also have a penchant for shiny objects.
- [Ferrets like to steal and stash everything they can get their little paws on.](#)
- **Squirrels** collect nuts and seeds which are not readily available in winter. Because trees and squirrel-like creatures have evolved in tandem, trees are helped by this practice of collecting and burying nuts. Trees and squirrels are 'interdependent'. National Geographic has succinct articles about many animals including [squirrels](#).
- **Hamsters and Gerbils** like to collect food and bedding and put it in their cheek pouch.
- **Raccoons** apparently like to collect shiny objects and keep them in their dens.
- **Bees** collect pollen for honey and make an especially fascinating as a case study.

Encourage students to find other hoarding/collecting animals who are not on this list.

ANIMALS THAT COLLECT

<p>COMMON NAME OF ANIMAL (e.g. dog)</p>	<p>THINGS I KNOW ABOUT THIS ANIMAL ALREADY:</p>	<p>A SKETCH</p>
<p>SPECIES NAME (e.g. Canis Lupus)</p>		<p>HAND-DRAWN BY</p>
<p>THIS ANIMAL COLLECTS...</p> <p>BECAUSE...</p>	<p>THEY EAT...</p>	<p>THEY LIVE...</p>
<p>THEY BREED...</p>	<p>THEY ARE RELATED TO...</p>	<p>THEY EVOLVED...</p>
<p>EXAMPLES OF THIS ANIMAL IN POP CULTURE/MYTHOLOGY/FOLKLORE:</p>	<p>THE MOST INTERESTING THING I FOUND OUT...</p>	<p>WHERE I FOUND MY INFORMATION:</p>

CREATIVE WRITING

Dream Space Activity

In *The Artifacts*, Asaf's imagination allows him to whisk himself away to imagined worlds. He does this when he is feeling unhappy or bored. In this lesson, students create their own imagined inner-world. A Dream Space.

The Pre-write: Students close their eyes and listen while the teacher asks them to imagine a 'dream space'. This is not a real space, but completely imagined. It's a place they'd really like to spend time in.

- Money is no object.
- This place can be anywhere on earth, or beyond.
- It can be as vast or as cosy as you would like.
- Imagine what kinds of things you'd like in this place.
- What season is it? What time of day?
- What can you see from here?
- What can you hear? Creatures, signs of other human life? The sounds of nature? Music?
- Is this place generally loud or quiet?
- Is there a distinctive smell?
- Is there a dominant colour?
- Is it light or dark, day or night?
- Are there any animals with you?
- Is there furniture? Other large objects?
- Explore the place with your senses as you wander/move/swim around for a minute or so, then I'll tell you to open your eyes.

Next, students quickly record details in five or so minutes of non-stop writing. Students don't worry about spelling/punctuation. The aim is just to get everything down. Write in present tense (This place IS).

First draft: Students organise images into a description of two or more paragraphs. The creative writing skill emphasised here is 'describing detail'. It's helpful to start with broad strokes of detail, zooming in like a camera to describe the smallest detail that regular visitors to this place wouldn't even notice.

Peer Response: In pairs or groups of three, students swap their dream spaces by reading each other's first drafts. Emphasise revision, not proof-reading and editing. Feedback is guided:

- My overall impression of the dream place...
- The most vivid details for me as reader included...
- This place suggests... (about mood, values, interests, passions of the writer)

Readers may also like to comment on:

- Any parts they found confusing
- Irrelevancies or repetitions
- Suggestions for emphasis
- Use of descriptive verbs and strong nouns.
- Suggestions for further development

Finally, students write their revised versions independently, making use of a proofreading checklist.

PROOFREADING CHECKLIST FOR CREATIVE WRITING

I HAVE...	I CHECK	FRIEND CHECKS
Checked the spelling		
Used capital letters where I need them		
Avoided sentences that are too long		
Avoided using a comma when a full stop would be better		
Used speech marks around direct speech		
Crossed out unnecessary repetition		
Changed bits that don't really make sense		
Kept my verb tense consistent		
Crossed out any unnecessary words		
Come up with an appropriate title		
Named my papers		
Page-numbered my papers		
SIGNATURE		

GEOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL SKILLS

In small groups, students discuss their own experiences of moving to a new house/school/town/country.

Using computers or iPads, students use the free [Google Earth app](#) to show peers the location of places they have lived. In many cases, Google Earth offers 'street view', and students can even find photographs of their former houses.

Guide for group discussion:

- Have you ever moved house?
- How many different places have you lived in?
- Show me where you used to live on Google Earth (or Google maps, or in a class set of atlases).
- How far away is that from here?
- Do you prefer to live here, or there?
- Why?
- Have you ever started a new school in the middle of the school year?
- What's it like to be the new kid?
- Do you remember your first day of kindergarten? 'Big' school? What happened that day?
- What are some things you could do to make a new kid feel welcome?

Compare And Contrast Essay

Compare and contrast *The Artifacts* with a story of similar theme.

For younger readers, locate a picture book of similar theme:

A list of **picture books about imagination** e.g. Flamboyant by Arnold Adoff

A list of **picture books about loneliness** e.g. Old Henry by Joan W. Blos

A list of **picture books about loss** e.g. So Far From The Sea by Eve Bunting

A list of **picture books about maturity** e.g. The Night Shimmy by Gwen Strauss/Anthony Browne

A list of **picture books about memory** e.g. I Have An Olive Tree by Eve Bunting

A list of **picture books about moving** e.g. Amelia's Road by Linda Jacobs Altman

Older students may instead choose to compare *The Artifacts* with a short story. In the example template below, I've chosen to compare and contrast *The Artifacts* with Ray Bradbury's short story *Season Of Disbelief*, from Ray Bradbury Short Stories Volume 2.

The template is for writing notes rather than complete thoughts, and will be used merely as a guide for writing the compare and contrast essay afterwards. (Teacher to set word count.)

Useful Words To Know Before Writing About *The Artifacts*

	WORD	WHAT I THINK IT MEANS	DEFINITION
1	Materialism		
2	Consumerism		
3	Spartan		
4	Omniscient		
5	Reminiscent		
6	Transient		
7	Contemporary		
8	Trope		
9	Ominous		
10	Individuality		
11	Theme		
12	Memorabilia		
13	Bric-a-brackery		
14	Authoritarian		
15	Ambiguous		
16	Suburbia		
17	Didactic		
18	Dearth		
19	Ephemeral		
20	Reverie		

TIPS FOR WRITING A COMPARE AND CONTRAST ESSAY

Point of Comparison	<i>Story 1</i>
Plot	It is tempting to spend most of your time regurgitating the plot, finally getting to the comparison in the final paragraph. This is a very common trap. Avoid it. Spend very little time on the plot. Practise summarising both stories as part of your revision, in one or two sentences.
Character	Take the characters from each story and explain how they are similar, how they are different. Explain how this impacts the story (plot) and theme (message). Spend less time describing a character's appearance and more time describing their personality and actions.
Point of View/Voice	Point of View: First person or third person POV? Whose story is this? Is the story told by a minor character who acts as an impartial observer? Or is the main character the same as the first person? Voice: educated, formal, informal, sad, upbeat, hopeful...? (Here might be a good place to include a quotation or two.)
Setting	Setting includes both TIME and PLACE. It is easy to focus on place and forget to mention time. Time: Contemporary (present-day), set in the past, in the future? Place: Specific to one region? Universal? Small-town, urban?
Structure	Are there any point-of-view switches? Is time linear, or are there many flashbacks and flash forwards? Is the story divided into 'chapters', or easily dividable chunks? When describing/understanding the various structures of a simple plot, this sheet from Shutta Crum's website comes in handy.
Theme	Why did the author write this story? Was there an epiphany for the character? For you, as reader? Were you reminded of a time in your own life, and encouraged to think of it in a different way?

COMPARE AND CONTRAST ESSAY TEMPLATE: THE ARTIFACTS vs SEASON OF DISBELIEF (EXAMPLE ONLY)

Point of Comparison	<i>The Artifacts by Lynley Stace</i>	<i>Season Of Disbelief by Ray Bradbury</i>
Plot	<p>Asaf is saddened when he comes home from school one day to find his room packed up ready for the family to move house. His parents have thrown out his beloved collections of knick-knacks. His new house is Spartan and unwelcoming so he retreats into his imagination. Over his teenage years he collects memories and learning instead. When he finally leaves home, some years later, Asaf’s wealth of mind stands him in good stead.</p>	<p>An old woman befriends some neighbourhood children who refuse to believe she was ever young. She shows them various items from her childhood, including a photograph of her young self, hoping to persuade them. They still refuse to believe her. After the girls steal her memorabilia, she deals with the loss by getting rid of all the rest of her collected items in a bonfire. Both of these stories feature characters who deal with loss, and who come to terms with that loss by realising that material possessions are nothing compared to what’s inside your mind.</p>
Character	<p>At the story’s beginning, Asaf is 12. By the end he is grown and leaving home. Twelve-year-old Asaf is happy and carefree, but the shifting house experience plunges him into the emotional ups and downs of adolescence. Although he doesn’t realise it immediately, and because his parents’ encouragement and enthusiasm for learning probably takes place ‘off-stage’, the cold and distant parents have done him a long-term favour by steering him away from materialism.</p> <p>Asaf is much younger than Mrs Bentley. The reader cannot tell whether he is completely happy with his lack of physical possessions, or whether he is simply dealing with an inevitable situation.</p> <p>In <i>The Artifacts</i>, Asaf appears alone even inside his imagination, suggesting loneliness and isolation. Loneliness is a feature of both stories. The words which appear when the user touches Asaf’s new room are evidence of that. ‘Loneliness, isolation, dearth’ – all of the words are variations of loneliness and solitude.</p> <p>Asaf is forced to learn this after his collections are taken away. But even as he makes his way down the ‘path of life’ on the final page, he may or may not be aware of his inner-riches; it may take him longer, or a lifetime, to work out that he is indeed better off without material possessions to weigh him down.</p>	<p>“Mrs Bentley was a saver.” She saved tickets, old theatre programs, bits of lace, scarves, rail transfers; all the tags and tokens of existence.” In this way, she is like Asaf, though she has never grown out of the habit. Her late husband gently coaxed her against saving every little thing (‘He had never approved of her bric-a-brackery’, but as a partner (not a parent) he avoided an authoritarian stance, and so his words only resonated with Mrs Bentley after he had died.</p> <p>Mrs Bentley is generous by nature – she offers the 3 children on her lawn an ice-cream. The befriending of children suggests loneliness. Mrs Bentley has a keen sense of justice, inwardly disappointed in the children’s lack of manners, then waiting on the front steps until they come by again. Asaf also has a keen sense of justice – that’s why he is so unhappy after his parents throw out his things without telling him.</p> <p>Both Mrs Bentley and Asaf suffer loss, but gain much more after their possessions are first taken from them against their will.</p> <p>Mrs Bentley changes over the course of this story – at the beginning she is clinging onto the past, as if photographs can keep her young. But after the girls refuse to believe she was ever young, then they take off with her treasures, she is able to come to terms with her own aging. She will no longer pretend to herself that she has any youthfulness about her.</p>
Point of View/Voice	<p>Point of View: This story is written in omniscient POV, with language reminiscent of fairytales.</p> <p>Voice: e.g. The opening sentence ‘Once there was a boy who loved to collect’ is reminiscent of the ‘Once upon a time’ openings of yesteryear and lends weight to an otherwise modern, and otherwise transient, story.</p>	<p>Point of View: As in <i>The Artifacts</i>, <i>Season of Disbelief</i> is also told in (close) third person – close because the author lets us inside Mrs Bentley’s mind by describing her thoughts. The reader also gets a glimpse inside Asaf’s mind in <i>The Artifacts</i>, though this is achieved through pictures rather than</p>

		<p>words.</p> <p>Voice: Ray The story opens, ‘How it began with the children, Mrs Bentley never knew.’ This opening is reminiscent of a yarn, or a fireside tale. Bradbury writes naturalistic dialogue interspersed throughout the narrative. The children sound like real children, and Mrs Bentley responds with the voice of a seventy-two year old woman.</p>
Setting	<p>Time: From the modern car parked in a driveway on the second page, we can tell this story is set in contemporary times.</p> <p>Place: The transition page introducing the story zooms in on houses in close proximity, surrounded by trees and grass, indicating suburbia. Asaf is moved to a larger, more ominous house, which may be set in a more rural area. But much of the story takes place inside Asaf’s head, in which case he makes use of popular tropes and classic fairytales to inform his imagination. This story could take place anywhere in the Western world. While Asaf is a typically Arabic name, the scenery suggests America over the Arab League.</p>	<p>Time: Since Mrs Bentley owns a ‘postal picture’ of herself as a girl, this story is likely set at the end of the 1900s, though could easily be set this year. Both stories are set at about the same time, in a slightly ambiguous decade.</p> <p>Place: Unless otherwise specified, Ray Bradbury’s short stories tend to be set in America, probably because he grew up in Tucson, Arizona. The narrative vocabulary and dialogue suggests American English.</p>
Structure	<p>This is a simple, linear story with few words. Much of the narrative is told via illustrations, and because it is an app, through touch interactivity. For example, while we see that Asaf is in a log cabin in the forest, the reader doesn’t realise until making the chicken appear on touch that Asaf’s imagination does not always follow reality.</p>	<p>This story, too, spans a lifetime (from 10 until 72), but the main action happens within a period of months. The rest of the story is conveyed via flashbacks, as Mrs Bentley remembers her childhood, remembers when she was 22 and pretty, remembers the words of her dead husband.</p>
Theme	<p>Although material objects provide comfort, the only thing that really matters in the long-term are what’s going on inside a person’s mind.</p> <p>The flock of sheep on the last page are a visual metaphor for ‘following the crowd’. Yet Asaf chooses to take the alternate path. This is a comment on individuality. When people put their heart and souls into their factory, mass-produced possessions, there is nothing to distinguish them from everybody else. But when people instead cultivate their minds, through real experiences and books, they must process those experiences in their own unique way. That’s what makes people individuals rather than simply ‘marketing demographics’.</p>	<p>Like <i>The Artifacts</i>, <i>Season Of Disbelief</i> is a mildly didactic story with several messages. The first (about material objects vs memories) is shared by both stories.</p> <p>This story also explores the idea of ageing, as it is told through the eyes of an old woman rather than a child. This theme is expressed through the words of her dead husband: ‘When you’re nine, you think you’ve always been nine years old and will always be. When you’re thirty, it seems you’ve always been balanced there on that bright rim of middle life. And then when you turn seventy, you are always and forever seventy. You’re in the present, you’re trapped in a young now or an old now, but there is no other now to be seen.’ The author thus advocates ‘living in the moment’. Since material possessions, and the need for more of them, can lead us away from living in the moment, this theme relates directly to the first.</p>

COMPARE AND CONTRAST ESSAY TEMPLATE

Point of Comparison	<i>Story 1</i>	<i>Story 2</i>
Plot		
Character		
Point of View/Voice		
Setting		
Structure		
Theme		

RELATED RESOURCES

APPS

The Artifacts storybook app [can be purchased](#) on the iTunes app store.

The Fantastic Flying Books Of Mr Morris Lessmore is a storybook app of similar theme, useful for a compare and contrast exercise, and can be purchased [here](#).

[Google Earth app](#) on the iTunes store

INTERNET

[The Collyer Brothers](#) were perhaps the world's most famous compulsive hoarders. They make an interesting case study.

[Teach With Picture Books](#) offers many useful ideas for teaching with picture books in the classroom.

[Children's Picture Book Database](#) is a simple wire-frame type site which can help you to find picture books of a similar theme.

[Teaching With Picture Books](#) is a useful website for brief lesson ideas, and includes an idea for teaching *The Fantastic Flying Books Of Mr Morris Lessmore*, which is similar in theme to *The Artifacts*. Both stories are available as storybook apps in the iTunes store.

[Picturebooks in the Secondary Classroom](#), a Prezi slideshow.

[Using Picture Books To Teach Literary Techniques](#) from Shutta Crum's website

There are various Flickr groups dedicated to specific collections. You can find photos of almost any collection you can imagine. [Here's a group dedicated to eraser collections](#), for example. A teacher guided exploration of some Flickr groups may help students prepare for the oral presentation.

BOOKS

Bradbury, Ray. (2008) *Ray Bradbury Short Stories Volume 2*. Harper Collins. UK (In this book you'll find the short story *Season Of Disbelief*.) Or listen to the story online at [Nostalgic Radio](#). (Follows another story 'Hail And Farewell'.)