
Teachers' Notes

WALLS

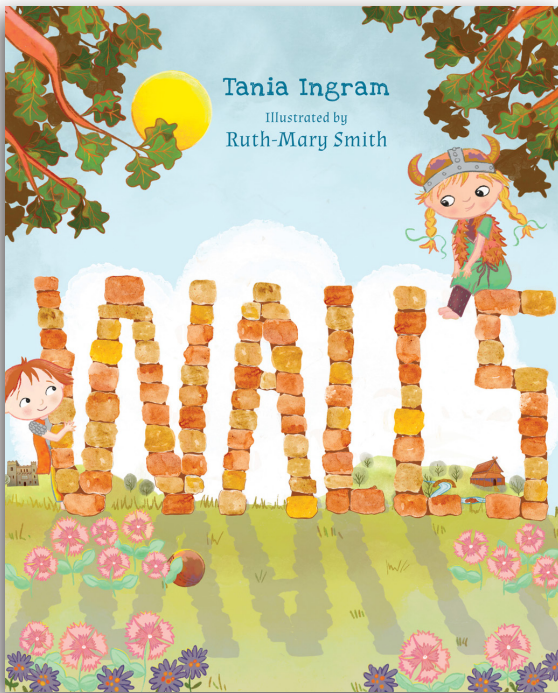
Tania Ingram / Ruth-Mary Smith

ISBN: 9781761111518

Recommended retail: \$26.99

Reading level: 5 to 8

BOOK SUMMARY



Knight believes that he lives on the best side of the book, but Viking disagrees. Their solution...build walls to keep their side safe from the other. But in their quest to build the better wall, will Knight and Viking fail to recognise the immediate danger that could impact both sides of the book?

A thought-provoking story about fear, prejudice and seeing the bigger picture.

THEMES

Conflict resolution ▪ Relationships ▪ Nature ▪ Ecological damage ▪ Differences ▪ Feelings ▪ Harmony Day ▪

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Walls Teachers' Notes can be used in schools (independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Tania Ingram is an internationally published author who writes books for children including the magical *Jinny & Cooper* series and the hilarious *Aggie Flea* series. *Aggie Flea is NOT a Liar!* was listed as a CBCA notable book in 2024. Prior to becoming an author, Tania was a child psychologist specialising in disability, brain injury and adolescent mental health.

Tania has acted as a peer assessor on the literature panel for Arts South Australia grants program and as a committee member for SCBWI SA. She's an active ambassador for The Premier's Reading Challenge.

When not writing, Tania enjoys sharing her knowledge and love of books through school visits and festivals. In her spare time, Tania likes to read children's fiction, crochet crooked rugs and sing to her chickens, who pretend to be oblivious to her talent.

AUTHOR NOTES

I came up with the idea for *Walls* after reading an article about the ecological damage from the Mexico-United States border wall. The then United States President, Donald Trump was building a wall to stop Mexican people from entering America illegally.

Scientists warned that some parts of the wall could cause flooding or drought in certain areas. The wall also posed a threat to wildlife, including several endangered species. In some areas, the wall blocked animals from migratory paths and from accessing food/water sources. It was warned that this would not only have an impact on wildlife numbers but also on the flora in the surrounding areas, as some plants rely on animal migration to carry seeds or control plant numbers.

Sadly, despite all of the warnings, the wall was built anyway.

Some links: [The ecological disaster that is Trump's border wall: a visual guide](#), [Trump's border wall caused 'significant damage and destruction' to environmental and cultural resources](#), [How The Border Wall Impacts the Environment](#), [Trump's Border Wall Threatens 93 Endangered Species](#), [Trump's Border Wall Torn Apart by Arizona Monsoon Rains](#), [Trump's Unfinished Border Wall Could Worsen Texas Flooding](#),

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Ruth-Mary Smith is an Australian illustrator with a special love of the gentle emotions portrayed in picture books. Her style has been described as sweet, warm and whimsical. She enjoys working with the traditional materials of watercolour and pencil, and she also produces digital illustrations. Most of her work is a hybrid of traditional and digital.

She has been published in the USA, been the recipient of a mentorship award from the ASA, won awards in the CYA festival during 2020 and 2021 & 2023. In Australia she has been published by several publishers including Wombat, Scholastic, Larrikin and Yellow Brick Books.

ILLUSTRATOR NOTES

When I read the story of Walls, I was excited at the prospect of bringing this story to life. It is a timely story with so much unrest going on in the world at the time and even more so, since I have completed the illustrations for the book.

There were two aspects that I was hoping to express in the illustrations, The first one was the children's acceptance of each other regardless of their family's history of confrontation. I endeavoured to bring across the fun and playfulness of the pair using playful poses and expressions. They were also the first to discover the impact their parents were having on the world around them, when their parents were blind to everything but their superiority.

The other aspect was the Wall itself. I wanted it to be created differently to the rest of the illustration which was created digitally on my iPad and in Photoshop. I decided to use collage to best represent the impending walls.



Firstly, I water coloured the rocks onto watercolour paper and speckled them using a trusty paintbrush! Next, I cut out the rocks and laid them out on my scanner so I could digitise them. Once scanned I then deleted the white background, changing them to a png. They were then available to manipulate on the iPad to use in the illustrations. (See attached photos)

My hope is that this book is a springboard for discussions in homes and classrooms around the issue of conflict, and ways to build bridges of friendship with those who may be different to us.

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REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

Walls is an exploration of conflict and how man's short-sighted actions can negatively impact their environment. With interwoven themes of differences and distrust, Walls is the perfect teaching tool for childhood educators wishing to encourage critical thinking around communication and effective conflict resolution. The additional themes of environment and ecology in the context of disputes, can be explored from both historical and contemporary perspectives. Barriers, whether perceived or physical, do not necessarily improve relations between neighbours, cultures or countries, and this multi-layered story allows conversations and discussion on what being a good neighbour really means.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes.

This uses Australian Curriculum V9.

FOUNDATION

English, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

AC9EFLE01	AC9EFLA02	AC9EFLA06	AC9EFLE02
AC9EFLA03	AC9EFLA07	AC9EFLY02	AC9EFLE03
AC9ADFD01	AC9ADAF01	AC9ADAFE01	
AC9HSFS03			

YEAR ONE

English, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

AC9E1LA01	AC9E1LA06	AC9E1LE02	AC9E1LY02
AC9E1LE03	AC9E1LA03	AC9E1LY05	AC9E1LE01
AC9E1LE05			
AC9AVA2E01	AC9AVA2D01		
AC9HS1S04			

YEAR TWO

English, Visual Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

AC9E2LA01	AC9E2LA03	AC9E2LA02	AC9E2LE03
AC9E2LY01			
AC9AVA2E01	AC9AVA2D01		
AC9HS2S04			

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TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask students if they can recognize the setting of this story from the cover image.

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students if any of the characters reminds them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
2. Ask students what they think of the story outcome. Do they agree with the ending?
3. What are some of the issues within the story, like migration and culture shock, that are relevant today?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- Why do the adults build the walls? Do you think it had the expected outcome?
- Why do you think the adults didn't notice the danger the walls were creating? Why do you think the children could see the danger but not the adults?
- What do you think the Knight and Viking should do next?
- The children do not speak in this story. Why do you think that is? How would the story have been different if written from the children's POV?
- Why do you think the author chose to end the book where she did?
- What do you think the adults were talking about at the end of the book?
- Did you spot the danger the walls created before it became obvious? What clues did the illustrator use to show changes to the environment?

THE WALL IN OUR WORLD TODAY

One of the problems between Mexico and the US is the number of people trying to illegally immigrate from Mexico into the United States. However the solution put forth by the US President of the time, President Trump, was to build a wall between the United States border and Mexico.

- Research why people were immigrating and why the United States finds this problematic.
- Research what impact the wall has had on both the United States and Mexico.
 - a) What happened to the animals because of the wall?
 - b) Why do you think the flora in the surrounding areas were impacted by the walls? Why is animal migration important? How do animals and animal migration impact flora?
 - c) What happened to surrounding towns because of the wall?
 - d) What happened to people's cultures and practices because of the wall?
 - e) Have there been any positive benefits from the building of the wall?
 - f) Is there a difference between the purpose of the Mexico-United States border wall and the walls in the story?

CONFLICT RESOLUTION & RELATIONSHIPS

- Have you ever had an argument with a friend? How did you resolve it?
- What do you think the children were suggesting when they gave the adults the string phone?
- Can you think of a time where you had feelings you struggled to communicate? How did you work through this?
- When you've experienced someone hurting your feelings in what ways did they make you feel better?

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NATURE

- What is the significance of the children planting the seedling at the end of the story?
- Look at other Walls throughout history. Are any of these walls still in use today? Brainstorm how you think these walls may have impacted their environment.
- Can you find instances where walls positively impact the environment (e.g., Japan's seawalls). What is the purpose of these walls? How does this purpose differ from the purpose of the Mexico - United States Border Wall? How does this purpose differ from the purpose of the walls in the story?
- Imagine how the knight and viking might go about restoring the book's environment. Are there ways they might make the book even better? Create a presentation on the steps they might take. Draw how you imagine their new environment might look.

ECOLOGICAL DAMAGE

- How did the walls impact the environment?
- Why do you think the plants on the Knight's side of the book died?
- What happened to the water on the Viking's side of the book?
- Imagine if border walls were put up to separate the states of Australia. What impact do you think this would have on the people, animals and flora? Do Australian animals have yearly migration paths that may be affected? How would you feel if you were unable to visit loved ones in another state?
- Can you think of other ways that humans have negatively impacted the environment because of cultural differences? e.g., devastation to the environment due to war, bombs etc.

FEELINGS & DIFFERENCES

- Can you think of other ways that humans put up 'walls' between themselves and others? e.g. exclusion, distrust, bullying etc.
- What do you think the Knight and Viking were feeling when they disagreed? E.g. angry, scared, worried, frustrated, confused etc. How does this compare to the end?
- How do you think the children feel about the walls?
- If you've ever had a disagreement with a friend how did it make you feel? How did you resolve your difference?

HARMONY DAY

- What is Harmony Day / Harmony Week and why do we celebrate it?
- How does this book relate to Harmony Day themes of diversity and inclusiveness?
- How could the knight and viking in the story come together to celebrate their differences? What could they call their celebration?
- Do you think the viking and knight would have chosen to build walls if they were from the same culture? Why or why not?

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ACTIVITIES

KNIGHT AND VIKING CONVERSATIONS

- In groups, come up with some ideas the Knight and Viking could have used to resolve their disagreement instead of building the walls.
- Pair up and act out the conversation you think the adult Knight and Viking would have had on the string telephone.

MAKE YOUR OWN PHONE

In the Walls book they use a special telephone! Make your own 'Kindness' telephone, otherwise known as a string telephone. [Here are some instructions.](#) Feel free to decorate yours!

RIVER AND BANK GAME

This game tests your listening skills! All you need is a group and some way to draw a line, say masking tape or chalk. Everyone should stand on one side of the line to begin with. When the leader calls out 'river' everyone should jump and land with both feet on the opposite side. And when leader calls out 'bank' everyone should jump back with both feet to where they started. However, if the leader calls out 'bridge' everyone should jump and land with one foot on either side of the line, like a bridge. Those who don't follow instructions are out. Continue until there's a winner!

FAMOUS WALLS

Explore famous walls throughout history.

Some examples are: the Berlin Wall, Great Wall of China, Mexico-United States border wall, Hadrian's Wall, Great Wall of Gorgon, Belfast Peace Walls, The Sumerians' Wall, The Athens Walls, The Walls of Constantinople.

Here are some questions to consider:

- Why were these walls built?
- Some of these walls are very old and some are newer. Are the reasons for building them similar or different?
- Did these walls work or did they cause more problems?

For an extra challenge, using a building material like blocks or Legos (or something else creative) try to build your own wall.

PLANT A SPECIAL POT PLANT

Gather together some supplies to paint a pot and plant something exciting.

You'll need a flower pot to paint and some seeds. Decide whether you'll plant herbs, flowers, or something else!

[Here are some full instructions and list of materials.](#)