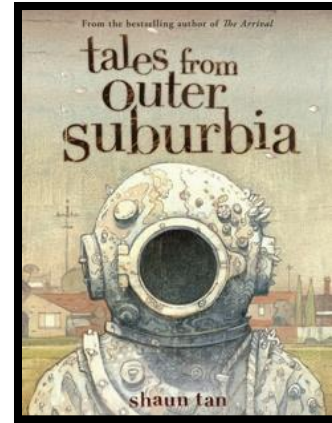


Title: Tales from Outer Suburbia

Author: Shaun Tan

Grade Level: 6th Grade



SUMMARY

Tales from Outer Suburbia is an engaging collection of short stories that brings imaginative and quirky adventures to an otherwise dull suburbia. Your family will enjoy venturing through unusual experiences along with the characters in these short stories. You'll learn how fiction can take on a magical sense when incorporated with real life scenarios, as well as bring up some curious real life themes. There are some undertones of cultural acceptance and assimilation. This book is most appropriate for you to read with your sixth grade child, taking turns sharing the stories of the characters' experiences. These magical tales will bring a new light to suburban living and uncover some of the secrets imagination can unfold.

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT WHILE READING

VOCABULARY

It's important to make sure that your child has an understanding of key words in the book. Talking about words while reading is a great way for your child to learn new words.

In this book, you might talk about these words:

- barnacled (pg. 26)
- sultry (pg. 37)
- sanctuary (pg. 60)
- allegories (pg. 60)
- brittle (pg. 65)

You might use a question like:

In this book, what does the word barnacled mean? What were the context clues surrounding the word you used to discover the definition? Can you use barnacled in your own sentence to describe something in the story?

KEY IDEAS and THEMES

In addition to words, it's important to talk about key ideas and themes and how they develop over the course of the book. Here are some examples to get you started:

- 1) The stories and adventures in this book are quite unusual. Can you identify some of the larger themes in the texts that might serve as commentary about some aspect of life? Particularly suburban life?
- 2) In the story *Eric*, what do the events and reaction of the family to their foreign exchange student say about accepting a different culture? What are some parts of the story where these differences are most noticeable?



- 3) Some of the stories have a dark undertone. They are not exactly scary, but they are eerie or slightly unnerving. Can you find any examples? What language is used to create these undertones? Why do you think the author chose to create this mood for the book?
- 4) The illustrations in *Tales from Outer Suburbia* are beautiful but weird at times. Spend some time examining this artwork and talk about how the drawings enhance your experience and engagement in the story.
- 5) Magical realism is a special literary genre that uses magical or unreal elements in an otherwise realistic environment. What are some of the magical parts in the stories in this book?
- 6) Read the story *Stick Figures* on page 65. This story is quite sad and somewhat disturbing. What is some of the language the author uses to create these uneasy feelings? What is the author's message and how might it apply to real life?

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

- 1) The stories in *Tales from Outer Suburbia* are written in a first person point of view without much background provided about the lives of the narrator or characters involved. Based on information from one of the short stories, make a biographical profile of the narrator including age, family history, school life, likes and dislikes, favorite quotes, and future plans. Be sure to link your ideas to details in the story. You can even try using social media like Facebook or Instagram to create a pseudo profile for this character.
- 2) Try writing your own tale from outer suburbia. Use the stories in the book as a model. Develop a theme and try your hand at using magical realism to develop a plot, characters, and setting. You might even try creating illustrations to enhance your story.