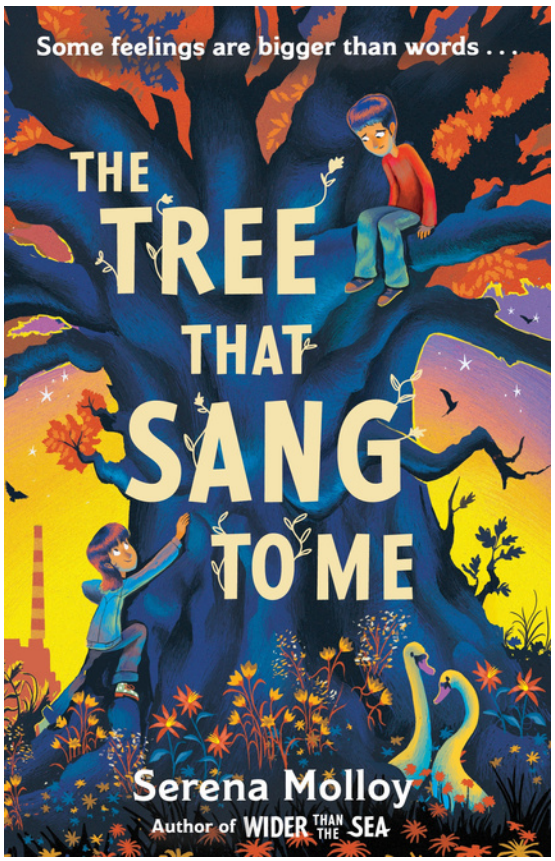


Teaching Notes & Resources

Key Stage 2 - 3

Themes: Hope | Belonging | Friendship
Family | Finding Sancutary

Purchase

Introduction

About the Book

Some feelings are so big, they're hard to express . . .

When Kai's big sister Jen leaves the family home, Kai knows it's all his fault. His secret burns, but he tells no one, just keeps pulling at tufts of his hair. But in the broad branches of a wasteland sycamore tree, Kai feels safe and free from his worries. Up there he feels he can be whoever he wants to be. And when a girl called Sky starts climbing Kai's tree, a friendship blossoms ... a friendship with the power to heal.

Up here
it's like
I'm part of something else
the wind
the leaves
the air
free to be
whoever I want to be.

A dyslexia-friendly verse story of friendship, family and self-discovery, perfect for readers aged 9+, beautifully illustrated in black and white.

About the Author

Serena Molloy was born in Wexford, Ireland, and is an English teacher who has taught in different schools across the UK. She settled in Galway with her family, where she can see the sea every day. As a mum of four, her house is always noisy but never, ever dull.

Serena is also the author of *Wider than the Sea* and her novels are a celebration of neurodiversity, empathy and the power to change.

Contents

Extract 1

Extract and discussion questions for poem *Free*

Extract 2

Extract and discussion questions for poem *Haunted House*

Extract 3

Extract and discussion questions for poem *Memory by Kai*

Activity 1

Identify what sanctuary means for you and draw a picture of it

Activity 2

Write a poem about your first memory

Glossary

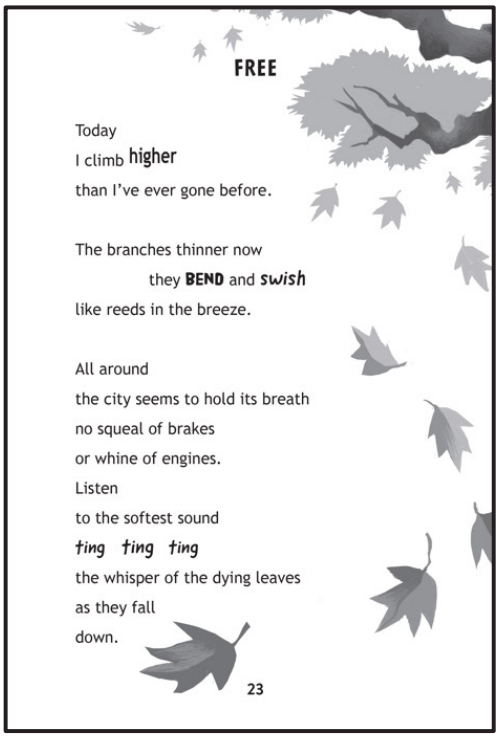
SCAN ME

Discover more books at
HachetteChildrens.co.uk

Discover more resources at
HachetteSchools.co.uk

SCAN ME

Extract 1: Taken from FREE



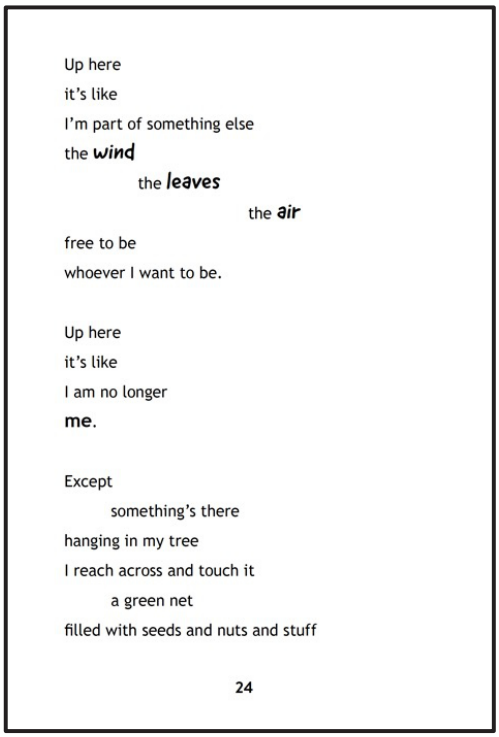
FREE

Today
I climb **higher**
than I've ever gone before.

The branches thinner now
they **BEND** and ***swish***
like reeds in the breeze.

All around
the city seems to hold its breath
no squeal of brakes
or whine of engines.
Listen
to the softest sound
ting ting ting
the whisper of the dying leaves
as they fall
down.

23

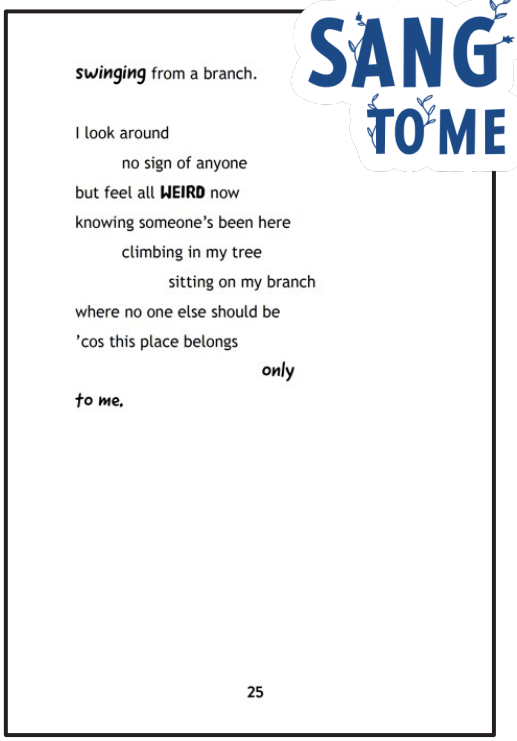


Up here
it's like
I'm part of something else
the ***wind***
the ***leaves***
the ***air***
free to be
whoever I want to be.

Up here
it's like
I am no longer
me.

Except
something's there
hanging in my tree
I reach across and touch it
a green net
filled with seeds and nuts and stuff

24



swinging from a branch.

I look around
no sign of anyone
but feel all **WEIRD** now
knowing someone's been here
climbing in my tree
sitting on my branch
where no one else should be
'cos this place belongs
only
to me.

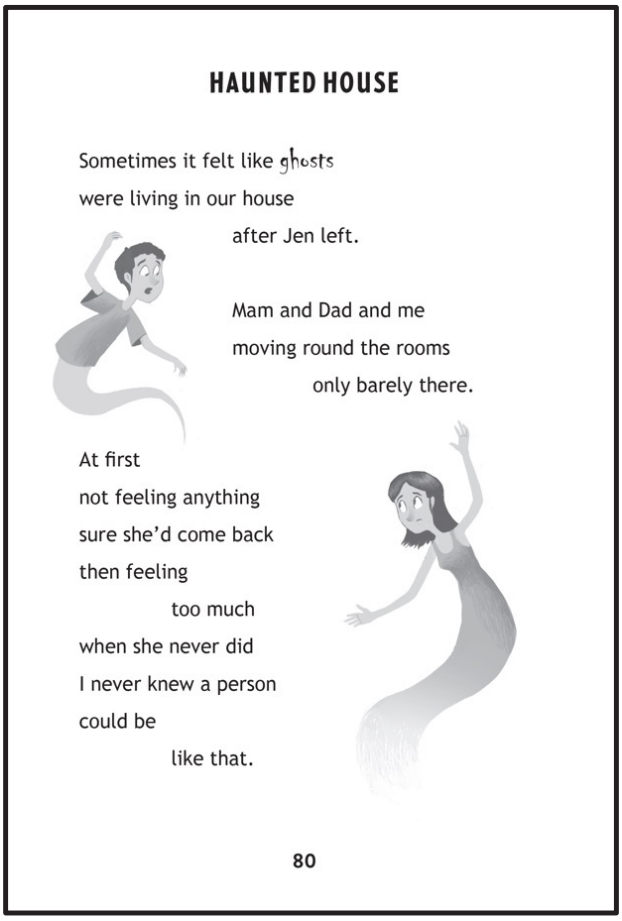
25

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Kai chose to climb higher than ever before?
- How does Kai feel when he is in the sycamore tree? Can you find evidence in the text to support your answer?
- What does Kai mean when he says, 'the city seems to hold its breath'?
- How does the way the lines are broken up change the way that you read each sentence?
- What is found hanging in the tree? Why might it be there?
- How does Kai feel about the discovery? What does it tell you about how he views the tree?

SCAN ME
Discover more books at HachetteChildrens.co.uk
Discover more resources at HachetteSchools.co.uk
SCAN ME

Extract 2: Taken from HAUNTED HOUSE



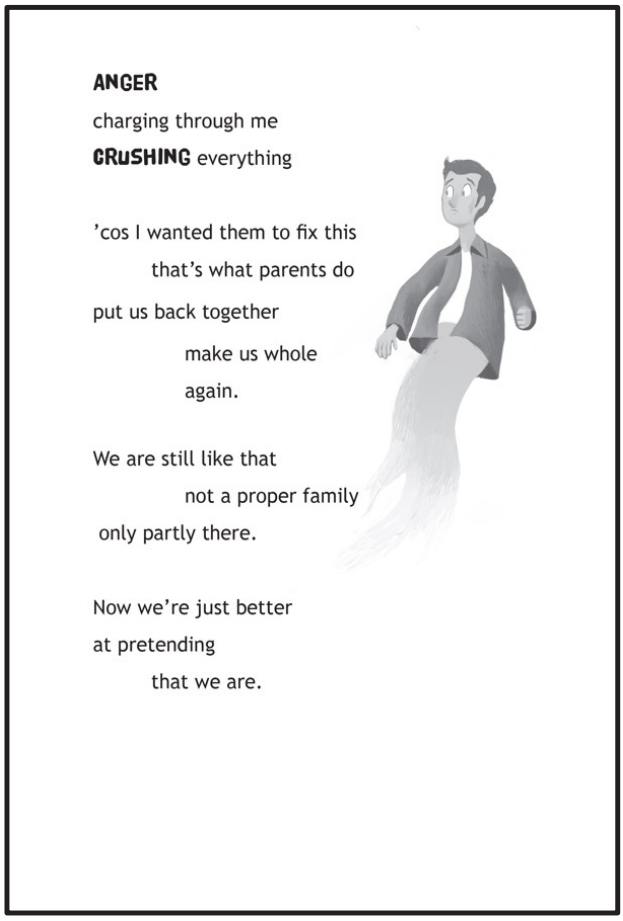
HAUNTED HOUSE

Sometimes it felt like ghosts
were living in our house
after Jen left.

Mam and Dad and me
moving round the rooms
only barely there.

At first
not feeling anything
sure she'd come back
then feeling
too much
when she never did
I never knew a person
could be
like that.

80



ANGER
charging through me
CRUSHING everything

'cos I wanted them to fix this
that's what parents do
put us back together
make us whole
again.

We are still like that
not a proper family
only partly there.

Now we're just better
at pretending
that we are.

Discussion Questions:

- Who are the ghosts in the house after Jen leaves?
- What is meant by, "moving round rooms only barely there"?
- How do Kai's feelings develop throughout the extract of text?
- Who is Kai angry at? Why is he angry?
- Why does Kai say that they are, "not a proper family'?
- How do the illustrations support the theme of the text?

Extract 3: Taken from MEMORY BY KAI

THE TREE THAT SANG TO ME

FIRST MEMORY BY KAI

Warm sun on my face.
Ball bouncing in our yard.

Me picking it up
then Jen saying
No, bootie,
kick it!
Like this.

Try to kick
but fumble stumble tumble
over it.

Hurt face
stinging palms.

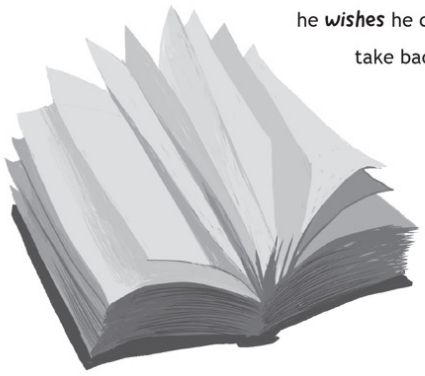
Hands under my arms
Jen pulling me up and folding me
into her
where I am safe
where I am happiest.

195

Jen is ***smiling*** now
'Oh, Bootie,' she says
'I remember this
I remember all of it!'

'There's more,' I say.

She turns the page
and reads the one
about a boy
who did a thing
he ***wishes*** he could
take back.



Discussion Questions:

- What does the line, "Warm sun on my face," tell you about Kai's memory of the event?
- What happened when he tried to kick the ball?
- How does Kai describe the way that Jen hugs him when she picks him up? Can you use evidence from the text to support your answer?
- How does Jen make Kai feel? Do you think she still does now?
- How does Kai's poem make Jen feel?
- Why is the word 'wishes' emphasised using a different font?

SCAN ME
Discover more books at HachetteChildrens.co.uk
Discover more resources at HachetteSchools.co.uk
SCAN ME

Sanctuary

In **THE TREE THAT SANG TO ME**, Kai finds sanctuary from the real world in his sycamore tree with Sky. When things are difficult, it can be helpful to have your own place, person or thing that can make you feel safe and calm.

Can you think of something that makes you feel safe and calm for each of the categories below?

- a place
- a person
- a colour
- a book
- a smell
- an animal
- a sound

Draw a picture that shows you finding sanctuary with the person, place or thing that makes you feel safe and calm.

SCAN ME
Discover more books at HachetteChildrens.co.uk
Discover more resources at HachetteSchools.co.uk
SCAN ME

Project Self

THE TREE THAT SANG TO ME

Inspired by Kai's poem for his school project, write a poem about your first memory.

Consider how you felt and what you experienced. Use descriptive language to bring your memory to life. Remember, your feelings give power to your words, making them come alive for the reader. Don't worry about impressing anyone with fancy language - what matters most is sharing your authentic experience. As Mr P says, 'Our feelings are electricity that bring the words to life.'

What happened?

Write out the key events to get the story clear in your head.

How did it feel?

Think about the emotions you felt during the event. List as many as you can.

Think about all of your senses and see if you can remember any of the sights, sounds, smells, tastes or feelings that you associate with that memory.

Emotions	Senses

SCAN ME
Discover more books at HachetteChildrens.co.uk
Discover more resources at HachetteSchools.co.uk
SCAN ME

Project Self

THE TREE THAT SANG TO ME

Use the ideas you've written down to create your own poem. Remember, it doesn't need to rhyme or follow any strict rules, your poem needs to express your emotions.

SCAN ME

Discover more books at HachetteChildrens.co.uk

Discover more resources at HachetteSchools.co.uk

SCAN ME

Project Self

Use the ideas you've written down to create your own poem. Remember, it doesn't need to rhyme or follow any strict rules, your poem needs to express your emotions.

SCAN ME
Discover more books at HachetteChildrens.co.uk
Discover more resources at HachetteSchools.co.uk
SCAN ME

THE TREE THAT SANG TO ME

Glossary

Caomhóg — A holy man from an ancient Irish myth.

gardaí — Police officers.

Croke Park — A large stadium in Dublin that hosts sporting events and live music.

Luas — The tram system in Dublin.

solas — Light in Irish.

Supermac's — An Irish fast food restaurant chain.

underpass — A tunnel that passes under a road or railway.

SCAN ME
Discover more books at HachetteChildrens.co.uk
Discover more resources at HachetteSchools.co.uk
SCAN ME

Resources created by

Teacher's Pet

SCAN ME

Discover more books at
HachetteChildrens.co.uk

Discover more resources at
HachetteSchools.co.uk

SCAN ME