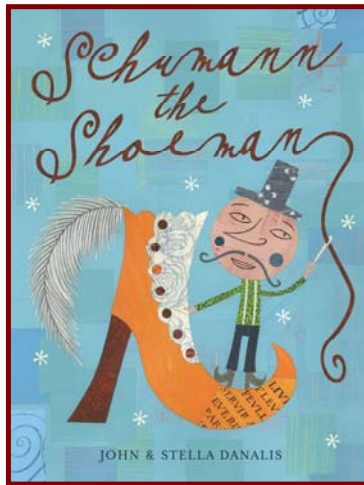


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SCHUMANN THE SHOEMAN

John and Stella Danalis



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising senior secondary teacher

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SYNOPSIS

Schumann the Shoeman is well loved by the town folk for his spectacular creations and his fancy shoe-shop sign. However, his safe and ordered world changes abruptly when a shoe factory opens in his town. Schumann is deserted by his customers as they wish to buy the cheaper shoes available in only one style and colour. Forced into factory work to earn a living, Schumann finds he is unable to conform to the monotonous expectations and alters the shoes – to the disapproval of his boss.

Broken in spirit and cast aside by his former customers, he sets off into the world. Schumann's new forest home welcomes him and in no time at all he finds himself in business again. Once more with his soul refreshed and his creativity stimulated, Schumann's wonderful shoes are in demand – his new customers are the animals of the forest.

As time passes, Schumann dresses the feet of all the forest creatures and they become his close and dear friends. The animals hold a party to celebrate Schumann and their glorious footwear. Schumann is presented with a challenge when the centipede requests that she too requires shoes – 50 pairs! Time passes as Schumann works until, at last, the day arrives when he can tie the laces on his sign – the shoes are complete! Then tragedy strikes as he tumbles from his ladder.

His life's work complete, the forest animals sadly lay him and his tools to rest under an old oak. The centipede, now stricken with grief, decorates the branches of the tree with the beautiful shoes that Schumann made for her in homage to their friend and his creativity.

Many years later, a passing bird cannot help but be captivated by the sheer beauty of the booties. He takes a pair to wear. As the lorikeet travels the skies of the world he one day finds himself above Schumann's old town. He loses a shoe after a sneeze forces it from his foot.

A curious townsman happens upon the shoe and so the legacy of Schumann the Shoeman lives on.

THEMES**Friendship:**

- Schumann's friendship with the creatures of the forest is ultimately more satisfying than that of the townsfolk.

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- Although he was initially adored by the townsfolk they quickly abandoned him. True friendship can be found in unexpected places and with unexpected people.

Cycles in Life:

- Although Schumann leaves the town, his creativity and uniqueness return when the bootie dropped by the lorikeet is found by a towns person after Schumann dies.

Social Comment on Contemporary Society:

- Assembly line mass production can create cheap and plentiful goods; however, this can be at the cost of individual and unique items.
- Modern technology brings many benefits, such as increased leisure time; however, the process may not always be satisfying.
- Consumerism: the factory produced shoes that were ultimately throw away items versus the shoes that Schumann produced that were made to last.

Recycling:

- The illustrator has taken this concept into her work by using found images and stamps to create the artwork.

WRITING STYLE

Schumann the Shoeman is an old-world-style story reminiscent of the traditional tales and fables that hold a message for all who read them. This joyous tale takes the reader on a journey in which he/she must reflect on what is most important in life.

Language and literary devices are used by the author to add depth to the text.

- Interesting vocabulary enriches the way in which the reader creates meaning for him/herself, for example, 'lavish loafers' and 'his spirit threadbare'.
- Simile and metaphor conjure up beautiful images, for example, 'the rustling trees spoke to him like old friends' and 'where they dangled and spun like jewels'.

STUDY NOTES

- Do you throw away stuff? What happens to it? Explore what we do with objects we throw out and consider how we could re-use them. Bring an

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item from home which you plan to throw away. Discuss how you could re-use or recycle it. In particular, explore the way in which Stella Danalis, the illustrator, has re-used items to create her illustrations.

- The pages at the beginning and end have many different shoes displayed. Which shoes would you wear? Younger children may like to have a footwear show.
- Shoes can be fastened in many ways – laces, zips, velcro and so on. Explore the footwear in the book and the footwear the class is wearing.
- Schumann very cleverly uses the bows on his sign to signal to his customers that their shoes are complete. This message is communicated without any verbal contact. How do you send messages? What ways can you “signal” a message without verbal communication?
- Forest and woods often feature as settings in traditional tales and fables. Read other tales which have forests as settings, for example, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Wizard of Oz*.
- In the forest, Schumann finds a sanctuary to continue his creative work. Where do you get inspiration? Younger readers may prefer to compare Schumann’s forest home with the forests from other tales.
- A change can take you in different directions. Schumann’s new forest home brings unexpected new friendships. Reflect on an experience that brought positive changes to your own life.
- Schumann’s forest home is a shoe house that he builds – very appropriate for a shoeman. Where do the forest creatures live? What are their homes like? Choose an animal and write/draw/design their home. How does it fit with their characteristics/personality?
- The name Schumann presents a play on words. However, there is an added layer of meaning: Robert Schumann was a composer from the romantic period of music. The illustrations appear to reference this with snippets of musical notes contained throughout. Look for all of the musical notes in the illustrations. Classes may like to listen to music composed by Robert Schumann.

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- Discuss the meanings of some of the vocabulary in the text, for example, promenade, hoodwinked, spiffy and mundane.
- The language devices conjure up beautiful images and enrich the story, for example, 'rustling trees spoke to him like old friends'. Create your own similes and metaphors for special places and objects.
- The illustrations add layers of meaning to the text, for example – the shoe cake presented to Schumann by the rabbit has a recipe on it. Can you find other special meanings in the illustrations?
- Create a special pair of shoes for your own chosen animal. Show your design in a collage.
- The illustration of the oak tree under which Schumann is buried is the only three dimensional image in the book. Does this add impact to the story? How?
- Explore other picture books that are illustrated with collage. Compare and contrast it to Stella Danalis' style. Picture book illustrators who use different styles of collage include Jeannie Baker, Eric Carle and Patricia Mullins. Have students create their own collaged works of art.
- Explore the opposites contained in the story, such as, the factory shoes compared with Schumann's creations, and the setting of the city compared with the forest. How are they different? Are there similarities?
- In the illustrations, colour has been used to create atmosphere. Explore how this is done. Look at different colours and how they can be attached to a feeling or a mood. For example – yellow is generally associated with happy, sunny, bright moods. Create your own mood pictures.
- A shoeman requires special tools for his/her trade. Explore other specialist tools/equipment that people use in their trade/job.
- Schumann appears as a somewhat eccentric or quirky character in the illustrations. What does eccentric mean? Do you agree that he is?
- Read about other shoes in literature:
 - *Puss in Boots*
 - *Cinderella*
 - *The Elves and the Shoemaker*

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- *The Red Shoes*
- *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*
- *The Wizard of Oz – Dorothy’s ruby red slippers*
- *The Old Woman who lived in a Shoe*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

John Danalis is a writer, illustrator and designer who, with his wife Stella, owns the design studio Peripheral Vision. John is the author of *Dog 37* published by UQP. When he is not illustrating or writing for children, he can be found in the forest riding one of his three bicycles.

Stella Danalis is the award-winning illustrator of *What the Sky Knows* and a highly respected artist and designer. *What the Sky Knows* was shortlisted for the CBCA 2006 Book of the Year Early Childhood and the CBCA 2006 Picture Book of the Year.