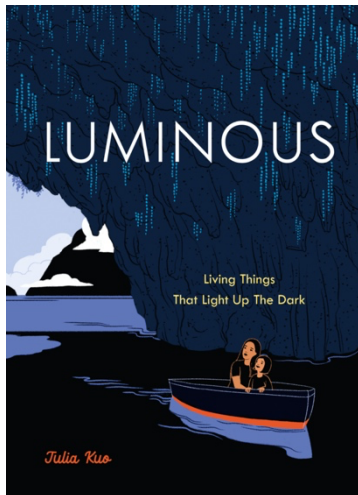


Teacher's Notes



Luminous

Written and illustrated by Julia Kuo

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary school-aged readers (ages 3+, grades prep - 3) These notes are designed for years 2-3 but can easily be adapted to other grades.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English & Science
- General capabilities:
 - Nature and development of science (ACSHE034)
 - Communicating (AC SIS042)
 - Biological Sciences (ACSSU044)
 - Language variation and change (ACE LA1460)

- Text structure and organisation (ACE LA1463)

THEMES

- Light and dark
- Curiosity
- Ocean animals
- Sources of light
- Luminescence

SYNOPSIS

Where does light come from? What if our bodies could create light?

In *Luminous*, author-illustrator Julia Kuo encourages young readers to explore and engage with the world of bioluminescence. Take an imaginative dive into the dark forests and ocean-depths to discover living things that glow from the inside and the way they use their bodies to eat, to protect, and to delight.

The simple prose invites readers to be curious and ask questions about the world around them, while informative paragraphs provide additional facts about the animals and creatures that live in the deep dark.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Julia Kuo is a Taiwanese-American author-illustrator who has worked with the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. She has illustrated numerous picture books, including *Let's Do Everything and Nothing*, and has taught illustration courses at Columbia College Chicago and Washington University in St Louis. She has been an artist-in-residence twice at the Banff Centre for the Arts and was a 2019-2021 fellow with the Gray Centre for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago. She is interested in discovering and illustrating the natural world.

THEMES

Science encourages us to look at the natural world with curiosity and a desire to understand more about why things happen the way they do. By asking questions alongside the facts of the book, *Luminous* encourages readers to not only engage with scientific themes – light, the environment, bioluminescence – but also taps into a natural sense of curiosity and wonder. This book is a wonderful place to start discussions about science and discovery, animals, the environment, the impact of human life on the natural world, and different ways of creatively presenting facts. More than anything, *Luminous* asks readers to question and observe the world around them, two fundamental principles of science.

WRITING STYLE

In *Luminous*, facts are presented alongside a simple narrative, allowing readers to engage with the information at their own pace. Julia Kuo makes clever use of font size and style to indicate the different types of information, making this a good text to discuss the different signals writers use to direct in non-fiction books.

How does it feel to read the main story without any of the facts? How do the facts change the type of book this is? *Luminous* is a gentle introduction to bioluminescence, but also to non-fiction books more broadly. Discuss what makes a book non-fiction, and how writers use creative writing to keep readers interested.

COMPREHENSION

- What is light? Where does it come from?
- What is the difference between a natural light source and a human-made light source? Can you come up with an example of each?
- What does *bioluminescence* mean?
- What is your favourite fact in the book? Why?
- What is the difference between fact and fiction? Can you identify which parts of the story are fact and which are fiction? How can you tell?
- What are some of the different things that the creatures in the book use light for?
- What is the opposite of light?
- What are some of the negative effects of too much human-made light on places?



WRITING EXERCISE

Can facts be creative? Sometimes we just need to change the way we look at or present information to make it sound more interesting. Choose an animal that interests you and write down ten facts about it. Write each fact on a separate line on paper that you can cut up. Cut along each line so that you can move them around, and experiment with the order of your facts. How does changing the order of your facts change the way you read it? Which way do you like best?

Write a haiku about your chosen animal – a haiku is a poem written in three lines. The first line has five syllables, the second has seven syllables, the third has five syllables. Draw a picture of your animal to accompany your poem.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Julia Kuo captures the full impact of bioluminescence using the contrast between light and dark, and black and colour. Look at the way she sets the scene – the first page of the book is pitch black with only a single line of text to begin. She then invites us into the story with circles of white light – the torch and the moon. From here it is as if our eyes adjust to the dark, and we are able to pick out details – some shadowy blues and other, brighter colours to draw our eyes to the various light sources. The illustration makes us think about the dark as a comforting place that is full of magic and delight and subverts the way we think about using colour to show detail.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a picture of somewhere familiar to you. Now use colour to show what it might look like in the dark.
2. Draw a creature that you imagine you might find in the dark. What does it look like? How does it use light to survive?
3. You might find a lot of new and unfamiliar words in the book. Some of them are highlighted in italics. Use these words to start a new vocabulary list and add any other words that are unfamiliar as you read. Look them up and write down the meaning. Choose two and use each one in a new sentence.
4. Go on a night walk. Take a torch (and an adult) and go on a night walk around your neighbourhood. Draw a map of the places you walk, and write or draw the things you see that look or sound different at night.

RELATED READING

'Weird, Wild, Amazing' by Tim Flannery
'A Curious Collection of Wild Companions' by Sami Bayly
'Bright in the Night' by Lena Sjoberg

