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## WINDOWS

WRITTEN BY PATRICK GUEST ILLUSTRATED BY JONATHAN BENTLEY

This warm and heartfelt book depicts a child's observations of the Covid-19 crisis. Each page shows a different child looking out from a series of different windows, but the text unites them in their imaginative wanderings. Each child's world has been reduced to looking out a window, the streets are suddenly empty of people, yet they can still observe the clouds and imagine that they look like an old steam train, a pirate ship, or a dinosaur. They also observe what's going on in their neighbourhood ... like when they visit Pop and he comes to the window, we see a series of 'Pops' hugging their grandchildren.

### THEMES

*Windows* covers a range of themes stemming from the isolation experienced during the current Covid-19 crisis, using the idea of a child's view of the world through their window as a symbol. It also explores imagination, observation, neighbours and communities, and families. It celebrates love and encourages hope. Each of these themes can be addressed via the following discussion points and activities.

What can you see from your window? Draw a picture of that view. Windows come in many shapes and sizes. Some appear in this book. Draw other windows that you notice near your home or school. Windows are for looking out from, or for looking in to. On pp 20–21, we see a series of windows from the outside. What can you see inside each of these windows? Take a picture of the view from your window at home and

create a wall of such images. (There is a global online project called 'View from my Window', which is very similar to this activity.)

The book opens with words indicating that the world has changed. Explain to your children/students what the pandemic is in simple terms. Then invite children to discuss the ways in which



Covid-19 has changed the world we live in. Ask them to respond to what you've told them in a simple drawing.

Guiseppe's mother playing the flute on her balcony (pp 16–17) is reminiscent of scenes in the media, for example, people in Italy serenading each other from their balconies. The teddies and rainbows in the windows have also become symbolic of solidarity among neighbours during the pandemic. Ask children what other things their communities have been doing to deal with the Covid-19 crisis.

### IMAGINATION

The children hear someone tapping on the glass (pp 22–23) and imagine a sheet on a clothesline is a ghost. Then they hear a growling noise and imagine that the shape of a tree might be a beast. When we turn the page, we realise it was Pop making those noises! What do you imagine when you are all alone and hear things outside, or look out your window and see strange shapes?

### NEIGHBOURS AND COMMUNITIES

The community depicted here is multicultural. The friends have names that might indicate their backgrounds (Mikayla and Abu, Giuseppe, Kiyoshi, Akira). What cultures did you see represented in these images?

### FAMILIES

Grandparents can be very special members of any family. During the crisis, many have been separated from their grandchildren. In *Windows*, Pop appears in the street outside the narrator's window and acts like a goose, but we actually see a number of 'Pops' acting the goose together (pp 26–27). Each of these 'Pops' is also very different to look at. Ask children what their grandparents have done during the crisis to stay in touch with them.

### HOPE

How is this book hopeful? What message does it convey about feelings during the Covid-19 crisis? What is hope? What makes you feel hopeful?