



## **Seeing Orange**

Sara Cassidy  
illustrated by Amy Meissner

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### **About the Book**

Seven-year-old Leland's grade two teacher, Mr. Carling, keeps Leland in for recess because he never finishes his work in class. Writing is difficult for Leland. But he is good at thinking! His mind is always spinning awesome stories and cool ideas, and he draws amazing pictures. Mr. Carling thinks Leland's a daydreamer. Leland starts to hate Mr. Carling and going to school. He invents an imaginary seeing-eye dog named Delilah to pull him to class. When a neighborhood artist recognizes Leland's artistic gifts, Leland learns that the way he sees the world isn't wrong and becomes confident enough to tell Mr. Carling how he feels. The two figure out how grade two can be okay for Leland.

### **About the Author**

Leland's family are also at the center of **Sara Cassidy's** other two Orca books, *Slick* and *Windfall*. Written for nine to thirteen-year-olds, those books are primarily about Liza, Leland's older sister, who becomes an activist against oil industry and for local agriculture as she comes to terms with her mother's new boyfriend and the death of a homeless man in her neighborhood. Just like Leland's family, Sara lives with her three children and an orange cat named Pumpkin. Her son, Ezra, delivers newspapers in a red wagon. Sara writes stories and poems for adults too.

### **About the Writing**

I was very interested in metaphor when I wrote *Seeing Orange*. It was kind of a dreamy book for me, more poetic than my other two children's books, and—I hate to admit it—I wrote it in a solid two-week stretch, lying on my bed! At the time that I wrote it, my son—who is kind and bright—was having trouble at school because he couldn't

write very well. I got the feeling that his teacher thought my son was lazy. I realized then that learning difficulties like fine motor control issues or dyslexia have nothing to do with whether someone is smart or not. Also, my mind wanders ALL the time, especially when someone starts teaching me something. I have to work to get my mind on track. It's funny because lately I've become a teacher!

### **Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections**

#### *Prereading Ideas*

- Do you ever feel as though someone doesn't understand you?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you think you'll get in trouble just for saying how you feel?
- Have you had a hard time getting your work done in class?
- Is it difficult for you to write—more difficult than it seems to be for other kids?
- Have you ever stared and stared at things until they become “more than they are,” like an orange on the breakfast table starts to blur and looks like a planet, or the cars whizzing by your window look like fast bugs with bright eyes?
- Have you ever imagined that you had a pet?
- Have you ever had a lost pet? How did you feel?
- Did you ever see someone and immediately like them and want to meet them?
- What is an artist?
- If a student finds it difficult to write, should she or he get in trouble?
- Is it silly or smart to have an imaginary friend to help you out?
- Is it okay not to like your teacher? If you didn't like your teacher, could she or he still teach you? Could you still learn? What could you do if you didn't like your teacher?

#### *Classroom Discussion Questions*

1. What made Leland feel brave?
2. Should Leland have told his teacher that he didn't like being kept in at recess, or was that disrespectful?
3. Leland's teacher keeps Leland in during recess to finish his in-class work. Do you think that is fair? Is it a punishment or is it meant to help Leland?
4. How does a picture “talk” differently from a story?
5. Do you see the world exactly the way it's supposed to be seen? Is there a way the world is “supposed to be seen”?
6. What makes a house look like a happy place? Why does that make it look happy?
7. Why do people make art?
8. A hundred years ago, an artist named Elbert Hubbard wrote that “Art is not a thing—it is a way.” What do you think that means

*Suggested Activities*

- A *metaphor* is when we say something is something else, like “the moon is a pearl in the sky.” You could also say “the moon looks like a pearl in the sky”: that is a kind of metaphor called a *simile*. Can you think of other metaphors for the moon? Remember it doesn't have to be a full moon. Can you find metaphors in *Seeing Orange*? (i.e. soft tower of folded laundry, her hand scuttles across her page *like a crab*.)
- The book opens with an artist saying what he thinks an artist does—show things as he sees them, not what they look like. Pretend you are an artist: how would you explain art to someone—an alien, say—who doesn't know what art is?
- Close your eyes and imagine a cat that would help you out in times of trouble. Imagine exactly what the cat would look like—what would be special about it, what would it have that would help you? Imagine the cat gets lost. Make a “Lost Cat” poster, drawing your marvelous cat. If you want, describe the cat in words.
- Close your eyes. Think of someone or something that bothers or scares you. If there isn't anything, think of something in the world that you wish didn't exist—like war. Now, imagine telling the person or thing that bothers you how you feel. Think out every word; state it very clearly. If you want, write it down. Practice being bold the way Leland was with Mr. Carling.
- Think of a color. Look around your classroom for six different examples of that color. Write down the six places that color is. Now try to describe each shade of the color. (i.e. Jason's book cover = Angry blue. My jeans = Yesterday blue. Riley's jacket = Summer morning blue. Teacher's desk = Bruise blue.)  
**Option:** You have been hired to work at the paint factory. Your job is to name the paints. Today the color is yellow. Think up fancy names that describe the shade of yellow (or blue, or red, etc.).
- The book makes a lot of references to the color orange—can you make a list? (Persimmon sweater, rotting Christmas orange carpet, Angela's fire-orange hair, the orange school bus, etc.)
- Can you draw a picture of someone “seeing red”? Now draw a picture of that person expressing what it is she or he is so angry about. “I wish we weren't out of Rice Krispies!”
- What does it mean to be focused? What are good ways to help you to be focused?
- How do eyes perceive color? How do they see at all? Look online for a picture of the eye. What are the parts of the eye? (Or: What is color? Look it up online and try to explain it!)
- Have you ever heard the theory that people see different colors even though we call them the same names? i.e. Your blue might be what I see when I see green. Do you think this is possible?

**Websites of Interest**

San Francisco Exploratorium Mix and Match game: excellent for understanding the range of color.

[www.exploratorium.edu/exhibits/mix\\_n\\_match](http://www.exploratorium.edu/exhibits/mix_n_match)

San Francisco Exploratorium information for children on “What is Colour?”

[www.exploratorium.edu/colorfest/whatiscolor.php](http://www.exploratorium.edu/colorfest/whatiscolor.php)

San Francisco Exploratorium on Seeing, with such ideas as: Seeing is subjective: Each of us sees the world differently. Seeing is active: Our eyes and brains construct the world we see. Seeing is interpreting light: Light carries information into our eyes.

[www.exploratorium.edu/seeing/about/introduction.html](http://www.exploratorium.edu/seeing/about/introduction.html)

**Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers**

*Slick* (Orca Currents)

*Windfall* (Orca Currents)

**Reviews**

*Slick*

“[Orca] couldn’t have picked a better time to publish *Slick*...A well-written, fast-paced, high interest novel with compelling characters written for reluctant readers...The book also encourages girls and tweens in general to become interested in political issues and current events. Highly Recommended.”  
—*CM Magazine*

“This novel would work well with an environmental science component. Largely idealistic, Liza shows that one person can make a difference in both their community and in the wider world.”  
—*Resource Links*

“Slender, easy-to-read, and strongly purposeful...This upbeat tale [is a] solid entry in the Orca Currents series.”  
—*Booklist*

“Liza’s determination and activism set a powerful example...The topic is relevant and will engage young socially aware readers.”  
—*Horn Book Guide*

*Windfall*

“The homeless, apple trees, community gardening, the politics of food, coping with death and meeting cute boys are the themes of Sara Cassidy’s latest book, *Windfall*. Somehow, Sara Cassidy weaves these themes together producing a fast, entertaining read suitable for young teens...this charming book about teen activism lives up to the high expectations set by Sara Cassidy’s first novel, *Slick*. Highly Recommended.”  
—*CM Magazine*

“*Windfall* will allow students a glimpse of a life seldom seen in current YA fiction: a Canadian sensibility, a successful single mother raising her children well, and a strong ‘green’ message presented respectfully throughout. Community matters in *Windfall*, and though Liza’s pain feels real and important, we know that she will deal with her losses and emerge stronger.”  
—*VOYA*