

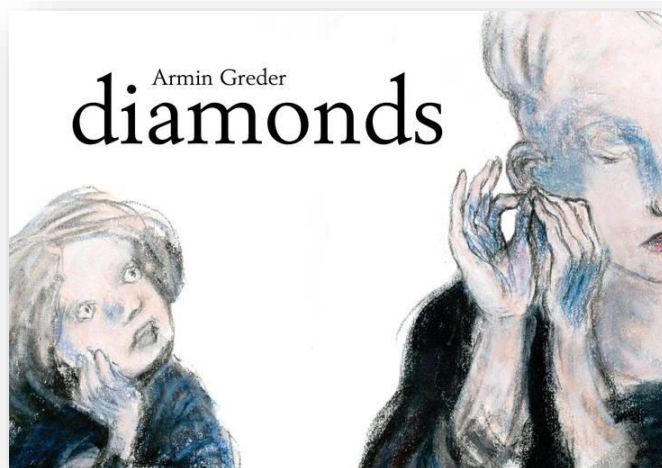
Teachers' Notes (Primary & Secondary) by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

Diamonds Armin Greder

Recommended for ages 11–18
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INTRODUCTION

STORY SUMMARY

This profound book explores the ethics associated with diamond mining, largely in Africa, and the devastating effects it has had, and continues to have on so many lives, as others benefit in receiving payment for these gems, and ultimately, for the personal gift of beautiful diamonds. For these glittering gifts often have a tragic origin ... which is why they are often called 'Blood Diamonds' or 'Conflict Diamonds'.

The story opens with a conversation between a mother and her daughter, Carolina, as her mother dons a pair of diamond earrings, before going out for the evening, but for the most part the text is wordless. Only at the end does Carolina's African nanny Amina address the mother, briefly. In Carolina's dream, which is reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch's or Pieter Bruegel's visions of hell, she sees an image of Amina doing the housework which morphs into her joining her fellow Africans in the horrendous conditions in which workers labour to mine diamonds in Africa. She witnesses a series of scenes including a utility full of armed guards and canny merchants eying the diamonds before agreeing to buy them. The diamonds Uncle Winston has bought in Antwerp, Belgium and given to Carolina's mother, which were discussed at the beginning of the story, therefore take on a sinister tone in the light of these nightmarish images.

As critic Francesco Boille points out in his afterword, Greder explores in his visual text the 'food chain' which links the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, in this graphic exploration not only of the global diamond trade but of any global commercial enterprise.

Another under-recognised issue is that diamonds are a source of wealth which frequently finances conflict. For as Noury also points out in this afterword here: 'The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the most glaring example of all this. But elsewhere, in Africa and beyond, diamonds have financed wars, and been exchanged for weapons. That is what lies at the heart of Carolina's nightmare.'

Haunting this work, too, is of course another sub-text, for such dangerous conditions lead to refugees embarking on desperate journeys – a problem explored in several of Greder's earlier books. For the conditions outlined and the inequities illustrated here directly relate to, and in fact create, the worldwide migration of people seeking a better existence; journeys which are often undertaken at great risk to those who have nothing left to lose.

And, also shadowing this work, is the fact that this household is a deliberate microcosm of the careless society which has allowed diamond mining to continue to exploit workers. For we see this depicted in the obviously distracted mothering which Carolina endures, as her mother blithely departs for an evening with 'Uncle Winston' (presumably her lover) – it is her African nanny who puts her to sleep and comforts her when she suffers nightmares. Her mother's dismissive treatment of her 'annoying' questions and of the notion that Amina might own any diamonds, are further evidences of the position of privilege and sense of entitlement which her mother represents. Her mother's immediate reaction when she returns to find Carolina crying is accusatory ('What's going on?'), as if she suspects Amina of some infringement. Amina herself is symbolic of her many fellow countrymen who are downtrodden workers, just as she is.

This is another monumentally important work by Armin Greder which reminds members of any privileged society to consider the lives of others, to not only empathise with them, but most of all to act in order to bring about change.

THEMES

There are several key ideas or themes which flow through this work. These notes are ideal for classroom discussion from Years 6 to 12, and could be used in Years 3 to 5 as well. They have

application to core subjects such as Art, English and HSIE. These themes could be considered in conjunction with the following school curriculum areas.

CURRICULUM TOPICS

1. Study of history, society and environment
2. English language and literacy
3. Visual literacy
4. Creative arts
5. Learning technologies

The notes which follow are designed to be used largely in upper primary and secondary classrooms. Teachers should be able to adapt them to suit the demands of their particular curriculum. **Note:** These notes are for teachers to use as an extended resource in order to encourage discussion of the concepts suggested below, and are to be mediated in a sensitive manner appropriate to the age-group of their students.

STUDIES OF HISTORY, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT

DIAMOND MINING

- *Discussion Point:* The text and images in this book challenge the reader to understand the inhumanity of the diamond trade in Africa. Workers there, many of whom are children, are forced to work in dangerous and unsanitary conditions, overseen by cruel and armed guards. Accident and mortality rates are high and corruption is rife. Wealthy corporations control the mining and trade of diamonds. Buyers sell to retailers who then sell to customers who present them as gifts to women like Carolina's mother. How is the international diamond trade organised? Which companies control it in Africa? What other countries are major players in diamond mining?
- *Discussion Point:* This book also reveals that the profits of this trade are often siphoned off into paying for wars and conflicts. How do so-called 'Conflict Diamonds' fund such wars?
- *Discussion Point:* The presence of an African nanny in Carolina's mother's household cements the impression conveyed in these images that diamond mining is an anachronistic form of slavery in our modern world. Environmental damage is another outcome of the industry. What aspects of the diamond trade did you notice in these images? What have you discovered in your research?
- *Discussion Point:* After reading the few opening words in this book, and then 'reading' the images, read the afterword by Francesco Boille at the end of the text. It is preceded by two quotes by American Presidents Dwight David Eisenhower and John Fitzgerald Kennedy. These are followed by words written by Riccardo Noury, Spokesperson of Amnesty International Italy. Discuss with students the information contained in these four pieces of text. For example, discuss the final part of Kennedy's Quote: 'If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.' – John Fitzgerald Kennedy, President of the United States, inaugural address, 20 January 1961. OR discuss Riccardo Noury's piece which dwells on the ironic use of the word 'forever' in the saying 'Diamonds are forever' by overturning that to examine the 'forever' consequences of the dangers of mining on the lives which are often lost (forever) in the process.
- *Discussion Point:* The saying 'Diamonds are forever' is not traditional; it was the official De Beers slogan, 'invented in 1948 by its New York advertising agency N. W. Ayer to promote the engagement ring as a symbol of enduring love.' (Pallister et al, 1987) Later the notion of wearing eternity rings or anniversary rings was similarly promoted. (Pallister et al, p 111) Marilyn Monroe's song 'Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend' in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* promoted an alternative 'racier' marketing image. (Pallister et al, p 110) How has marketing driven the international thirst for diamonds? Is a diamond really an appropriate symbol of

enduring love, when its production entails so much hardship? And is a diamond really such a good investment when one considers the market manipulation which has occurred in order to maintain profits for those companies which mine and sell diamonds?

- *Discussion Point:* Later in his afterword, Noury mentions the 'Kimberley Process', 'a certification agreement that aims to reduce the flow of diamonds used to finance conflict', and says it doesn't go far enough. Research and write an analysis of this issue using websites such as *The Kimberley Process (KP)* <https://www.kimberleyprocess.com/>. [See also **English Language & Literacy** below.]
- *Discussion Points:* Pose questions to students about the ethics of diamond mining. For example,
 - a) Should children be put to work in any industry?
 - b) What ethical responsibilities should companies adhere to when working in any foreign country?

Encourage secondary students to research these questions in the media and by consulting the resources listed in the **Bibliography** below.

GLOBALISM & CAPITALISM

- *Discussion Point:* Community responsibility extends to global responsibility. Conduct a debate on this topic.
- *Discussion Point:* The 'food chain' outlined in this exposé of diamond mining reminds us all that every individual action may be linked to consequences for other people. This begins with immediate family and friends, extends to co-workers, and to an intricate network of connections involved in creating and marketing any product. This sense of a 'global ecology' should inform each of us to act with responsibility towards others.

SLAVERY & RACISM

- *Discussion Point:* Employing workers in sub-human and violently enforced conditions (a whip and guns are evident in these images), from which they cannot afford to escape, is tantamount to slavery, despite the fact that our westernised notions of slavery are bound up with the outcome of the American Civil War which supposedly made slavery illegal. Invite students to investigate the various forms of contemporary slavery against which organisations such as Amnesty International are currently mounting challenges.
- *Discussion Point:* Is inherent racism implied in the mother's off-handed treatment of her nanny, Amina?

POLITICAL ACTIVISM & FORMS OF SOCIAL/POLITICAL PROTEST

- *Discussion Point:* How should governments and corporations address the issues outlined in this book? Should ordinary citizens be taking a stand against this industry?
- *Activity:* Read about advocacy groups and organisations such as Global Witness and Amnesty International and how they interpret, and are addressing, this challenge.
- *Activity:* Research some of the forms of peaceful protest used by advocacy groups, such as letter-writing, signing petitions, creating placards and banners to be used in peaceful marches and demonstrations, fundraising etc. How might a useful protest against diamond mining be made?

- *Activity:* Research 'craftivism' or 'craft activism' – a form of protest which employs craft in a peaceful way. [See **Bibliography.**] Encourage students to come up with such a project on the theme of diamond mining using yarn bombing, embroidery, cross stitching, basket weaving, or any other forms of craft.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

1) This text contains two quotes and an afterword by both Francesco Boille and Riccardo Noury.

- *Discussion Point:* Having discussed their meaning above under the theme of **Diamond Mining**, discuss these four pieces of text, as poetic or expository or persuasive forms of writing, with your students.
- *Discussion Point:* Invite students to write a response to these four pieces of text in any of these types of prose.

2) Structure in a story is important. This has a framing story set in Carolina's home but the main story is that of the diamond trade and how it affects African workers.

- *Discussion Point:* Discuss the structure of the story – with exposition, turning point, resolution, open ending.

3) This book tells a story largely in images.

- *Discussion Point:* Invite students to write some sentences to accompany one of the images.

4) The Conclusion of a story should cement its themes.

- *Discussion Point:* How do the final words and the image of the three members of this household resolve or summarise the ideas and themes in this book?

5) Poetry can offer a strong and immediate response to the issues raised here.

- *Activity:* Encourage students to write their own poetic responses to the issues explored in this book, in any poetic form they choose.
- *Activity:* Watch *YouTube* videos of UK performance poets Kate Tempest or Benjamin Zephaniah or Australian poets such as Steven Herrick deliver their poetry on personal and social issues. [See examples in **Bibliography.**] Encourage students to read social issues based poetry and then to write and perform such poetry for their classmates.

VISUAL LITERACY

1) Visual texts may be interpreted very differently by a reader, particularly where a text has an 'open' ending.

- *Activity:* Invite students to read Francesco Boille's very elegant and astute analysis of how Greder's comic/graphic/filmic artwork actually works on the page. Closely analyse how his drawing and use of devices (such as perspective and colour) work together to create meaning in this text.
- *Activity:* Boille also refers to the influence of Francisco Goya, Honoré Daumier and Käthe Kollwitz on Greder's work. Study their artwork as well. [See **Bibliography.**]
- *Activity:* Invite students to create a visual response to this text. It might be another image to be added to the text, or some other visual image. Create a class display and an online gallery of these artworks. Discuss the differences between each interpretation.

2) A good part of this text is wordless.

- *Activity:* Read other examples of wordless texts such as Armin Greder's *The Mediterranean* (2017) or Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2006). Consult the **Bibliography** for other wordless texts and compare and contrast their impact.

3) The **text** is set in Adobe Garamond and the title type is Berling.

- *Activity:* Discuss the selection of fonts, and the differences between serif and sans serif fonts. Examine a variety of fonts and discuss the impact they have on one's reading.

4) The **medium** used here is compressed charcoal and pastel on paper.

- *Activity:* Armin Greder's drawings are always very loosely drawn and expressive. Create your own image of a child in a diamond mine, using a similar technique.

5) Emotions are conveyed in the images in this book, too, via spatial perspective.

Activity: Choose a particular image and describe the emotions conveyed in it. For example, pp 6–7 where Amina is putting Carolina to bed. What emotions are explored here?

6) The **muted colour palette** used in this book includes charcoal grey, and a pale pink on a white background.

- *Discussion:* What effect does this colour palette have on the reading of this work?

7) Critical Literacy can be employed to examine each double page and to discover inter-textual references.

- *Activity:* Invite students to examine each page carefully. For example, pp 8–9 illustrates the terrible conditions in the diamond mines. What aspects of the working conditions does this spread reveal? What feelings does it convey? Compare and discuss interpretations.
- *Question:* What 'sub-texts' did you discover in the images in this book?

8) Design encompasses every aspect of a picture book's construction, including the front and back cover image, a title page, a series of double page spreads, two afterwords, and a final imprint or publication details page containing the author's dedication. The juxtaposition of images and words on each page contributes to meaning in this and in other books.

- *Discussion Point:* The title page depicts a bag of diamonds being casually thrown on a table. What comment does this image suggest the author is making?
- *Discussion Point:* Choose a double page spread and discuss how the two facing pages have been designed and how that contributes to meaning.
- *Activity:* Examine the front and back cover of the book. Body language is an important part of meaning making. What does the mother's attitude/stance/expression suggest to the viewer? The back cover blurb reads: 'A powerful parable that explores how the desire for endless riches perpetuates chains of inequality and corruption.' Invite students to write their own blurb for this book.

9) Cartoonists have used their art to make comments on many issues. Show students some examples of this.

- *Activity:* Create a cartoon or a comic strip or a page of a graphic novel exploring the topic of diamond mining.

10) Artists might protest against diamond mining in exhibitions, street art, or installations.

- *Activity:* Create a class mural expressing students' views about diamond mining.

CREATIVE ARTS

This text will encourage students to explore various other creative arts.

DRAMA

- *Activity:* Invite students to write a short playscript based on the issues explored in this book.

MUSIC

- *Activity:* Choose music or write a song to enhance the play you are performing.

CRAFT AND DESIGN

- *Activity:* Design a poster about the issues explored in this book. Before embarking on this activity, study other posters, and consult this reference for advice: 'Poster Design to Change the World' *Oxfam Australia* <<https://www.oxfam.org.au/secondary-section-1-part-3-what-makes-a-successful-campaign-poster/>>

FILM

- *Activity:* Create a Book Trailer for this book. [See **Bibliography** for resources.]

LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

This book might be used as a tool for investigations on the Internet.

- *Activity:* Research the issues discussed in these notes and explored in this visual text.
- *Activity:* Research the work of Armin Greder online.

CONCLUSION

Armin Greder's work unflinchingly challenges governments, corporations and ordinary people to consider the ethics of their actions, and in this book to consider, in particular, the human impact of diamond mining. Those who are paid (and often forced) to dig for diamonds may be digging their own graves at the behest of the multinationals which fund conflicts via such corrupt forms of trade. But even in his stark 'take' on this industry, Greder manages to infuse the written and visual text with a touching sense of a child's innate curiosity and hence empathy with others. This is eloquent, ultimately devastating, but still maintains some hope that people might really listen and take heed of such vital concerns.

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Enough Project
<https://enoughproject.org/>

FAIRTRADE AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND
<http://fairtrade.com.au/>

The Fair Trade Foundation
<https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>

Global Witness
<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/forests/what-lies-beneath/>

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'Wordless Picture Books' *Children's Books and Reading*

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ABOUT THE WRITER/ILLUSTRATOR

ARMIN GREDER

Armin Greder was born in Switzerland. In 1971 he migrated to Australia where he worked as a graphic designer and later taught design and illustration at a tertiary art institution. Books he has illustrated include *The Great Bear*, *An Ordinary Day* and *I Am Thomas*, all written by Libby Gleeson and *Flight* by Nadia Wheatley. Books he has authored and illustrated include *Australia To Z*, *The Island* and *The City*. His work, in which charcoal is prominent, reflects his European background. *Flight* was CBCA Picture Book of the Year 2016. He is the recipient of a number of international recognitions such as the Bologna Ragazzi Award 2000 and has also been nominated for IBBY's Hans Christian Andersen Award 2004. He now lives in Lima, Peru and travels regularly.

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Sleep Time by Libby Gleeson (Scholastic)

Uncle David by Libby Gleeson (Scholastic)

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To This Day: For the Bullied and Beautiful by Shane Koyczan illustrated by Gary Venn, Armin Greder, Phil Lesnie, Kathleen Jennings, Barroux and others. Walker Books, 2014.

ROBYN SHEAHAN-BRIGHT

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and publishes regularly on children's literature, Australian fiction, and publishing history. She was inaugural director of and is a Life Member of the Queensland Writers Centre, and was co-founder of Jam Roll Press. Her publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia (1946-2005)* (2006) co-edited with Craig Munro and *Hot Iron Corrugated Sky: 100 Years of Queensland Writing* (2002) co-edited with Stuart Glover. In 2011 she was recipient of the CBCA (Qld) Dame

Annabelle Rankin Award, in 2012 of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature, and in 2014 the Queensland Writers' Centre's Johnno Award.