

## Teachers' Guide to Bringing Down the Wall

### Relevance to the National Curriculum

*Content Descriptions* (Years 4-6): Literature and context (ACELT 1602, 1608, 1613); Responding to literature (ACELT 1603-4, 1609, 1614); Examining Literature (ACELT 1605, 1610, 1616)

### Synopsis

Joshua misses his grandpa, but his mother has told him he's not allowed to see him. She won't explain why, but Joshua suspects it has something to do with his grandpa's new wife, Riva. He sets out on his own to renew contact with his grandpa and to meet Riva at their home, where his grandpa explains that Joshua's mother, still grieving over the death of Joshua's father, has closed herself off from the rest of the family. Joshua takes the initiative of ringing his mother to convince her that family is important to all of them and that she needs to bring down the wall separating them.

### Thematic importance

Few children are immune from the effects of family tension and conflicts. Many feel powerless to prevent breakdowns. While Joshua's actions may seem a bit risky to some, we would suggest that many children would relate to and sympathise with his actions. The story provides a means for them to imaginatively follow his progress and rejoice in his success, suggesting that there is hope for children to make themselves heard and assist in the resolution of such conflicts.

### Topics for discussion

1. Why does Joshua go to see his grandpa without telling his mother?
2. Who is Riva? Does Joshua change his mind about her during his visit? How do we know that Joshua's grandpa and Riva are happy together?
3. Joshua's grandfather tries to explain to Joshua that there are 'some things we can't change.' Give an example from the story.
4. Why does Joshua's grandpa tell him the story about himself and his grandma when he was a boy?
5. Think about the illustrations. Which is your favourite – and why?
6. Has the illustrator set the story in a particular place and time, or do you think her drawings could suggest many places? If so, why would she do that?
7. What does the biblical story of Joshua at Jericho have to do with this story?