

WINDOWS

TEACHERS NOTES

Written by Patrick Guest and illustrated by Jonathan Bentley

Published in October 2020 by Little Hare,
an imprint of Hardie Grant Egmont
Teachers notes by Robyn Shehan-Bright

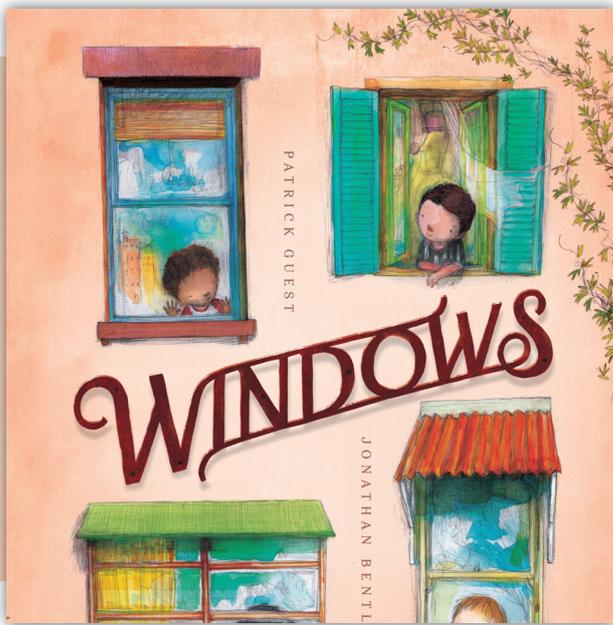
SYNOPSIS

'Out the window, I can see a new world looking back at me.'

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. For although each child's world has been reduced to looking out a window, and the streets are suddenly empty of people, 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. The lovely thing about this text is that these children's views are not confined at all. They observe the world with the same curiosity and imaginative insights that children bring to life no matter where they live.

Author Patrick Guest's beautifully crafted rhyming couplets are accompanied by Jonathan Bentley's glorious watercolour images, which depict each child's view of their neighbourhood from the isolation of their various homes. The text is universal in outlook. At the story's beginning one imagines it's set in a singular neighbourhood, but it gradually becomes obvious that these might be children in many different countries. Nevertheless, each child is thinking the same words.

And when Pop comes to the window, we see a series of 'Pops' hugging their grandchildren in a subsequent frame. The message is clear that, united, we can overcome the seemingly insurmountable; and that, although seemingly alone, we are surrounded by people for whom we care, and who care for us in return.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patrick Guest was raised in the Melbourne beachside suburb of Seaford. He works as a physiotherapist by day and a bestselling children's author by night.

Patrick received huge acclaim for his story *The Second Sky*, which is illustrated by Jonathan Bentley. It was shortlisted for the 2018 CBCA Picture Book of the Year Award, and also selected by the Victorian State Government for their 'Books for Preps' initiative, which delivers a free book bundle to every Victorian prep student in their first week of school.

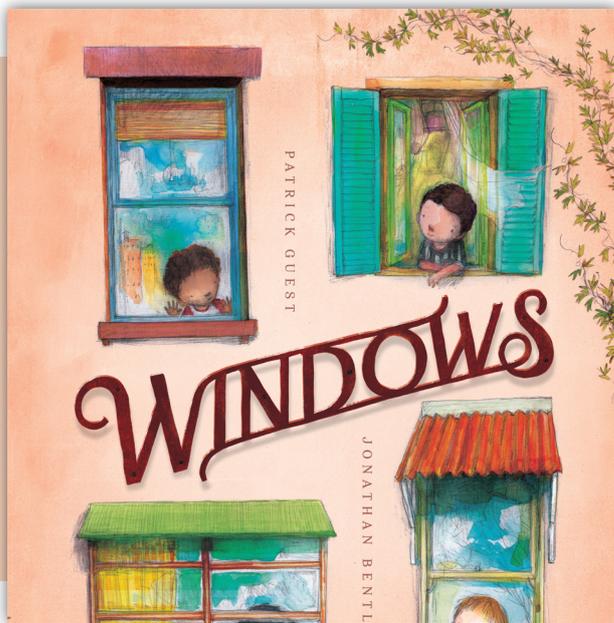
Patrick's fourth title, *The Dress-Up Box*, illustrated by Nathaniel Eckstrom, has also established itself as a much-loved Australian classic. It was shortlisted for the 2019 CBCA Picture Book of the Year Award and also selected for the 'Books for Preps' bundle.

Patrick has also found success overseas, with his books selling into seven different countries. For further information, visit: <https://www.patrickguest.com.au/>

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

As a little boy, **Jonathan Bentley** liked football and drawing. When he was eight years old, he realised he wouldn't be good enough to play football for Leeds United – so he concentrated on drawing instead. He is now one of Australia's most treasured illustrators.

Jonathan has worked with authors such as Margaret Wild and Andrew Daddo, as well as writing and illustrating many of his own titles. His award-winning picture books – including *A House of Her Own*, *Pink*, *The Second Sky*, *Where is Bear?* and *Cat and Dog* – have been published all over the world. Jonathan likes to work with a range of materials including acrylics, oils and watercolour, and he looks forward to the day when he has a big, barn-like studio somewhere in the countryside. For further information, visit: <https://www.jonathanbentleybooks.com>



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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.

- **Windows**

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 20–1, we see a series of windows from the outside. What can you see inside each of these windows?

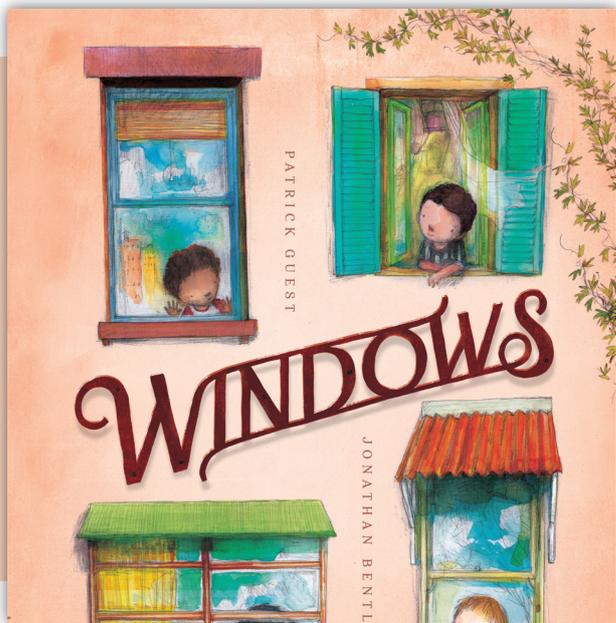
Take a picture of the view from your window at home and create a wall of such images. (There is a global online project called 'View from my Window', which is very similar to this activity.)

- **Covid-19 and Isolation**

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.

The postman waving (pp 14–15) and Guiseppe's mother playing the flute on her balcony (pp 16–17) are 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.



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'I'd love to give you all a hug. I'd love to squash this silly bug.' (pp 28–9) Compare this quote to current Australian Children's Laureate Ursula Dubosarsky's Covid-19 poem 'The Little Cat'. (See **Related Reading**.)

Although *Windows* is about the Covid-19 crisis, it might also relate to other experiences of isolation, change or trauma. Ask children to name other situations where children might not be able to leave their homes.

Many books have been published about the pandemic. You may wish to read and compare some to *Windows*. (See **Related Reading**.)

- **Imagination**

The children in this book see several shapes in the clouds. Invite children to look at the clouds and tell you what shapes they see.

The children hear someone tapping on the glass (pp 22–3) 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?

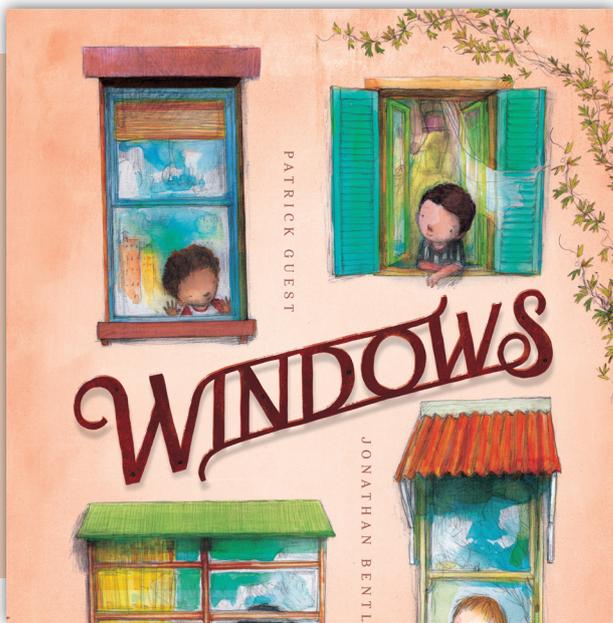
What other things do you imagine you see in the world around you? For example, in Sophie Masson's *Building Site Zoo* (2017) she imagines that large machines on a building site each look like an animal in a zoo.

- **Observation**

Observe the different homes in which each child in this book lives. Invite children to describe each home (house, apartment block etc.) in their own words. For example, the opening frame depicts a Queensland suburb in which the weatherboard houses have iron roofing and the window awnings are typical of houses known as 'Queenslanders'. Children may describe this differently. Encourage them to identify the key features of each home depicted.

Apart from teddy bears and rainbows, what other toys or objects appear in each window?

How many pets can you find in these pictures? How many birds appear in this book?



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- **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?

A neighbourhood might consist of a street, a suburb, a city, a state, a country or the whole world. What community does this book depict?

- **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 26–7). 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.

In this book we see only two parents: Giuseppe's mamma playing the flute (pp 16–17) and a mother returning from work (pp 30–1) dressed in what looks like a hospital uniform. Ask children if they spotted this mother in the final double-page spread.

What might all the other parents be doing while their children are gazing out the window? What does your parent or carer do every day during isolation?

- **Love**

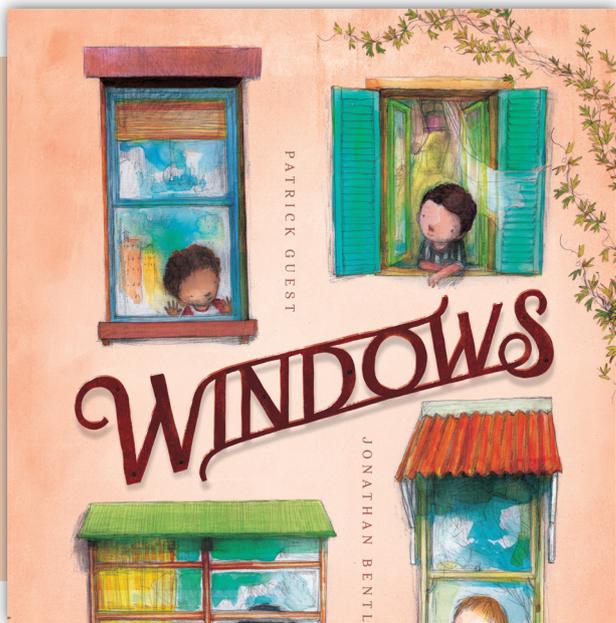
Who do you love and why?

Make a card to send to someone you love.

- **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?



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WRITING STYLE

Patrick Guest uses carefully honed, lyrical rhyming couplets in this text so that the language sounds natural and there is no 'forced' rhyme. Invite children to create another rhymed line to rhyme with, and follow, this line: 'Kiyoshi smiles and waves his coat, Akira leaves a lovely note.' (pp 18–19)

The narrative is written in first person, present tense, which emphasises the fact that even though these are different children, they are united by their common experiences.

Patrick Guest also uses questions to engage the reader ('But who's that tapping on the glass?') Ask children to begin a story using a question in this way.

- **Comprehension**

When Pop says, 'I'd like to squash this silly bug' (p 28), what does he mean?

- **Writing Exercise**

Continue this story with other rhymed sentences about other children looking out of their windows.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

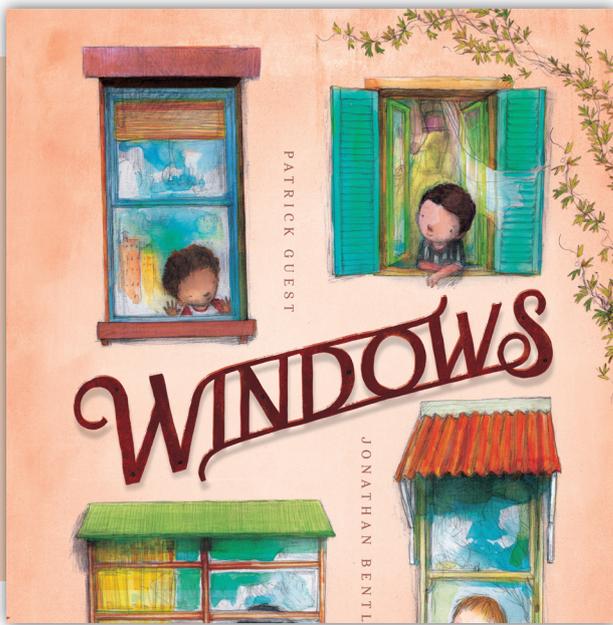
Jonathan Bentley's images contain watercolour drawings that are warmly vibrant in colour.

Body language and facial expression also convey a great deal of emotion in each image. Look at each face and write a word to describe each child's or adult's feelings.

Examine the cover of this book. What does it tell you about this story? Design a different cover for this book.

Jonathan Bentley uses perspective to create images from different viewpoints. Each child is seen from a different angle. Redraw one of these images from another angle or perspective.

The endpapers are images of clouds. Ask children/students what they imagine they see in these clouds.



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- **Comprehension**

What else can you see in the picture of the boy in the apartment block (pp 6–7); or of the friendly postman (pp 14–15); or of Kiyoshi waving his coat (pp 18–19)?

- **Illustration Exercise**

Draw a picture to accompany the writing exercise above. Make the window and the building indicative of the country in which that child lives.

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Mural: Create a mural (either at home or at school) featuring images of children in windows side-by-side.

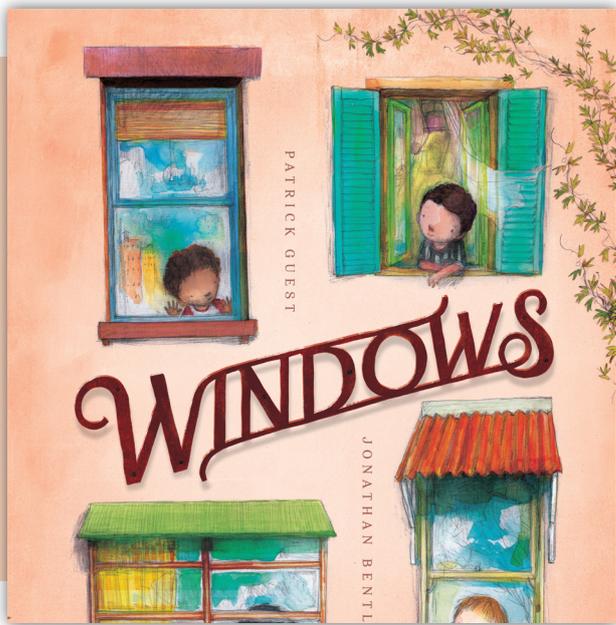
Silly faces: The 'Pops' make a range of silly faces (pp 26–7 and pp 28–9). What silly faces can you make? Draw someone making a silly face. You could even draw them using their hands or legs to add to the silliness, as the Pops in this book do.

Shadow play: Use a torch and your hands to make shadows on the wall, e.g. animals, trees etc.

Songs: Using a simple tune, sing the words in this book to each other.

Counting: Encourage observation skills by having children count things in their home.

Diorama: Create a diorama of a window using a cardboard box. Decorate it and put one of your toys in the window.



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RELATED READING

Picture Books

Baker, Jeannie *Mirror* Walker Books, 2010.

Baker, Jeannie *Window* Walker Books Australia; Julia Macrae, 1991.

Baker, Jeannie *Belonging* Walker Books, 2004.

Bradman, Tony and Browne, Eileen *Through My Window* Frances Lincoln Children's, 2016; 1986.

Gonsalves, Rob *Imagine a World* Simon & Schuster, 2015.

Jenner, Elizabeth, Wilson, Kate, Roberts, Nia and Scheffler, Axel *Coronavirus: A Book for Children*, Nosy Crow, 2020.

Thompson, Sarah L. and Gonsalves, Rob *Imagine a Place* Atheneum, 2008.

Thompson, Sarah L. and Gonsalves, Rob *Imagine a Night* Atheneum, 2003.

Thompson, Sarah L. and Gonsalves, Rob *Imagine a Day* Books for Young Readers, 2005.

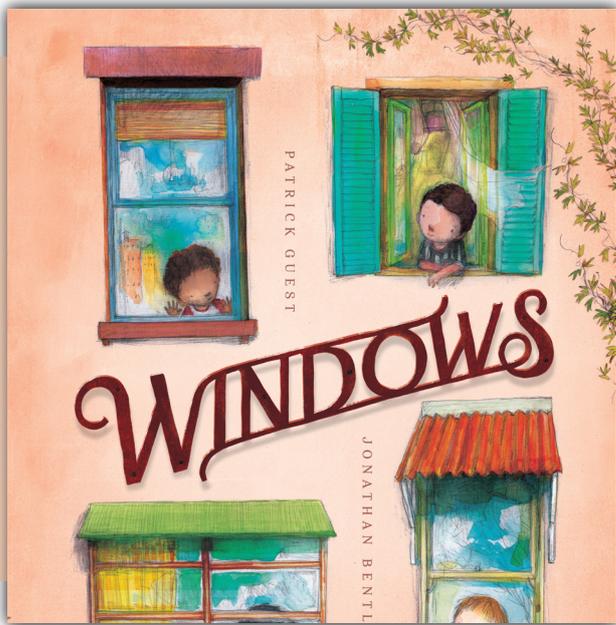
Masson, Sophie and Wood, Laura *Building Site Zoo*, Hachette, 2017.

Seuss, Dr *And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street* Green Back Books, 2003; Random House, 1989; Vanguard Press, 1937.

Shanahan, Lisa and Gordon, Gus *Big Pet Day*, Lothian, Hachette Australia, 2014.

Smith, Tai *Slow Down World*, Thames & Hudson, 2017.

Zanni, Louise and Mackintosh, David *Archie and the Bear*, Hardie Grant Egmont, 2017.



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Websites

'Activities to do at Home With Children during the Covid-19 outbreak' *Startingblocks.gov.au*
<https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/covid-19/activities-to-do-at-home-with-children/activities-to-do-at-home-with-your-child-during-the-covid-19-shutdown/>

Age-Appropriate Resources for Teaching Young Children about COVID-19 [video] [downloadable]
Anti-Racism Resource Center for Families and Educators <https://www.chconline.org/resourcelibrary/age-appropriate-resources-for-teaching-young-children-about-covid-19/>

Alter, Alexandra 'Answering Kids' Questions About the Coronavirus, in Free Picture Books' *NY Times* April 14, 2020
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/14/books/coronavirus-picture-books.html>

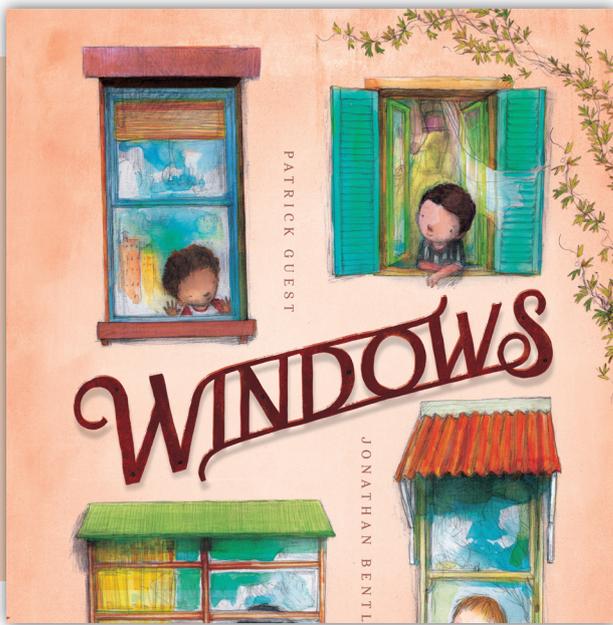
'Books for Teaching Creativity' The best children's books
<https://www.the-best-childrens-books.org/teaching-creativity.html>

Bradman, Tony and Browne, Eileen '*Through my Window: the classic multicultural children's book – in pictures*' *The Guardian* 21 March 2016
<https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/gallery/2016/mar/21/through-my-window-multicultural-picture-book-tony-bradman-eileen-browne>

'COVID-19 – Resources for teachers and school leaders' *Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment* Friday 15 May 2020
<https://www.education.gov.au/news/covid-19-resources-teachers-and-school-leaders>

'Coronavirus (COVID-19) resources for the general public' *Australian Government Department of Health*
<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources>

'Coronavirus Resources' *TESOL*
<https://www.tesol.org/coronavirus-resources-for-teachers>



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'Great Picture Books to Spark Imagination' *Pernille Ripp* October 23, 2015.
<https://pernillesripp.com/2015/10/23/great-picture-books-to-spark-imagination>

'How to Talk to Children about the Coronavirus' *Save the Children's Resource Centre*
<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/how-talk-children-about-coronavirus>

'My Hero is You: How kids can fight Covid-19!' by Helen Patuck *UNICEF*
<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/my-hero-you>

'P is for Pandemic: kids' books about coronavirus' *The Conversation* May 26, 2020
<https://theconversation.com/p-is-for-pandemic-kids-books-about-coronavirus-138299>

"The Little Cat" poem by Ursula Dubosarsky, Australian Children's Laureate 2020–2021 Illustrated by Andrew Joyner' *ACLF* <https://www.childrenslaureate.org.au/blog>

'View From My Window' *Facebook*
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/viewfrommywindow>

Yumi *Rainbows in Windows*
<https://helloyumi.com/coronavirus-children-book>