

# The Arrival Reading Guide



## Questions and Ideas for Consideration

**End Pages:** Consider the end pages. Who are these people and does your answer/perspective change between the opening and final end pages?

**Opening:** Why begin/end with the idea of materiality, the “things” of the person?

**Layout:** Consider the variance between small images in succession, not unlike a graphic novel, and the large images...why use this layout variation?

**Pacing:** How does this wordless/image layout change pacing and control/direct the reader in purposeful ways? Why is this important?

**Fantasy:** This world is similar to ours, but also fantastical—why this choice?

**Language:** How are silence and the use of language working purposefully in this text, including how you read it. What does this say about language?

**Industry:** What kind of society is this? The factory is one of few recognizable or discernable elements-- what does this say about industry and commercialism?

**Story within a Story:** Look at the protagonist’s discussion with others, separated from the text by unique borders. Why include these “framed” tales?

**Looking for Work:** Examine the protagonist’s attempt to find employment--what does this reveal about ideas of migrant and immigrant workers?

**Race:** Think about the race/ethnicity of the protagonist—why this depiction?

## Daybook Possibilities

- How does Tan play with perspective in the text, especially in the sequence pages? Chart various perspectives and investigate effect.
- Explore various artistic choices. For example, why use black and white, frame size, detail, line choices, etc in these ways? What effect do these have?
- Apply some of the concepts related to graphic novels and Molly Bang’s principles of visual imagery to analyze this text.
- List or sketch all of the animal/nonhuman creatures, and describe characteristic of the main character’s little creature friend. What does this animal and others in the text symbolize?
- Find another wordless picturebook at the library and compare the effect of this technique in these two texts. Why would an author make this choice?
- Write a narration or textual accompaniment to several pages in *The Arrival*.
- Create a short segment of your own wordless picture book in your daybook. How can you tell a story without words?
- Research Shaun Tan’s other work or visit his website at <http://www.shauntan.net/>.

## Suggested Critical Reading

“The Artist as Narrator: Shaun Tan’s Wondrous Worlds” by Linnet Hunter or “Mapping Australia’s Past in Picture Books” by Robin Morrow (*Bookbird*)

“Australia’s Fairy Tales Illustrated in Print: Instances of Indigeneity, Colonization, and Suburbanization” by Rebecca-Anne C. Do Rozario

“Thinking Inside the Boxes: The Importance of Comic Books and Graphic Novels in Visual Arts Education” by Grant Thomas

## Background and Context

A wordless picture book (or graphic novel, depending on who you ask), *The Arrival* (2006) represents just one of the many unique illustrated texts created by Australian author Shaun Tan. For his career contribution to “children’s and young adult literature in the broadest sense,” Tan won the 2011 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, and his work is often considered to cross boundaries between age groups, genres, and medias in notable ways.