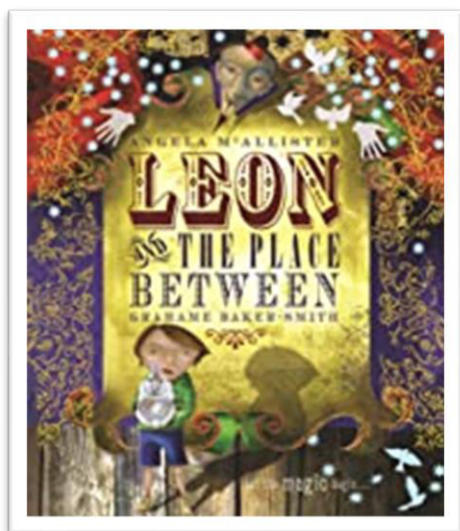


# Read for Pleasure

## Leon and the Place Between

By Angela McAllister and Graham Baker-Smith



The crowd waited impatiently for something to happen.

“It’s not real,” hissed Pete. “It’s only tricks.”

Little Mo looked disappointed.

“Sssh now,” whispered their brother Leon.

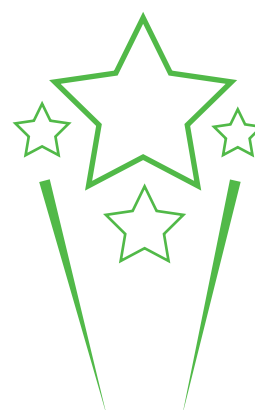
“It will be magic. You have to believe.”

Dare you step into the place between?

### Cover Chat

*Let’s first look at the cover of this picture book.*

- What kind of story do you think this might be?
- Why do you think this?
- Who do you think the young boy might be?
- Where do you think he is stood?
- Why might he be stood there holding a white rabbit?
- There is a lot of gold on this cover. Even the rabbit is wearing a jewel. What might this suggest about the magical adventure we are about to go on? Discuss.



### Title Talk

*Now let’s consider the title of this story: Leon and the Place Between.*

- Who do you think Leon is: the magician, the boy or the rabbit?
- Where do you think THE PLACE BETWEEN might be?
- How do you think Leon will get there? Who will it be who sends him?

### **Page 1-2**

- Where do we first see Leon and his siblings?
- Where are they? What kind of tent are they stood outside?
- Notice that this tent is quite some distance from the rest of the fun fair. What might this suggest about the tent and the magician who owns it?
- Who is it that is taking the most interest in tonight's magic show? Might this be significant?

### **Page 3-4**

- Tonight has arrived and Leon and his siblings are seated ready for the show to begin. Interestingly, they are sat on the front row. What might this suggest?
- Which of the four siblings does not believe in magic?
- Why do you think Tom and Pete's words leave Little Mo disappointed?
- Does Leon believe in magic?

Remember: all you need for magic to be real is to believe.

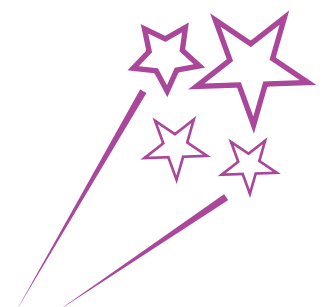
- A masked figure holds a figure to their lips after the words LOOK, IT'S GOING TO BEGIN. Why might this be?
- Are these words being directed at Tom and Pete or at us?
- What is about to begin: the show or Leon's magical adventure?  
Discuss.

### **Page 5-8**

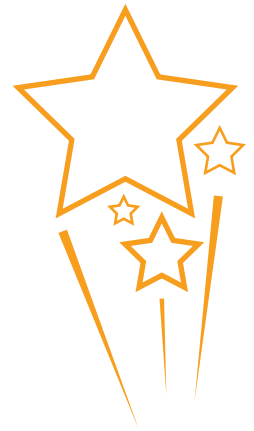
- What happens next? Why do the lanterns go out?
- Might this be why pages 5-6 are all but black?
- Although we see nothing, we hear lots, including a LOUD HUSH. What does this tell us about the atmosphere in the tent at this time? Discuss.
- The curtains slowly part, the tension rises. What do you think will happen next? Who or what are we likely to see?

### **Page 9-10**

- Which word is used to break the still and the quiet?
- How and why is this word emphasised?



- Which act now tumbles onto the stage?
- This act has lots of noise, movement and speed. Why might this be?
  - \* Their tambourines: rattled loud and louder.
  - \* Their skittles: spun high and higher.
  - \* The jugglers: twisted fast and faster
- Did the audience enjoy this act?
- What happens when the jugglers bow and bounce away?



### **Page 11-12**

- What now appears upon the darkened stage?
- Why might this mysterious object appear to be magical?
- How would this make the audience feel? How does it make you feel?
- The eerie music dances in the darkness and drifts towards the words FOLD OUT that float in the air. Who dares follow this command?
- What do you think we will see?
- We open the flap... and out jumps a mechanical monkey and an array of mechanical toys. What toys can you spot and which of them do you like best?
- How spectacular would this spectacle have been? Discuss.

### **Page 13-14**

- Once again, the stage falls silent, the lights grow dim and the curtains close. Another act will begin shortly. Which act do you think it will be?
- Which act does Leon think it will be?
- Is this the act he has been waiting for? Why do you think this?
- What do we hear outside the tent just before the curtains open? Might this be significant?
- Page 12 is dominated by the face of Leon. How does he look? What do you think he is thinking as the curtains begin to swish open?

### **Page 15-16**

- Who enters the stage? How? Can you see him on page 13?
- What do you think it means when it says Leon could SMELL THE MAGIC?

### **Page 17-18**

- What does Abdul Kazam ask us to A] trust and B] believe?
- Why might he have said this? Discuss.
- Which magic tricks does he perform?
- How are these depicted by the illustrator?
- Interestingly, three specific playing cards are shown, each of which might be considered to be special. Can you spot them?
  - \* The Joker: a card associated with tricksters and tricks.
  - \* The Ace of Spades: a card often associated with great change.
  - \* The Queen of Hearts: a card associated with Alice in Wonderland, who fell through a hole and entered a world full of magic.
- What might these cards suggest about what will happen next?

### **Page 19-20**

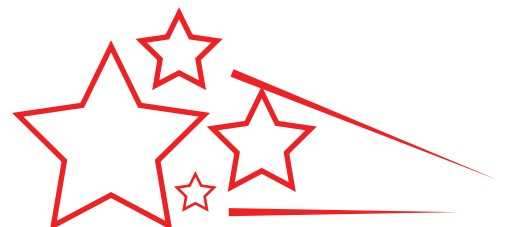
- Why do you think Leon volunteers to climb inside the magician's box? Discuss.
- Why do you think A] Leon and B] Abdul Kazam look excited?
- Why do you think Little Mo does not?
- Interestingly, there is a hole on page 18. Might this be deliberate? Why?

### **Page 21-22**

- There are no words on these pages. Describe what is happening.
- Why might the writer have chosen to let the illustrator tell this part of the story instead? Discuss.

### **Page 23-24**

- Where does Leon fall?
- Who does he meet?
- What does the boy tell him?
- Can you see any MAGIC in this magical PLACE BETWEEN?



### **Page 25-26**

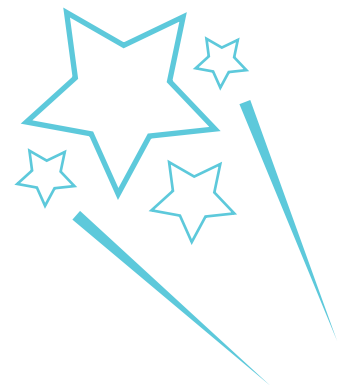
- The boy takes Leon on his flying carpet. What do they see?
- We are told this is a world of ASTONISHMENT, a world of the UNEXPECTED, a world ALIVE WITH MAGIC. How true is this? Discuss.
- How has this been illustrated?

### **Page 27-28**

- What joins Leon and the boy on the flying carpet?
- Does this remind you of anything on the front cover?
- Does the boy feel sorry for the white rabbit? Why?
- Do you feel sorry for the white rabbit?
- Why do you think the rabbit climbs onto Leon's lap and nestles in his arms?
- Might this be why Abdul Kazam has sent Leon into the Place Between?

### **Page 29-30**

- Why does the boy begin to float away?
- It is at this very moment, that Leon too hears a voice. What does this voice tell him to do?
- Whose voice do you think it might be?
- Where do you think Leon will go next?
- Who do you think he will take with him? Why?



### **Page 30-31**

- How are these pages similar to pages 21-22?
- Why might this be? Discuss.
- Why do you think the hole on page 32 has reappeared?
- Who do you notice looking through it?
- Why do you think he is smiling?

### Page 31-32

- Where is Leon when the Abdul Kazam takes a bow?
- Who else has returned? How does this make you feel? Why?
- How does the crowd react when they see Leon? Why might this be?
- Think back to what Tom said and Little Mo felt on page 4. With this in mind, why do you think these two characters clapped the loudest?

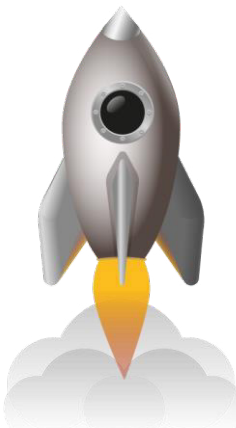
### Page 33-34

- What question does Pete ask Leon?
- Might it be significant that it is Pete that asks this question? Why?
- Does Leon reply to Pete's question? Why not?
- What does Little Mo ask Leon?
- How does Leon answer?
- The mask that put its finger to its lips at the start of the show, now smiles and two gloved hands appear asking us to leave the magician's tent. The show, Leon's adventure and this story is nearing its end. How does this make you feel?



### Page 35-36

- The tent is in darkness. The show is over. Where will Leon and his siblings now go?
- Who will they take with him? Why is this important?
- Has this night of magic changed these children? How?
- Who do you notice in the moonlight looking over them, smiling?
- Why do you think this might be?



The perfect companion to  
Reading Rocketeers: **Unit 4.11**

## **John Murray**

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John is a recognised specialist in developing children's reading and comprehension.

The creator of Reading Explorers, Top Class Comprehension and Reading Rocketeers, his seminars and CPD training focus on the teaching, learning and enjoyment of reading.

An independent Literacy consultant, he aims to support schools to improve their performance and secure best practice. Above all, it is to ignite within us a passion for books and a genuine love for the written word.

His enthusiasm and expertise can be seen throughout his work and his resources and training are used in classrooms worldwide.

“The world was hers for the reading.”

Betty Smith