

AUDREY SKIPS INTRODUCTION

*Audrey skips. Audrey glows. Red dress and ruffles flip and flick, flit and blink.
Twirling rope up and down, round and round.
Sidestep, double step, double Dutch.
Audrey springs, Audrey grins.
The sunset spins a pink and orange glow.
Audrey skip-step-skips from her pose with a cheeky little toe.*

With a skip rope rhyme, the treasured historic sign of the skipping girl skips off the rooftops of a city and into the streets below where she watches a community fade and fret during tough times.

When Audrey loses her own light, the members of the community realise that it is up to them to help her find her sparkle and spirit, and in turn they all reclaim their own.

From Andrea Rowe, acclaimed award-winning author of *Jetty Jumping*, and respected illustrator Lisa Coutts, comes this extraordinary reminder to look up and see the stories of a city, to recognise landmarks as legacies of the heart and value how communities in cities can make a difference.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Andrea Rowe is a best-selling, award-winning picture book author. Her picture book, *Jetty Jumping* (Published by Hardie Grant, illustrated by Hannah Sommerville), was awarded the 2022 CBCA Picture Book of the Year – Early Childhood and the 2023 Australian Speech Pathology Picture Book of the Year.

Her books *In the Rockpool* and *Amid the Sand Dunes* (Illustrated by Hannah Sommerville, published by Hardie Grant) were both awarded the 2024 and 2025 CBCA Notable Picture Books of the Year – Early Childhood.

Andrea loves to write stories where characters explore the great outdoors, ponder big questions and move through tricky feelings, which inspire conversations amongst children, families and educators.

Andrea is the 2025 inaugural Public Libraries ambassador for Victoria, and a May Gibbs Children's Literature Trust Fellow.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Lisa Coutts is an illustrator based in Naarm, Melbourne, Australia. Her work has features in over 20 books of varying genres, and her greatest love is picture books.

Lisa loves creating charming characters and placing them in quirky and whimsical worlds.

She is the illustrator of *The Great Book Swapping Machine* (written by Emma Allen, The National Library of Australia) and she designed the cover art on Tim Winton's *Blueback* (Penguin Random House) with more books in production.

Lisa's art practice incorporates mixed media techniques including coloured pencil, dry pastel, acrylic and watercolour paints, and Procreate. Her work has been described as charming, delicious, quirky, whimsical and that it hurts people's hearts in a good way!

Audrey Skips Teacher notes

SYNOPSIS:

Audrey loves to skip-step-skip, right off her rooftop sign and through the sleeping streets of the city.

Her playground rhyme and skipping rope take her on an adventure as early readers explore Melbourne's landscape through a whimsical wander. However, hard times come to the city, and as the people lose hope, Audrey's light dims. With their help, and Audrey's hopeful spirit, her light, is returned, shining brighter than ever.

Written by Andrea Rowe, and illustrated by Lisa Coutts, this picture book is a nostalgic celebration of Melbourne's iconic roof-top neon sign The Skipping Girl.

Audrey Skips is a story of hope in tough times, the community we find in city landscapes, and preservation and conservation, written against a backdrop of The Great Depression, but relatable to recent tough times too.

This picture book is a nostalgic read for generations of Melburnians and history lovers to enjoy together. It is written for 5–8-year-olds to expand their vocabulary and inspire creative expression and connection with a city environment.

HISTORY:

Audrey Skips is a tribute to The Skipping Girl, which is a treasured landmark perched on top of a building in Melbourne.

Affectionately referred to as Little Audrey, she skipped into cultural history as the first animated sequence neon advertising sign in Australia. The Skipping Girl sign advertised Malt Vinegar, which first flickered across Melbourne rooftops in 1936.

After a community campaign the Skipping Girl sign is now recognised by the National Trust Victorian Heritage register as one of the state's most significant places and objects.

Today Audrey is still skipping, lighting the memories of Melburnians, thanks to a little help from friends.

In 2026 the Skipping Girl celebrates 90 years of skipping through Melbourne's history.

THEMES AND CURRICULUM TOPICS:

- Conservation and preservation
- Legacies in urban places

Audrey Skips Teacher notes

- Special spaces and their stories – looking up to see history
- Community care and preservation
- Resilience and hope
- Social disconnection, poverty, homelessness, social change and economic impacts
- Belonging and inclusion
- History keeping, fundraising and civic activism

SELLING POINTS:

- A beautiful rhythmic picture book celebrating communities in cities, conservation and preservation, and how communities can be custodians for history and caretakers for each other
- Written by award-winning author Andrea Rowe and illustrated by Melbourne illustrator Lisa Coutts
- 2026 is the 90th anniversary of Melbourne's iconic neon sign, the Skipping Girl
- Engaging opportunities for use in the classroom to connect students in themes such as different kinds of living history, community, resilience and belonging

Sometimes our light goes out, but it is blown again into an instant flame by an encounter with another human being – Albery Schweitzer

TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

Foundation to Grade Two

Before Reading:

- Discuss the cover, what colours are used and what the girl on the front is doing.
- Ask if anyone knows what skipping is and if they know how to skip.

During:

- (Dreaming page) See if anyone remembers their dream from the previous night.
- (Dreaming page) Ask if anyone sleeps with a toy, what kind and name.
- (Bills to homelessness pages) What changed from the previous page. (Colours have become dull)
- How does it make them feel? (Sad, lonely, disappointed).

After:

- Take students outside to demonstrate and attempt skipping
- Look at a video clip of the real Audrey Skips sign in Melbourne.
 - Ask if anyone has seen her before or been to Melbourne. (What state is Melbourne in)?
 - What landscape view can Audrey see today?

Audrey Skips Teacher notes

Students will take part in an Interactive Binoculars Game to encourage students to look around and see landmarks, describing what they see through a word list or drawing. After an engaging read aloud text connection, they'll be invited to borrow the words of Andrea's book to create their own group story featuring verbs and onomatopoeia.

Students can also develop a Word Splash of descriptions, investigate the setting of the story, and chart *Audrey Skips* own story in the book.

Learning Outcomes

https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/learning-areas/english/foundation-year_year-1_year-2?view=quick&detailed-content-descriptions=0&hide-ccp=0&hide-gc=0&side-by-side=1&strands-start-index=0 (English).

https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/learning-areas/visual-arts/foundation-year_year-1_year-2?view=quick&detailed-content-descriptions=0&hide-ccp=0&hide-gc=0&side-by-side=1&strands-start-index=0 (Art).

Foundation to Grade Two

Share thoughts, feelings and ideas of texts in classroom settings.

Connect words to images when reading texts (the word 'cat' to a picture of a cat).

Identify facial expressions and their meanings.

Spelling frequent words and begin to develop recognition of common spelling patterns and sounds that certain letter combinations create.

Learn how rhyme, rhythm and repetition work to create stories and memorable text.

Learn how pronouns (personal and possessive) and how they can be inferred in text.

What adjective and verbs are and what they do and add to text.

How images add meaning to texts.

Relate stories to personal experiences. Identify different characters and settings in text.

Imitate sounds and patterns of sentences (alliteration and rhyme).

Learn how vowels and consonants create words, how words can be broken into syllables.

Identify where people can see and experience arts. Why people look at art.

Create their own art and share with others in an informal setting.

Create art that communicates ideas. Use of different materials to create art.

Audrey Skips Teacher notes

Grade Three to Grade Six

Before Reading:

- Ask if anyone has heard of the Skipping Girl before.

During:

- Why are the townspeople sad?
 - (Great Depression, bills, less income, homelessness, without work).
- What does sleeping rough mean? What do they think it would be like?
 - (cold, lonely, hard pavements, hungry, embarrassing, judged by others).
- Identify facial expressions and their meanings in the book, how colours play a role in themes and emotions of the readers.
- Why did Audrey's light go off. Discuss in terms of the story (empathy) and then in terms of real history (Great Depression, money, demolition of building and rebuilding and installing the neon sign. Heritage listed).

After:

- Look at online resources about the Skipping Girl and encourage students to also locate sources on a landmark of their choosing.
- <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/2000s/>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-06-13/skipping-girl-sign-little-audrey-part-of-melbourne-history/103967350>

Students will brainstorm signs, landmarks and places that are special to them (or focus on a shared local one), as well as the people who live and work in their community. Classroom discussions can focus on why these places are special to communities. Discussions can also evolve around social issues such as homelessness, community hardship and help. Students can explore the text by planning, writing and editing their own *Audrey Skips* stories.

https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/learning-areas/english/year-3_year-4_year-5_year-6?view=quick&detailed-content-descriptions=0&hide-ccp=0&hide-gc=0&side-by-side=1&strands-start-index=0 (English).

https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/learning-areas/visual-arts/year-4_year-5_year-6?view=quick&detailed-content-descriptions=0&hide-ccp=0&hide-gc=0&side-by-side=1&strands-start-index=0 (Art).

https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/learning-areas/hass-f-6/year-4_year-5_year-6?view=quick&detailed-content-descriptions=0&hide-ccp=0&hide-gc=0&side-by-side=1&strands-start-index=0 (HASS).

Grade Three to Grade Six

Audrey Skips Teacher notes

Understand how language is used to work with others collaboratively, including the relevance of formalities. Later exploring how language develops formal and informal relationships and how social context changes what language is used.

Language features across different types of text and how they are used.

How language features are organised into characteristics, stages and phases.

The importance of sentence and paragraph structure when reading and writing texts, how it helps introduce themes and messages into writing.

Creating and understanding complex sentences with independent and dependant clauses.

How language used can create characters, setting and mood of a text. What imagery, simile, metaphor and personification add to a text.

How perspective and POV influence interpretations of texts and positions readers to feel and respond differently. Identify the audience and purpose of texts and reading with purpose to location information and key points. (Contribute to discussions and activities based on findings).

How art can present different cultures, times and places.

The use of visual conventions and different materials to communicate ideas, perspectives and give art meaning and value.

The role of visual conventions, visual processes and variety of materials in planning and creating artworks that communicate ideas and meaning.

Sharing art in informal and formal settings.

Develop questions to guide investigations about people, events, places and issues. Locate and organise information from primary and secondary sources for presentation.

Interpret and evaluate data in different forms to identify patterns and trends.

Present descriptions and explanations of findings and sources using relevant terms and connections.

Further Questions / Activities –

- Who is the REAL Skipping Girl? There are many questions and claims about who the young girl was who was the initial model for the sign.
- What businesses and shops would have existed in Melbourne in the Great Depression?
- What part did famous actor Barry Haumphires play in Skipping Girl history
- What songs have bands written and performed about the Skipping Girl
- Research the history behind the original Skipping Girl Sign and other Heritage listed landmarks in Australia
- Research Homelessness in Australia and present findings. Also discuss empathy and how students may feel in someone else's shoes, what they are grateful for.

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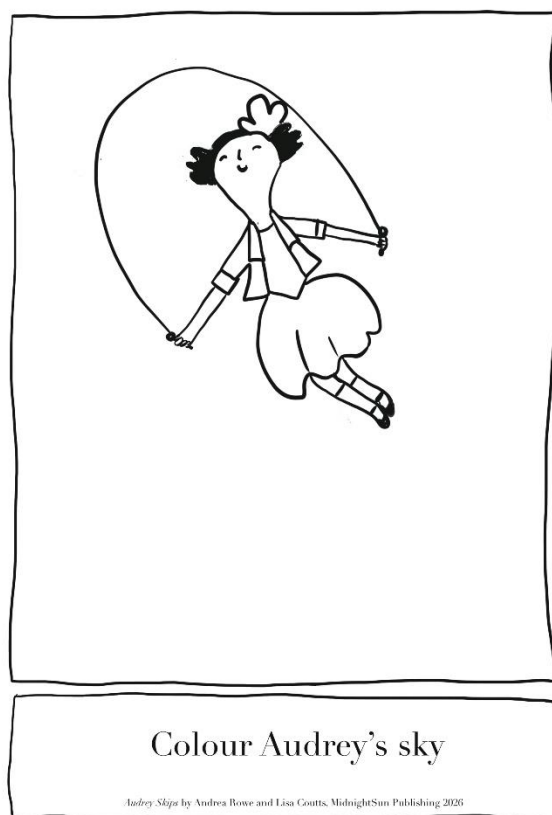
Health and Physical Education / Personal and Social Capability

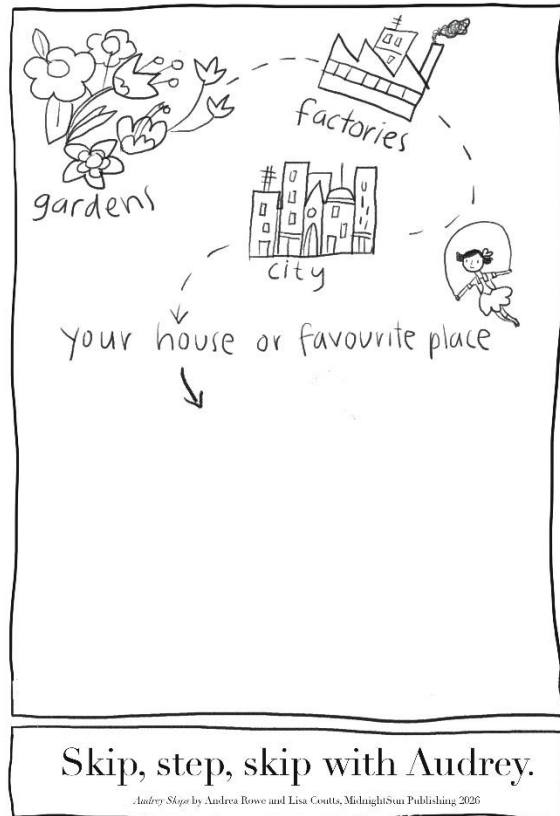
Students can practise physical and emotional health by activities from history such as:

- Skipping
- Skittles
- Hoola Hoop

The Arts: Visual Arts

Make Skipping Girl art





COMPARATIVE TITLE BOOKS

- *Little Dog and the Christmas Wish* by Corrine Fenton & Robin Cowcher
- *The Gargoyle* by Zana Fraillon & Ross Morgan
- *The Day We Built the Bridge* by Samantha Tidy & Fiona Burrows
- *The Stone Lion* by Margaret Wild & Ritva Voutila

WEBSITES FOR REFERENCE AND TEACHER RESOURCES:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/2000s/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-06-13/skipping-girl-sign-little-audrey-part-of-melbourne-history/103967350>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skipping_Girl_Sign

- <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/13810>

<https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/our-stories/ask-a-librarian/neon-magic/>

Audrey Skips Teacher notes

https://www.agl.com.au/about-agl/our-company/corporate-sponsorship/skipping-girl?srsId=AfmBOop_cDHnriGnXYQ0Izzejd_pPHIRcZ7bfBsoVy49oVoO5GUD4_BI

<https://www.signmanager.com.au/index.php/the-skipping-girl-more-than-the-sum-of-its-parts/>

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/skipping-girl-sign-2>

<https://www.museumoflost.com/skipping-girl-vinegar/>

<https://victoriancollections.net.au/collections?q=skipping%20girl>

<https://www.mpnews.com.au/2016/03/29/the-original-skipping-girl-now-in-sorrento/>