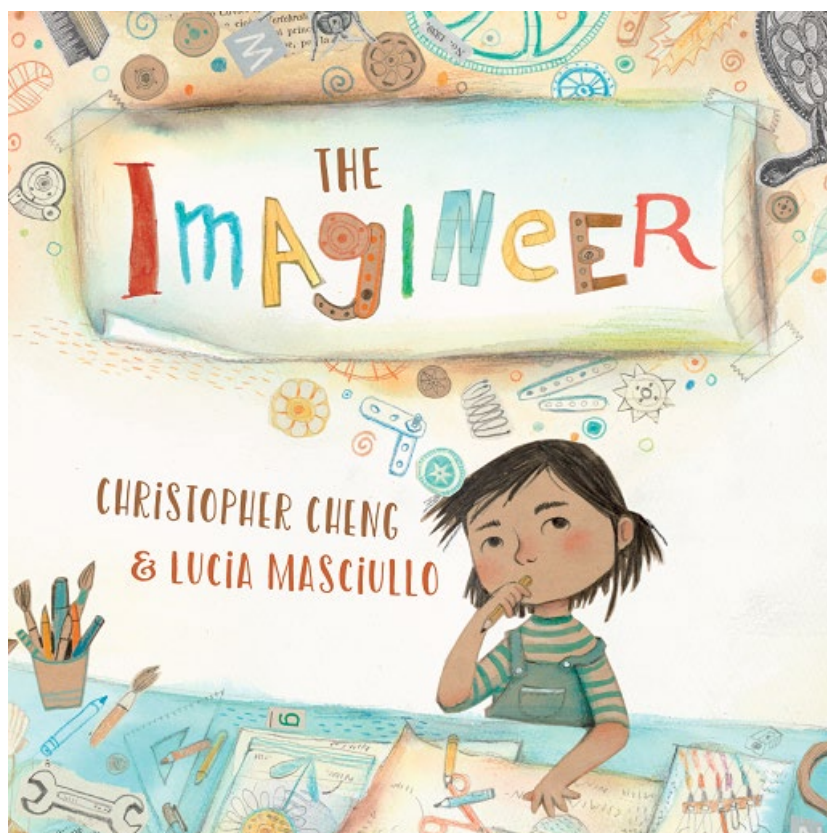


## TEACHERS' NOTES

## THE IMAGINEER

by Christopher Cheng  
illustrated by Lucia Masciullo



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### About the Book

Penny has a massive imagination. She loves to draw up plans, gather her tools and turn sketches and scribbles into new creations.

One day, she visits her grandpa's house and is amazed at his gadgets and gizmos. He has a telephone hanging on his wall, an organ with bellows to pump and a contraption with a handle to churn homemade butter.

Then Penny discovers grandpa's garage ...

Christopher Cheng's *The Imagineer* is a beautiful story about an inquisitive little girl whose imagination is sparked by the things around her. It also highlights the value in spending time with a grandparent and learning from their lived experience.

Author: Christopher Cheng

Christopher Cheng is an award-winning author of many children's books including non-fiction, picture books and Chinese-themed historical fiction titles. He is co-chair of the Advisory Board for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and a recipient of the Lady Cutler Award for Children's Literature. Christopher is also an ambassador for the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature.

[chrischeng.com](http://chrischeng.com)

Illustrator: Lucia Masciullo

Lucia is an award-winning illustrator who loves to illustrate children's books. Born and bred in Livorno, Italy, she moved to Australia in 2007 and since then she has illustrated more than 20 books, including the CBCA Honour Book and Prime Minister's Awards shortlisted *Come Down, Cat!* by Sonya Hartnett and the *Olive of Groves* trilogy by Katrina Nannestad. She now lives on the Gold Coast. Lucia likes to create whimsical characters and she works mainly with traditional techniques, mixing watercolour, pencil and collage.

[luciamasciullo.com](http://luciamasciullo.com)

## Notes and Activities

### Cover

- As a class, discuss what you think the book is about. What do you see that makes you say that?
  - What do you notice about the way that the illustrator designed the letters of the title?
  - What do you think this might tell us about the story?
- Discuss the ways that the class thinks the title might be pronounced.
  - The word 'imagineer' isn't found in a dictionary; it's a made-up word. Which two words does it combine?
  - What do you think an imagineer is? What do they do?
  - Why does the class think might this title be appropriate for the child on the cover?
- Who in the class thinks that they could be an imagineer? Why? Ask students to share personal experiences of 'imagineering'.

### Pages 3–4

- On these pages we meet Penny. We also see sketches of Penny's imaginings. As a class, discuss
  - what they are

- how you think the objects in Penny's sketches work
- Discuss the protective material that is Penny using while she investigates the object in her hands.
  - Why might it be important to use this protection?
  - Do you or your families use protection for some activities in the classroom or at home? What kind of protection? What does it protect you from?

#### Pages 5–6:

- As a class, list the everyday objects that are hidden in this illustration.
  - What are they normally used for?
  - Brainstorm what they could be used for, other than their original purpose.
- Have the class create a chart comparing Penny's bedroom to their classroom or bedrooms, listing similarities and differences. Decide which room is more fun, more useful and tidier.
- What does the class think Penny is doing in this illustration? Would it be easier or harder if her room were more organised?
- Is her bedroom safe?

#### Pages 7–8:

- What does the class think of Penny's imagineerings on these pages?
- How useful do you think these creations / imaginings would be?
- Have the class think about imagineering. If they imagineered something, what would it do?
  - Have them make a list of the materials they would need and choose a few students to describe to the class how they would create their designs.

#### Pages 9–10:

- Have the class investigate the types of people who sketch and plan before building.
  - What jobs do they do?
  - Why do we have these jobs?
  - Is the class surprised to learn that most jobs require some kind of planning?
- What do you think Penny has imagineered in the illustrations on these two pages?
  - Describe how these imaginings might work.

#### Pages 11–12:

- Have the class identify the objects that they can see on these pages at Grandpa's house.
  - What do these things do? Are there things that they can see that they don't know the function of? Are they old things or new?
- What does the class use in their own homes to do the same jobs as the older objects in these illustrations?
  - What can they imagine those objects could do that they're not designed to do?
- What is 'flabbergasted'?
  - List other words to use instead of flabbergasted.

- Why would Penny be flabbergasted?

#### Pages 13-14:

- Grandpa has a big black box on the wall. Talk with the class about
  - what it does
  - how it works
  - the ways that this is the same or different to ones in their homes.
- A mandoline is used to slice vegetables.
  - How does it work?
  - Have the class make a list of steps for operating a mandoline.
- What do bellows on a pump organ do?
  - Sing a song that Penny could be singing.
- Discuss with the class where their butter comes from.
  - Investigate how a butter churn works.
  - How is the butter the class eats at home made?
  - How are these processes the same and how are they different?
  - Do you need a churn to make butter at home?
  - Make butter in a jar in your classroom.

#### Pages 15–16:

- Why does the class think Penny could barely breathe when she discovered the shed?
- Identify all the objects that Penny sees in Grandpa's shed and
  - discuss what they might be used for
  - imagine what they could be used for.
- What else might have been in the shed?

#### Pages 17–18:

- How does the class think Penny investigated the 'bits and pieces' she found in Grandpa's shed?
- How has the illustrator created the illustrations on these pages?
- What are 'thingamajigs', 'whatchamacallits' and 'fandangled contraptions'?
  - Use a thesaurus or otherwise brainstorm other creative words that could be used to replace these words.

#### Pages 19–20:

- What are Grandpa and Penny doing on these pages?
- Who does the class think is doing the imagineering? Why?
- What part did the two characters play in the imagineering?
- Have the class collect objects from around the classroom.
  - Think about what they do.
  - Imagine what they could build with them.

- Have the class split into small groups and
  - draw sketches of an imagining and describe what it does
  - create a plan for how they will build the imagining
  - build the imagining.

### Pages 21–22 (and foldout):

- Examine Penny’s big imagining as a class.
  - Do students remember seeing the objects in this imagining in Grandpa’s house?
- Discuss as a class the purpose of Penny’s imagining.
  - Why do students think that Penny made this machine? What problem will it solve?
  - Should all imaginings try to solve a problem? What is the point in creating something that doesn’t solve a problem?

### Follow-up Discussions and Activities:

- Discuss why imagining is important.
- Talk with an inventor.
  - Where do they get their ideas from?
  - Who do they solve problems for?
  - Where do they get the parts they use for their inventions? Do they use things lying about, as Penny does, or have parts specially made?
  - What do they do if their invention doesn’t work?
- Get students to imagine that they could create a machine for an older relative.
  - What would it be called?
  - What would it do?
  - How would it help them?
  - Sketch, plan and write a description of this machine.
    - In the same way that the illustrator has used real pictures of real life objects to create her illustrations, encourage students to use images sourced from various media to create their imaginings.
  - Get students to construct a working model of the imaginings.
- The final pages of the book feature images of some of the objects that the illustrator has used in the story. Get students to find illustrations of modern examples of these tools and discuss the ways that the tools look and work differently to do the same job. Are the newer tools harder or easier to use?