It’s also a wonderful thought exercise for children and leads students to consider the things they like doing, those which are important to them and the things that make their friends and other members of their family happy.

This exercise will take you through creating an image of a bus covered in special objects, based on Bob Graham’s original, by using a series of layers. Some other areas of discussion you might cover with your students are:

- If the bus is decorated with things that are important for each student, what will appear on their own, personal bus?
- How might the bus in the book differ from the buses in their neighbourhood.
- What shape is a bus? Is it just a rectangular box on wheels, or is it more complex than that?
- What media is used in this exercise? Which are wet and which are dry media? Which are easier to control?
- The paper used in this exercise is special 300gsm watercolour paper, made in France out of cotton. Have your students ever been to a cotton farm? Do they know any farmers? How might buses be different in France?

**What You’ll Need**

**We used:**
- A3 Roymac Rains paper – one per student
- Essential pencils (hb or 2b preferred) – one each
- Set of 12 Colourush pencils (one packet between two or three)
- Micador erasers to share
- Koh-I-Noor Brilliant set 12 watercolour discs one between two or three
- Or Koh-I-Noor set 24 watercolour disc (if you would like the children to use more realistic colours)
- Set 12 Micador soft pastels one between two or three.
- Achiever round size No. 2 and size No. 6 brushes
- Water pots – one each is a good idea (one between two is fine for this activity)
- Cotton wool
- Tissues
- Butter knives to share
- Protections for tables
- Protection for clothing
- Wet wipes for cleaning hands
- Hair dryers would be handy
- Newspaper for collecting pastel dust.

**Children’s Art Activity after reading A Bus Called Heaven by Bob Graham**

This is a great art activity that encourages children to express themselves through re-creating an image from *A Bus Called Heaven* by Bob Graham, all while learning several drawing and shading techniques using pastel and pencil.
Step 1
Ask the children to draw a bus on their paper. It might help them to break the bus down into a collection of regular shapes. For younger students, it might help to prepare a template and have them trace the bus. Once the basic outline is complete, add details such as doors and windows.

Step 2
Ask the children to decorate the bus. Have them draw objects they like or would like to share with friends or neighbours. Anything that makes them happy is fair game; pets, sports, people and rainbows are just a start. Ask them to consider the size and placement of their objects.

Step 3
Think about the colours; what colours make people happy? Ask your students to think about their own experience. Do they tend to prefer bright or dark colours? Based on their decisions, use Koh-I-Noor discs to paint in the background of the bus as well as any area on the roof or chassis that isn’t decorated with a special object. It’s a good idea to wet the target area with water to allow the paint to flow into the right areas. This will prevent lines and hard edges where they aren’t wanted. Allow the paint to dry naturally, or speed the process along with a hairdryer.

Step 4
Paint the special objects using a variety of bright colours. Again, allow them to dry or blast them gently with a hairdryer to speed it up.

Step 5
When dry, work over the paint with coloured pencils to tidy up and add more colour and vibrancy to the objects. The pencils will add depth to the effect already achieved through watercolours. Ask your students to experiment with the way they shade using pencil, adding sparse lines or stroke marks through the colour-blocks to add emphasis. Encourage the students to try these complementary textures, rather than covering the watercolour completely.
Step 6
Use white paint and the fine brush to add any white details or highlights you need.

Step 7
Draw in a line to divide the ground from the sky (make sure it isn’t the centre of the page – it should be below or above the centre). Cover the bus with a protective sheet of tissue paper. Take a light green pastel and use a butter knife to scrape flakes of colour all over the bottom section. Rub them in lightly with a thumb and – voila- you have grass. Repeat around the bottom of the bus with a dark green pastel. This darker pastel will help show the shadow cast around the bus.

Step 8
Remove the tissue from the bus that was acting as a mask. Scrunched up and use it to blend the pastel into the paper.

Step 9
Cover the bus again with a clean tissue. Take some balls of cotton wool and fashion clouds out of them. These are only temporary, and will be used as cloud maskings. Select a light blue pastel and scrape it onto the top section of the paper.

Step 10
Take the dark blue pastel and scrape onto the top of the sky. Remove the masking tissues and clouds. Blend the pastel scrapings with the tissue, being careful not to smudge out the white patches where the cloud masks were. The result will be a lovely, shaded skyline.

Step 11
On a piece of scrap paper, stand the image up and tap on paper to let excess pastel scrapings fall onto it. This can be discarded. Place a tissue on the paper under your hand and trace around the outline of the bus with a black colourush pencil. Add some slanted strokes directly underneath the bus to suggest shadow.

Step 12
With the white paint in the disc set add any highlights you need including hubcaps and the headlights on the bus.

Step 13
Now you’re done! Give the bus a name and add any little flourishes you feel like. You might think about including grass, bushes, flowers, and other decorations with pastel or coloured pencils to the ground and or sky.