

Blackout

Author: John Rocco

- **Summary:** Have you ever lost power in your house before? Imagine a whole city losing power for a night. A city that is normally very loud, busy, and hot suddenly loses all power. Everything becomes very still and quiet, which is not normal for a big city. No one knows what to do, and eventually they become too hot to stay inside. Once they find their way outside, they find the lights in the sky. Everywhere people are outside finding relief from the heat, and enjoying each other's company. When the power suddenly comes back on, what will everyone do?
- **Awards Received:**
 - 2011 Wall Street Journal's Best Books
 - 2012 Caldecott Honor
 - 2012 New York Times Best Book of the Year
- **Reviews:**
 - From *School Library Journal* (June 18, 2011): Grade PreS- 2nd – “The view inside this family of four's duplex depicts what might be a typical night for them. The younger child is reaching for a board game, her older sister is talking on the phone, dad is cooking, and mom is working at the computer. When the girl tries to enlist the others to play the game with her, they're all too busy-until "The lights went out. All of them." It's a blackout! At first, the family members sit at the kitchen table with a flashlight and some candles; then they head up to the roof for a look at the bright stars against the dark cityscape; and, finally, they go down to the street, where there's a festive atmosphere of guitars playing, free ice cream, and an open fire hydrant. In the end, readers will see that simple pleasures and a spirit of togetherness can be enjoyed even when the electricity comes back on. The colorful pictures work beautifully with the book's design. Rocco uses comic-strip panels and a brief text to convey the atmosphere of a lively and almost magical urban landscape. Great bedtime reading for a soft summer night.”—
Lauralyn Persson, Wilmette Public Library, IL
- **Author Information:**
 - **John Rocco** www.roccoart.com/home.html
 - About the Author: www.roccoart.com/roccoart_about.html
 - Author's Blog: <http://roccoart.blogspot.com/>
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - Has the power ever gone out at your house?

- Have you ever been scared of the dark or quiet?
- What do you think it would be like for a whole city to lose power?
- How would you feel if nothing in the house worked?
- What would you have done while the power was off?
- Have you ever found the lights in the sky before?
- Have you ever wished the power to go off before?
- What are some things you would not be able to do if the whole city lost power?
- Name some things that you and your family could do while the power is out.
- What did you like about this book? What did you not like about this book?

- **Curricular Activities:**

- **Reading/Oral Language**
 - Read the book together as a class with the lights off.
 - Read the book in partners.
 - Have students read the book on their own.
- **Writing**
 - Have students' journal about a time the power went out at their house. If the power has never gone off, have them imagine it going off.
- **Math**
 - Students can make a chart/graph based of who has lost power and who has not lost power.
- **Science**
 - Research electricity could be taught.
 - Students could find facts about power outages.
 - Students could research to find out why power outages occur.
- **Social Studies**
 - Discuss the geography of the state of New York. Talk about the climate of New York compared to the climate of where you live. How many times have they had long lasting power outages?
- **Art**
 - Have students make their own pictures of the lights in the sky, using whatever materials they would like.
- **Food**
 - What kinds of food can you eat when you have no electricity? Try and come up with a list of foods, and have a "no cooking" cookout.

- **Related Books:**

- *When the Lights Went Out* by Cris Baisch
- *When the Library Lights Go Out* by Richard Jackson
- *When Charlie McButton Lost Power* by Suzanne Collins

- **Other titles by Rocco:**

- *Fu Finds the Way*
- *Moonpowder*
- *Wolf! Wolf!*
- *Alice*

- **Websites for further study or enrichment:**

- <http://www.squidoo.com/Power-Outage-Activities>
 - A list of games to play when the power goes out.
- <http://www.kidsastronomy.com/stars.htm>
 - Information about the stars and space for children when they lose power.
- <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/kids/>
 - Website filled with information, games, coloring, and much more about space.
- <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/electricity.html>
 - If children ever wonder how electricity works, and why there are sometimes power outages, this website is filled with activities for them to discover answers to their questions.