

Teaching Ideas for the CILIP Kate Greenaway Award Shortlist 2019

Title: The Wolf The Duck & The Mouse

Author: Mac Barnett

Illustrator: Jon Klassen

Publisher: Walker (2017)

These notes have been written by the teachers at CLPE to provide schools with sessions which focus on the importance of illustration in building a narrative and supporting children's response. They build on our work supporting teachers to use picture books to enhance critical thinking and develop creative approaches in art and writing. The teaching notes show how picture books can be used in schools to enhance children's reading comprehension and composition of their own creative writing. We hope you find them useful.

Before beginning this sequence:

Collect together a range of art materials that will allow the children to engage in the activities exploring illustration, for example: cartridge paper, sketching pencils 2B-4B, coloured pencils, watercolour paints and a variety of brushes.

In order to engage fully with the layers of meaning and the details within the illustrations, it is advisable to ensure that you have access to a visualiser or similar device to enable you to share images from the text with the pupils on a large scale.

Suggested Activities:

Session 1: Investigating characters and their relationships

Give children the time and space to investigate the front cover of the text. Read aloud the title of the text and look carefully at the accompanying illustration. What can the children see? What does it make them think about? How does it make them feel? Look now at the relationship between the three characters. What story might lie ahead for these characters? What in the illustration makes you think this? The children might make suggestions about the possible dynamic between the three, drawing on things they see in the illustration. They may comment on the size, scale of the wolf in comparison to the duck and the mouse. They may look at the fact that the wolf is positioned behind the tree, as if he is hiding or emerging. They may focus in on the mouse and duck sitting against the tree; *do they think they know the wolf is there? What makes them think this?* Look at how the body language and facial expressions mirror each other, both leaning against the tree, bodies angled outwards, bodies upright, feet straight up; *what might that tell us about their relationship?*

Now turn to the title page and look at the accompanying illustration. Focus in on the mouse, look at the scale here between the mouse and the tree; *how does that make us think and feel about this character?* Focus on the gaze of the character; *where is the mouse looking? What does this make you think? What does it make you think about the story ahead for this character?*



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Turn to the first spread, discuss the impact of the page turn for the children from a single page spread to a double page spread. *What do they notice first?* Read the text aloud to the children. Come back to the language on the page. Look at the author's choice of the word 'met'. *What does this word mean to us? Do they think this is a friendly situation?* Return to the illustration; *what does this suggest about their meeting?* The children may focus in on the gaze of the two animals, the positioning of the wolf – larger and higher, bearing down on the mouse, the mouse looking up to the wolf. They may remark on the way the illustrator has chosen to show the wolf emerging from the dark and shadowed space between the trees, literally blocking the mouse's journey forward. Compare the two sides of the page; *what do they notice about the left hand side, compared to the right? How does the colour and scenery compare?* They may notice that the mouse's side of the page is much lighter and more open, they may look at the way the branch overhead leans down, almost pointing the mouse out to the wolf; *what does this suggest?* Ask the children to predict what they think will happen next. *Why do they think this?* The children could scribe their responses on post-it notes and stick these around the illustration, coming back together to look at similarities and differences in their opinions.

Session 2: Investigating the journey of the story through the illustrations

Re-read the book from the beginning and on to the second spread. *What was the impact of page turn on the children? Does the next event surprise them? Did the next part of the story match their predictions?* Turn back to the previous spread; *what was in the words or illustrations that could suggest this may or may not happen?*

Now revisit the second spread in more detail. Read the words that accompany the image; *what in the image suggests that this event happened quickly? What is the impact of only seeing the back half of the wolf walking away?* What do you notice about the rest of the scene? Look at how the position of everything else is exactly the same. Draw children's attention the branch still pointing down; *what does this highlight now? How does this make you feel?* Look at the direction the wolf is walking in; *is this towards or against the natural journey of the story? Are we encouraged to turn the page?* Discuss with the children where they think the story is going now, noting down their predictions around a copy of the illustration.

Now turn the page and give time for the children to look at the illustration, without revealing the words, and work out what is happening. *Where is the mouse? How do you think he feels?* You could encourage the children to think in role as the mouse, writing down what he might be thinking or saying to himself then encompassing this in a thought or speech bubble around the illustration. Now read aloud the words and compare with how the children thought he was feeling. *What words tell us how he is actually feeling? Look at these words together – woe, fear, shrieked. What do these tell us that the illustration does not? Who do you think is shouting at the mouse? Why?*

Explore the direction of the lines on the page, the stomach, the mouse's gaze and body position; the story is now moving forwards again, *whose story do you think this is?*

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Follow the lines on the page and turn to the next spread. Read the text aloud and give time for the children to carefully consider the illustration. Encourage them to compare the two sides of the spread, look at the effect of the split between the two in the page gutter. *What do we think we know about the duck from this spread?* Look at the props the duck has been given by the illustrator. *What can we infer about how long he has been there? How he feels about being there?* Note children's ideas around a copy of the illustration.

Session 3: Investigating setting and props and what these add to our understanding of the story

Re-read the book so far and on to the next spread *'The meal was delicious... ...I have no intention of being eaten.'* What can we tell about the characters' relationship by the way they are portrayed in the illustration? How does this 'meeting' feel compared to when the mouse 'met' the wolf? Look at the way the illustrator hasn't chosen to split the page equally. The divide of the gutter is surpassed by the illustration. Look at how they are more level, the duck is slightly looking down on the mouse, but not on the scale of the wolf. Investigate what the choice of props might say about their relationship. Children may notice there is a symmetry to their cups – both handles face outwards, their plates – both have taken one corner bite of their toast, the choice of a circular table and a pattern made up of equilateral triangles on the tablecloth, the candle placed directly between them, their chairs angled toward each other in the same way. If there is too much to focus on at once and the children don't notice these details, provide them with a viewfinder to investigate parts of the illustration more closely. This is simply a piece of A4 card or paper – black or white if possible – with a small square or rectangle cut out, the children can then move this around the illustration to see if they can spot these smaller details and then talk about what they might say about the relationship between the characters, e.g.



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Look again at the props used to set the scene. Re-read the lines that refer to the props in the text:

"Where did you get jam?" the mouse asked.

"And a tablecloth?"

The duck munched a crust.

"You'd be surprised what you find inside a wolf."

"It's nice," said the mouse.

"It's home," said the duck.

"You live here?"

Consider what else the duck might need to make this his home. We've seen him in bed, eating at the table; *what other things or facilities might the duck need to make this his home?* Use cartridge paper, soft pencils and watercolour paint to draw another 'homely' setting with the mouse and the duck in. Look at the techniques the illustrator has used to place you firmly inside the stomach of the wolf in both the 'bedroom' and 'dining room' scenes, the dark paintwash background, the furniture looking almost like it's floating, the touches like the picture hung on the wall and then think about where to place the characters in your new 'scene'. *What other 'rooms' might be in the stomach of the wolf? What furniture and props would be there? How will you place them? How will you place the characters in the scene? What will we be able to tell about the nature of their relationship through the choices you make?* Give time for the children to plan and work up their ideas to a finished quality, then tac these around the room for the children to explore and reflect on. *Does everyone's look the same? Did anyone choose the same 'room'? Explore in more detail the effect that the work has on you as a reader; which images do you think are most effective? Why?*

Now read on until 'this called for a dance' and compare the author and illustrator's choices to their own. *What were the similarities? What were the differences? Re-read these spreads again; what more do we learn about the character of the duck over these spreads from the text and illustration? What more do we learn about the relationship between the characters?*

Now read on to *"To the health of the wolf!"* Explore the similarities and differences in this final spread with the spread focussing on the characters having breakfast. Note children's observations round a copy of the illustration.

Session 4: Exploring visual links in illustration

Re-read the book so far and on until *'A hunter heard the wolf moan.'* Compare and contrast this spread with the spread where the mouse 'met' the wolf. Give time and space for the children to explore the visual links in these two scenes. The children may pick up that the hunter emerges from the trees like the wolf, the wolf is placed in the 'spotlight' of the moon, as the mouse was 'pointed out' by the branch on the tree. In contrast to the first spread, they may notice that the way the branches are pointing on the trees is directing us away from the natural journey of the story, this might indicate his story is taking a 'backward turn' i.e. something that is not good is going to happen in his story. Compare the wolf's body position and

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facial expression in this scene with the first scene. Here, the children may notice that he is low on the ground, hunter up above looking down; *what does this suggest about who holds the power in this scene?* Look at the differences between mouse in the first spread and the wolf in this spread. The children may observe that in contrast to the mouse, who faces the wolf directly in the first scene, the wolf is not looking, his eyes are covered and therefore literally doesn't see what's coming.

Turn the page and talk about the impact of this spread on the children as readers. Look at how the illustrator has used shape and colour to represent the power of the explosion. This graphic representation could link to a study of Lichtenstein's 'Explosion' (1965-6) in an associated art session:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/lichtenstein-explosion-p01796>

Look at and discuss with the children how framing is used in this spread to explore the impact of this moment on the 'outside' and 'inside' worlds of the wolf. The children may pick up on the wide eyed gaze of all the animals, their wide 'arms', legs and ears, the way the wolf seems like he's flying through the forest to escape, compared with the duck and mouse flying through the air with the props in disorder, the way duck is bursting out of the frame at the top. *What do the children think will happen next? Why?* Note their predictions around a copy of the illustration.

Session 5: How illustration can evoke an emotional response and empathy for a character

Re-read the book so far and on to '*...got trapped in an old oak tree's roots.*' Give children the chance to explore this spread thoroughly, exploring the change in stature and the vulnerability of the previously powerful wolf in the words and images. The children might look at how the wolf's ears have dropped, his legs are bent, his eyes wide, the bright light of the moon is exposing him, the roots are tangled around his paws and the branches also look like they are trapping his body. They may pick up that the alliteration in the words draws our attention to the verbs *tried*, *tripped*, (*got*) *trapped*. *What do these verb choices tell us about this character now?*

Now turn the page and, through exploring the illustration, without revealing the text, explore the change in mouse and duck. *Who frets? Who is ordered?* Compare this with the spread where the characters first met, what has changed since then? Look at the props that mouse has now; the way he wears the pan on his head with the bow-tie around it, the way his dinner shirt has become a jacket, the way he holds the hockey stick and his general stance and the direction he faces. *How do we view mouse here?* Now read the text on the page, compare the verb choices with those used for the wolf; '*stood*', '*fight*', '*try*', '*defend*'. *What do these verb choices tell us about this character now?*

Now turn the page. *What is the impact of this vast double page spread on them as readers?* Explore the illustrator's choice of scale and perspective; *what does this tell us about the duck and the mouse?* Here, in contrast to the other spreads in the book, this illustration takes up nearly the entire space. There is just one word in a thin frame at the bottom, all in capital letters, punctuated with an exclamation mark. *What does this exclamation mark tell us about the change in the characters of the mouse and the duck?*

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Read the next page of the text and explore the illustration. Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to have the hunter looking back as he runs forward? What does this suggest to us? What do you think he sees as he looks back? Explore the repetition of the phrase '*Oh woe!*' throughout the text; the mouse, the wolf, the duck and the hunter have all made this exclamation at different points in the story. Compare these points; *who shifts from powerful to powerless and vice versa? How can we tell through the words and pictures?*

Now read to the end of the book and investigate how we view the wolf by the end of the story. *What position is he in related to the duck and the mouse? How can we tell from the words and images?* Give time and space for the children to discuss the last spreads in the book, using all the skills of reading pictures that they have been supported to develop throughout the text.

Re-read and discuss the text as a whole with the children, opening up discussion so that the children can share their likes and dislikes, any questions they are left with and share connections with other stories they have read or seen. *What do you think this story was really about? Does it remind you of anything else you have read? How does the wolf end up, what does he learn?* Look at the final end page, with the publication details. Compare this with the initial title page where the same tree appears, with a light background and the mouse in front of it. *Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to leave the story here?*

After reading, you may wish to explore the intertextual links of this story with other fables; conveying a moral, using animals with anthropomorphic characteristics as the main characters, often in an outdoor setting. You may wish to explore other fables in collections such as *Aesop's Fables* retold by Michael Morpurgo and illustrated by Emma Chichester-Clark (Orchard) if the children do not already know a good stock of fables.

You may also wish to explore other texts illustrated by Jon Klassen, looking at similarities and differences in his style across texts. You could look at how he uses eyes and gaze across texts as a key part of the storytelling, they may look at how he portrays more 'gruesome' action like characters potentially being eaten 'off the page' in books like *I Want my Hat Back*, *This is Not my Hat* and *We Found a Hat*. You could also explore how he creates and develops relationships with and between characters in his texts, including others he has illustrated for Mac Barnett, such as *Square*, *Circle* and *Rectangle*, *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole*, and *Extra Yarn*. You could also explore the use of scenery and props as part of the visual storytelling.

This sequence of activities was designed by CLPE for the Greenaway shortlist. To access more free resources from CLPE, visit: www.clpe.org.uk/freeresources

In depth teaching sequences for over 200 other high quality texts can be found at:
www.clpe.org.uk/powerofreading

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Further resources to support children's understanding of picturebooks for all ages and research on the importance of using picturebooks across the primary years can be found at:

<https://www.clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures>

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