



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower primary  
(ages 4+)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking; Visual Language

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Learning about visual literacy
- Learning about picture books
- Learning about imaginative thinking and creativity

## THEMES

- Family
- Friends
- Community
- Kindness
- Empathy
- Love
- Death
- Grief
- Life's journey

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

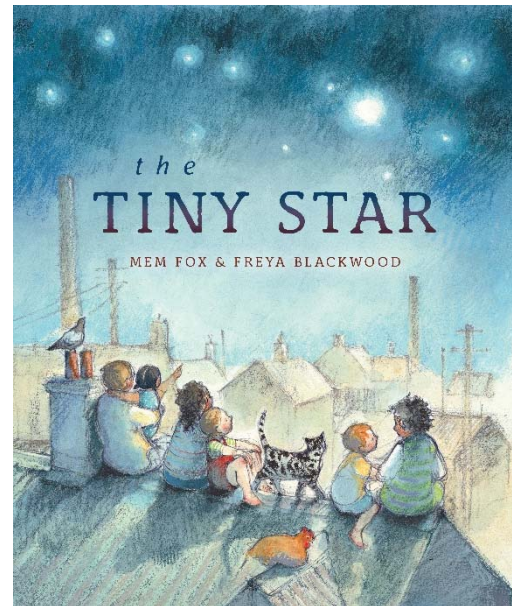
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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## The Tiny Star

Mem Fox & Freya Blackwood

## PLOT SUMMARY

*Once upon a time, although this happens all the time, a tiny star fell to earth . . .*

This touching and timeless story combines, for the first time, the talents of world-renowned author Mem Fox with the heartwarming illustrations of Freya Blackwood. These two luminaries craft a truly unique and moving story about the journey of life, to be cherished and shared for generations to come.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mem Fox is the author of many loved and celebrated picture books, including *Possum Magic* which became the bestselling children's book in Australia. Her more recent books include the perennial favourite *Where is the Green Sheep?* (with Judy Horacek) and *Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes* (with Helen Oxenbury). Mem lives in Adelaide, Australia.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Freya Blackwood is one of Australia's most admired children's illustrators today. While warm and classic, her style has a unique quality that renders her art instantly recognisable. Freya's previous work includes *The Treasure Box* with Margaret Wild. Freya lives in orange with her daughter, Ivy.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Mem says:

*The Tiny Star* burst from my heart when I thought of my grandson living on after I had died. We adore each other. So I wrote a very happy book about the inevitability of life's journey in which a star (me, probably!) is born, lives and dies but shines happily ever after.

*The Tiny Star* is a new Mem Fox story in the old Mem Fox style, which can be enjoyed on two totally different levels. It's a book for children under five, soothing and calming, with a happy ending for bedtime. But it will also speak to adults about the loss of their own aged parents, and provide a gentle conversation starter with young children about birth and death and everything in between.

## ILLUSTRATOR'S INSPIRATION

Freya says:

This book is about an extraordinary person, and yet we all know a tiny star, or if we're lucky, several tiny stars. I loved the challenge and complexity of this story, from depicting such a character, to deciding on a setting, to working out how to show the passing of time and the gradual swell of simple joys *The Tiny Star* brings to her family and friends.

This book made me think of the women in my life who are tiny stars – my mother, who has given us everything, an aunt who takes in stray teenagers and gives them love, and a friend's mother who has thirteen children and is always calm, generous and loving. Although this project was complex, it was an utter joy to create.

## Questions

1. What does the beautiful cover of this book tell us about the story to follow? Look at the characters on the roof, the stars in the sky, the rooftops, the colours used by Freya to let us know that it's night time etc
  - o Do these things tell us it will be a gentle story about family and love or does the cover tell us it will be a rollicking, fun picture book?

## Activities

1. Read the book together without stopping for questions or to talk about the text.
2. Read the book a second time and with this reading, stop at the endpapers before you begin the reading to note the stars in the sky being used as a motif throughout the book. The children should keep an eye out for the stars appearing, not just in the sky but as the tiny baby's blanket, a cape, and later as the older person's shawl.

## WRITING STYLE

Mem's writing is 'spare' and every word she uses matters.

The Illustrations complement the words in greater detail and provide opportunities for interaction with the story.

Note the importance of the rhythm of the text: Short sentences (mostly), repeated words, finishing the book with one word – 'Forever' – and having to turn the page to read this word. It all comes together to form a gentle pace.

Every sentence is 'charged' with meaning and emotion.

Note that Mem spends most of the book building the character and the beauty of the child and the happiness she brings to the community and family. There are just 3–4 pages spent on the sadness of death and these are followed immediately by a sense of lightness and hope in the pages to follow.

## Questions

1. Discuss the language in the book that helps build a sense of the story and its major themes?
  - o Eg: 'The people who found it loved it immediately.'
  - o Words such as carefully, warmly, beautiful, caring, kind, loved and adored, hopes and dreams, gently, forever.
2. Ask the children if these words help to describe the way they felt about the story



3. Discuss the illustrations in the context of the story and how they complement the words and the language to help tell the story.
  - o Consider colour palette, facial expressions, the inclusion of birds and butterflies, the activities such as swinging, gardening, dancing, sitting on the roof, sharing, caring etc

#### Activities

1. Using a template of a star, ask the children to draw their own star and colour it in a colour that suits their mood. These can be put on a wall to represent all the tiny stars in the classroom.

### POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think this story was about?
2. How did this story make you feel?
3. In particular, did the way that you feel change as the story went on – and particularly when it finished? Remind the students about Mem's words in the paragraph on her inspiration – 'a star . . . is born, lives and dies but **shines happily ever after**'
4. Does it make you think about someone you know?
5. Have you read other stories by Mem Fox? Is this similar or different?
6. Have you read other stories that have been illustrated by Freya Blackwood?

### KEY STUDY TOPICS

#### Family/Community

*The Tiny Star* is a story about family, belonging and being loved by the people around you.

From the beginning we sense there is something very special about the baby – its arrival, its role in the family and community and its connection to everyone and everything.

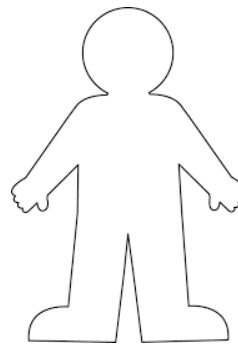
#### Questions

##### Ask the children to:

1. Describe your community to the class – does it include extended family like aunts and uncles, cousins, neighbours and friends?
2. People can have very different communities and it's important to acknowledge that. What might be different about your community or that of someone else you know?

#### Activities

1. On a big piece of poster paper, write the word COMMUNITY. Underneath this word, add some words that help describe what community means to us. Eg – Family, neighbours, friends, cousins, carer, grandparent, etc
2. Using a template of a 'person' (see below – these are readily available on the internet) draw your face and write your name down the middle. Join them up around the wall (like they're holding hands) to represent the classroom 'family' or community.



3. Look at pages 7 and 8, describe all the ways the community is showing their love and happiness for the arrival of the Tiny Star baby.

#### The Life Cycle

*The Tiny Star* is a story of our life cycle – about birth and death and the life we live in between. It is about the love that we hold in our hearts for someone when they are here with us and then when they are no longer with us.

#### Questions

1. Why do we celebrate the birth of a new baby?
2. We talked earlier about the quilt that is covered in stars that the new baby is wrapped in. Talk about where else the blanket appears to mark a different age and stage of the Tiny Star's life.
3. Eventually the Tiny Star returns 'to its home in the heavens' and this is an indication that she has died and returned to where she came from. The words describe this in the story but how do the illustrations show us that the Tiny Star has died and that people are feeling sad? Consider how the quilt is used to illustrate a sense of loss and emptiness.
4. How are the family and community comforted at the end of the story?
5. What does it mean to have 'lived a full life'?



### Activities

1. How did you feel when you realised that the Tiny Star had returned to its 'home in the heavens'
  - o Write down the words to describe your feelings
2. At home, in the evening (and if it is a nice night) look out at the night sky and think about all the tiny stars you can see. Find a star and dedicate it to someone you love or have loved.

### THEMES

- Love and Loss
- Kindness
- Grief
- Compassion
- empathy
- Friendship

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

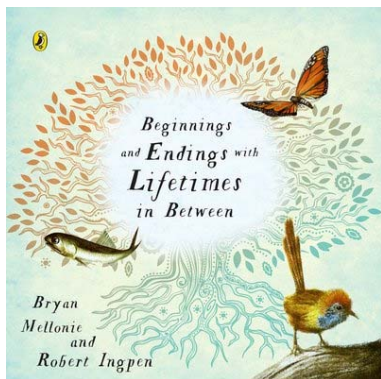
- There were many times in the story when both the illustrator and the author show people being kind and caring.
  - o Find some of those examples and discuss various acts of kindness that might occur during the day for the children and the teacher.
- What is meant by the word grief?
  - o Talk about sadness and how we cope with being sad.
  - o Where do we seek comfort when we are sad?
  - o How did the family and community in the book find comfort in the end?
- Why is friendship so important?
  - o Discuss the notion of empathy and compassion in supporting people who are sad or grieving.
  - o Discuss how the children show empathy and compassion for someone who might be feeling sad.

### ACTIVITIES

- Make a list of all the ways you've been kind today
- Make a list of all the ways you've seen other people in the classroom be kind today
- Combine these lists on a piece of poster paper with the heading **ALL THE WAYS TO BE KIND**. Put it up in the classroom so that the class is reminded of how simple and easy it can be.
- Invite parents, grandparents, family friends' another teacher, or someone special in your life, to a **CELEBRATION OF LIFE** – this will be a morning tea to celebrate all of the things the children are grateful for.
- Children should list at least one thing that they are grateful for and draw a picture to illustrate what that is. It might be a home, a family, school, a friend, books, food, warmth, etc



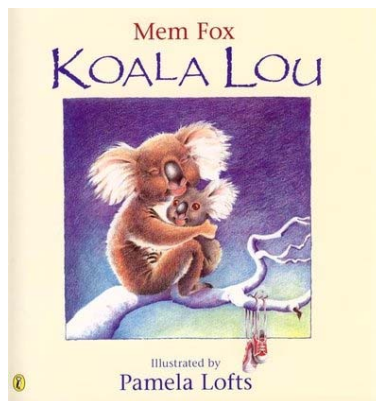
FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*Beginnings and Endings with Lifetimes in Between* by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

Have you ever wondered why a butterfly lives for only a few weeks? Or why a tree lives for hundreds of year? You may have been sad when someone in your family, or a favourite pet became sick and died. There is a beginning and an ending to everything that is alive. In between is a lifetime. Dying is a much a part of living as being born.

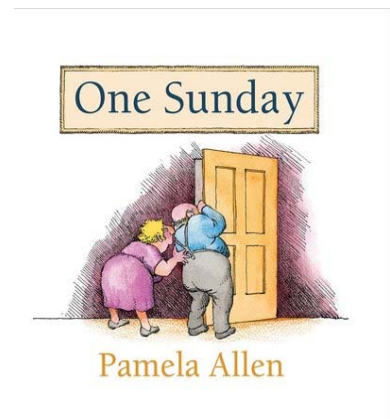
[Teachers' resources available.](#)



*Koala Lou* by Mem Fox

*There was once a baby koala, so soft and round that all who saw her loved her. Her name was Koala Lou.*

Koala Lou is the first born in a large family. She feels sad because her mother seems too busy to pay her any attention. Perhaps if she wins the tree-climbing at the Bush Olympics her mother might notice her again.



*One Sunday* by Pam Allen

From the one and only Pamela Allen, comes this gentle story for children about home and hearth, about the comfort of ritual, and about opening your heart to the possibilities of life.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
The Tiny Star	Mem Fox & Freya Blackwood	9780670078127		\$24.99		
Koala Lou	Mem Fox & Pamela Lofts	9780140540635		\$14.99		
Hunwick's Egg	Mem Fox & Pamela Lofts	9780143501350		\$14.99		
Night Noises	Mem Fox & Terry Denton	9780143501480		\$14.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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