

When the Waterhole Dries Up

Teachers Notes

From the author

I like thinking up funny stories and one day I imagined a boy in the dusty outback filling his bath. I pictured the red outback soil, a cute little house, various animals that might live near a waterhole, and the surprise that a boy would get if animals knocked on his door and burst inside. I later changed this sequence to the animals appearing one after the other without knocking to add pace to the story. As I worked on the text it felt so warm and friendly that I hoped one day it would become a book.

From the illustrator

When illustrating Kaye's text for "When the Waterhole Dries Up" I really wanted to create a complete world for the reader and illustrating this book was a lot like creating a little movie through the visual narrative. I set the scene of an outback landscape in drought with the cover illustration and the dry, cracked earth illustration for the end papers.

As the story commences the dusty boy can be seen getting ready for his bath through the window of his home linking the outback setting to the antics that will take place inside his bathroom. We are soon welcomed into the bathroom as he runs his bubble bath and gets undressed, ready to jump in. Visual clues to the unfolding story are included such as glimpses through the window of storm clouds rolling in and sneak peeks of the upcoming animals hoping to invade the boy's bath.

I wanted the animal characters to have different types of personalities and the little boy character in the story is a gentle, patient little boy and I hope this character reflect the patience of our farmers and their families in times of drought.

I used mainly watercolour and coloured pencils to create these illustrations and felt watercolour was the ideal medium for illustrating the splashing bath water and transparency of the water. I used paint brushes and old toothbrushes to achieve the effects of the splashing water and had a lot of fun with this.

Before Reading

Can you tell from the cover where this book is set?

Read the first page and ask, what do you think the dusty boy is waiting for?

After Reading

The story ends with the waterhole filling with water. What may have happened if it didn't rain?

This is a story about a boy and his bath but is also about drought how scarce water can be in the Australian outback. What other books do you know that are about a similar theme. Can you make a class collection of books on this theme and share them?

Writing activities

The author uses alliteration throughout the book. What other animal alliterations can you come up with?

What are some of the animals not used this story? What actions might they do if they were part of the book?

The author uses a familiar cumulative narrative. What other stories do you know that use the same literary device. Share them with the class. For example, The House That Jack Built. Come up with your own class cumulative story.

Art activities

The illustrator has given some visual clues as to what animals will be entering the bath. Can you find them?

What other books do you know that use a similar visual narrative device?

The colours in the book are limited to the palate of the outback. Experiment with using only reds and blues to create artwork.

The illustrator has created cracked mud on the endpapers using pencil and watercolour. Experiment with using actual mud to create a background.

Drama

The pace and action of this story lends itself to acting out as a class.

Take individual animals and act out their characteristics. How would a rollicking roo act?

The author uses great language to describe the actions and personality of the animals. Can you come up with instrument sounds to match with each animal and their actions?