

Clare's Goodbye Teachers Notes

Written by Libby Gleeson and Illustrated by
Anna Pignataro

Published by Little Hare in March 2017

SYNOPSIS

We all have our own way of saying goodbye.

Libby Gleeson tells a poignant story about letting go, with evocative illustrations by acclaimed illustrator Anna Pignataro.

THEMES

Clare's Goodbye is about a thoughtful girl called Clare and the day she moves house. At first, Clare is reluctant to join her brother and sister in systematically saying goodbye to parts of their home (the tree house, their bunny's grave), and in the end Jacob and Rosie stop trying to include her. That's when they discover Clare saying goodbye to their beloved house in her own way.

This is a story about moving house, but it's also a wonderful example of how we all express sadness in different ways. By listening to our emotions and allowing ourselves to feel, we have the power to transform our sadness into beauty and creativity.



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WRITING STYLE

Libby Gleeson is one of Australia's most-loved children's authors. As with many of Libby's texts, *Clare's Goodbye* is based on a true story. Some names and genders have been changed, but others remain the same.

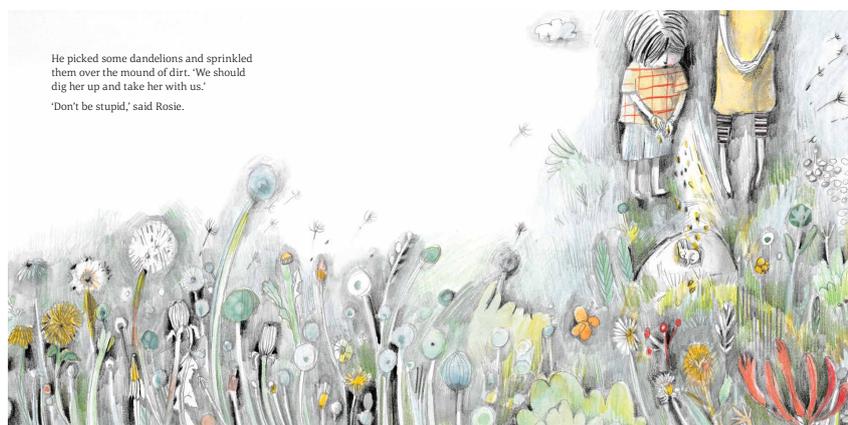
Libby's signature pared-back style focuses on a few specifics without explaining or elaborating. Carefully chosen details combine to create poignancy that seeps between the economical lines of text. These minimal actions and brief comments gradually build a mood of despondency. The power of the final two spreads reverses the build-up of sadness.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

The illustrations are based on Anna Pignataro's childhood home. (If you look at the beginning of the book, you'll see that Anna has dedicated the book to her brother.)

Anna has kept the adult world full of clutter, colours and activity. The children's world is emptier, shadowed and more brooding. It remains empty to the end, but the colours brighten and soften, the shadows are banished, and warmth and sunlight pervade the final spread of them dancing.

Anna experimented with a new style to embrace the feeling of sadness that pervades the story. The emotion was her focus rather than strict logical mapping, and flowers in particular play a powerful role in suggesting mood and feeling.





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AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Books were hugely important to Libby Gleeson as a child, and have remained the focus of her adult life.

Libby's fiction and picture books have won multiple awards, including CBCA shortlistings and wins, State Premier's Literary Awards, the Bologna Ragazzi Award in 2000, and the Prime Minister's Award in 2013.

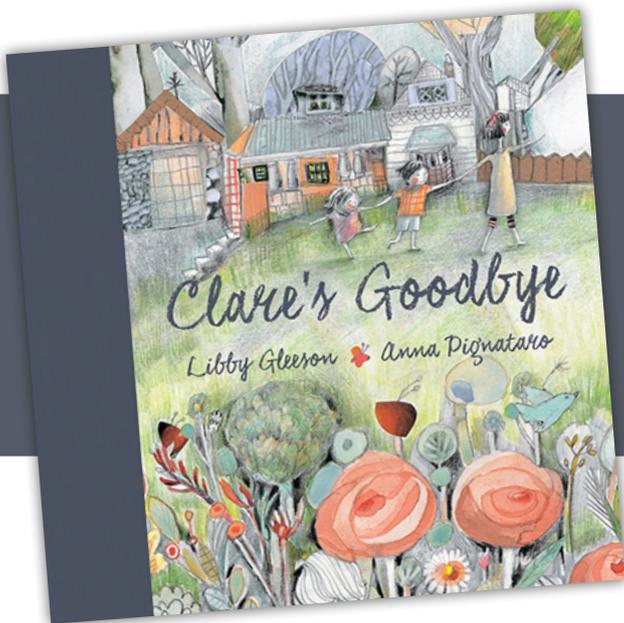
For her services to children's literature, Libby has been honoured with the Lady Cutler Award (1997), Member of the Order of Australia (2007), the Dromkeen Medal (2011) and the Nan Chauncy Award (2015).

ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Anna Pignataro has created more than fifty books for children. Her most popular picture books have had international success and are published in seventeen countries and enjoyed in eleven different languages.

Anna is also the author of a junior fiction series and has a diverse and quirky range of greeting cards. Through her work Anna hopes to connect with children and encourage children to follow their hearts, to be inspired by the natural world and to always believe that anything is possible.

Anna's previous books with Little Hare are *Too Busy Sleeping*, written by Zanni Louise, and *B is for Bedtime* and *Counting Through the Day*, written by Margaret Hamilton. Anna lives with her husband and daughter near the beach in Melbourne, Australia.



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STUDY NOTES

1. This story is about moving house, but it's also about finding ways to deal with strong emotions. When is the last time that you said goodbye to something or someone you love? Write a short account about how you felt and how you behaved in response to that feeling.
2. How might the emotional arc be plotted in a line graph? How effectively does this type of narrative replace the arc usually provided by an action-driven plot?
3. An artist uses colour to create a mood. Find a page from *Clare's Goodbye* that seems to suggest despair. Which colour does the artist use? Find a page that seems to suggest contentment. Which colour has the artist used here? Paint a picture using colour to express a specific mood.
4. An artist can also use **composition** to create a mood. **Composition** is the arrangement and position of objects and figures on the page. Find a page that seems sad. How do you think the artist has created this impression? Draw your own picture to suggest sadness. You can also use composition to create pictures that suggest boredom, liveliness and other moods and feelings. Try doing this, using only circles!
5. Artists also pay attention to the empty space on a page. Find a page or spread from *Clare's Goodbye* that seems empty. What mood does this emptiness seem to create? Why do you think this is? Write a list of feelings that you get when you look at this.

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ACTIVITIES

- In *Clare's Goodbye*, illustrator Anna Pignataro uses flowers to suggest mood and feeling. Ask students to draw a garden bed full of flowers illustrating how they feel after reading the book.
- By listening to our emotions and allowing ourselves to feel, we have the power to transform our sadness into beauty and creativity. Talk to your class about how they express emotions. What do they do when they're sad? What do they do when they're happy? What do they do when they're feeling silly?
- The story ends with Rosie, Jacob and their mum spreading their arms and 'dancing goodbye'. Take your class outside in the sunshine and ask them to think of something they've had to say goodbye to, then have them dance goodbye.

