

Teacher's Notes

Title: Five Little Owls
Author: Mark Carthew
Illustrator: Mini Goss



1. Synopsis

Five Little Owls play an unexpected game of hide and seek under the moonlit sky with some familiar creatures of the forest.

Children adults alike will have fun counting and searching for all the animals hiding in the double page spreads while also enjoying the use of repetition and onomatopoeic rhyme, *Tu-whit, tu-whoo! Hoo-hoo, Hoo-hoo!*

Author Mark Carthew's love of the environment comes alive with his use of simple evocative imagery and rhyme, while award -winning illustrator Mini Goss has created another stunningly beautiful picture book.

2. Author/Illustrator style or medium

Author Mark Carthew's lyrical rhyming metre captures the essence of this traditional rhyme and cleverly creates a simple but entrancing game like narrative.

Introducing familiar and universally recognised creatures - mice, rabbits, frogs, bats and using descending counting techniques, there is much to engage readers with every page turn.

The illustrations for *Five Little Owls* are painted in oil on canvas, a medium which CBCA Crichton Award winning artist Mini Goss excels.

Her use of rich and vibrant colours and her characteristic blend of realism and fantasy mixed with eye-catching detail and a sense of movement is used to great effect.

The attention to detail in *Five Little Owls* is sure to stimulate imagination and the stunning use of images in both flight and static positions captures the nature of these beautiful creatures and the other forest creatures.

The illustrations also portray a great sense of fantasy and fun, underlying the playful nature of the text.

Mini researched Owls and other creatures to evoke a blend of technical realism with fantasy. The model for the owl is an imaginative blend resembling a barn owl. Readers will also enjoy how Mini has also echoed the counting aspect of the book by adding multiples of a range of other creatures, flora and fauna. Her use of silhouettes also adds a sense of depth and compliments the imagery.

Capturing the multi-layered playfulness of this text was one of the highlights for Mini when she was painting the illustrations.

3. Author/Illustrator Motivation

Both Mark and Mini wanted to create a classic style picture book that children and readers of all ages will want to enjoy over and over again as a shared reading experience and read aloud.

Mark's love of wordplay, poetry, music and literature also motivates him to bring new angles to traditional rhymes with a lyricism and quirky sense of humour.

Having worked as both an author and editor with Mini and commissioning her art before in poetry anthologies of contemporary and traditional rhymes Mark knew that Mini's wonderful talent for bright & evocative imagery would be a perfect match to bring this book to life.

4. Author/Illustrator Background Information



Mark Carthew is an award winning editor, author & primary teacher. Best known for his books and series exploring poetry, humour, music, movement and drama, he has always loved the joy of wordplay.

He is series editor for the internationally acclaimed illustrated play script series *VoiceWorks* which has won a number of awards. He has worked closely with some of the biggest names in children's publishing including Margaret Mahy, Graeme Base, Pamela Allen, Ann James, Michael Rosen and a host of other Australian and international authors and illustrators and loves the creative and collaborative process. Mark has a passion for creating quality books for children and in 2005 he was Highly Commended in the ***Dromkeen Librarian's Award*** for his success in bringing literary experiences to children.

In 2006 he was awarded a three year scholarship to pursue his PhD in writing with Swinburne University Victoria and he has been invited to present as part of the 2007 Melbourne Writer's Festival School's Program.

Mark is a keen bushwalker and his love of the natural environment is evident in this imaginative book for young readers.



Mini Goss was born in Melbourne. Her mum was a model and her dad an architect and like lots of young people at the time her parents soon got on a ship and sailed away to find excitement in London. Mini lived in London and New York for most of her childhood.

Despite going to groovy parties and meeting the odd pop star Mini, an only child, longed for a "normal" life back in Melbourne with grandparents, cousins to play with and a dog.

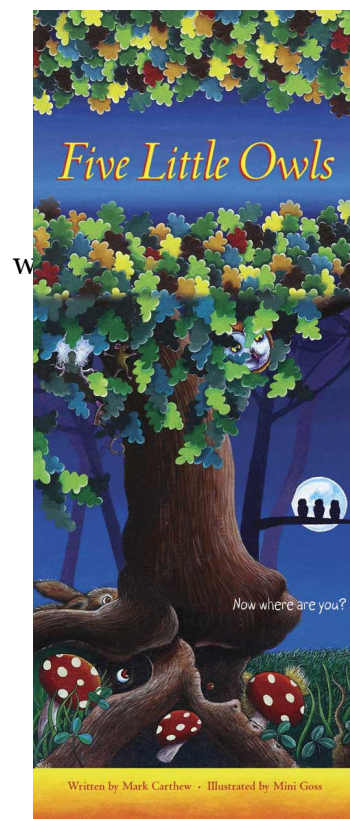
When Mini was a teenager she returned to Melbourne, got a dog, a cat, a rabbit and some birds. She was only allowed to watch one hour of TV a day so the rest of the time she spent drawing. Her favourite thing to draw was her dog.

As a grown up Mini still likes to draw her dog, her cat, rabbits, birds, fish and Owls and her three children. Since starting to write and illustrate children's books about thirteen years ago, her pets and children have been the models for many characters in her books. Owls have always been one of her favourite creatures and they sometimes fly into her family backyard which backs on to a reserve near Melbourne's Yarra River.

Mini was awarded the Crichton award for illustration in 2002.

Her picture Rhino Neil was selected as a CBCA Notable Book for 2006.

5. Educational Applicability



There are many themes in this book which can be explored further and applied to an educational curriculum and teachers / caregiver interaction young children.

The counting sub-text provides a lovely crossover between literacy and numeracy.

There are many fun things to search and count!

The use of descending counting is another element to explore and encourage discussion of text features and children will love finding and counting the hidden creatures.



The use of repetition and onomatopoeic ‘owl call sounds’ makes this book perfect for young readers to interact with the text and for teachers to encourage group participation in the reading.

There are a number of discussions that can be facilitated by this book:

Discussion topics

Before reading the book

1. Ask children if they know what an owl call sounds like?
2. Discuss the different types of owls there are in Australia and in other countries. Show pictures of different species.
3. Cue children in by asking if they enjoy books where they have to search for and find things eg *Animalia* and *Where’s Wally*.
4. Hide some soft toy creatures in the library or room and play a fun game of hide and seek.
5. Use Owls soft toys or finger puppets to help introduce the book.

After Reading the book

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you find all the creatures in the last page?
2. Where do you think the owls and other creatures are going now?
3. What did you notice about the position of the moon as we read through the book?
4. Let's re-visit the text and focus this time on the moon. I want you think about why it is placed where it is.
5. Did you also notice anything special about the colour in the sky?
6. Do you think that rabbits, mice and other creatures would really hang upside down and hide up high in the tree?
7. Which creature actually does do this?
8. What time of day does all the action in this book take place? Why?
9. Who can tell me what nocturnal means?
10. How did the illustrator Mini Goss make the hide and seek game interesting? In what ways do you think her illustrations matched the text?



Activities

Make a poster

- Ask each child to draw / create a poster of the forest with lots of hidden creatures semi-hidden. Hide five of each.
- Make a chart or legend of creatures to search for.

Art, Craft & Design

The children can make simplified versions of **owls** and or other **creatures** in either:-

- Clay or Modroc
- Finger puppets
- Cut outs to place on a tree or forest scene. (make a tree either three dimensional or flat for attaching the owls to)

As a grade, make a large collage / mural of a forest scene modelled on the double page spread and each children could hide five of their creatures. An owl, mouse, rabbit and bat – and add in some others eg grasshoppers, ants etc. They should be nocturnal creatures.

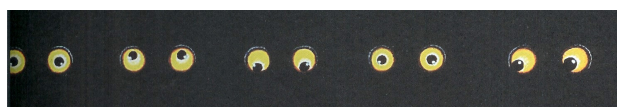
- Make **silhouettes** of the owls perched on a tree branch. Use black paper cut outs for tree , branches, owls and moon and place in frame behind grease paper – mount on window.

You will need:

- Black paper
- Grease paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- assorted coloured PAPER, markers or crayons

[sample templates and activity sheet masters will be placed on the New Frontier website as PDFs]

- Discuss and Draw special features of owls – discuss techniques of using multi-colours and speckling.
- Simplify to draw a single owl feather. Discuss and focus on key features. Have a feather example if possible.
- It would also be fun to draw the owls eyes in the dark all looking in different directions

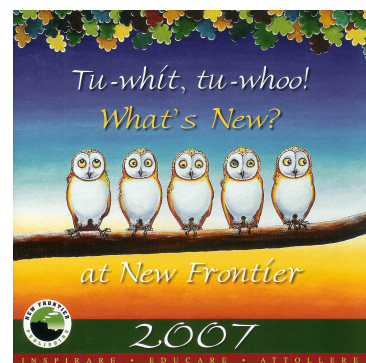


11. Marketing & Selling Points

- Mark Carthew is a well respected author and scriptwriter and is currently touring Australia.
- Mini Goss is a CBCA Crichton award winning children's illustrator.
- Shared reading between parents, teachers and children is a corner stone of language acquisition and enjoyment.
- This book is visually stunning.
- It is designed to work as an evocative read aloud and has an response interactive element with children who love calling out the owl call – ***Tu-whit, tu-whoo!***
- The search element is a strong feature of the book. Children love searching for and finding all the hidden creatures.
- Owls are a perennial favourite and interest in owls is high, especially in the context of their raised profile due to the Harry Potter books and movies.
- The final double gatefold flap and reflective pond creates a stunning high interest point.

7. How the book is to be promoted

Review copies to Magpies, Reading time, metropolitan and regional dailies and various online forums & catalogues.



It is also headlining the New Frontier Publishing stand at 2007 The Bologna Book Fair and is being promoted by the Australia Licensing Corporation at The London Book Fair.

Promotions via radio interviews, school and library networks.

Five Little Owls is to be launched at Books Illustrated, Gasworks Park Albert Park Melbourne on the 22nd February 2007 along with an accompanying art exhibition.



Books Illustrated

This exhibition may also tour other states and capital cities.

A teacher/librarian PD forum featuring Mini and Mark discussing their collaboration is to be conducted at Books illustrated on April 26th in conjunction with the School Library Association of Victoria & with the support of Sticks Winery of the Yarra Valley.

Both Mark and Mini make regular visits to schools and community libraries and are involved in several literary festivals including The Melbourne Writer's Festival, Warrnambool *Fun4 Kids* Festival.

Mark is touring Tasmania, Qld and NSW and North Eastern Victoria during 2007 and various states and regional centres across Australia in 2008.

Mini is conducting illustration workshops at Books illustrated and the Gasworks Farmer's Market.

Mark and Mini will appear at Federation Square Saturday April 28th for activities and readings at the Books @ Federation Square Market.

Book signing promotional events will be conducted in association with bookstores including Angus & Robertson, Stories Bookshop (Launceston), The Hobart Bookshop, Lindfield Children's Bookshop & The Children's Bookshop Beecroft (NSW), Readings and many others.

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