

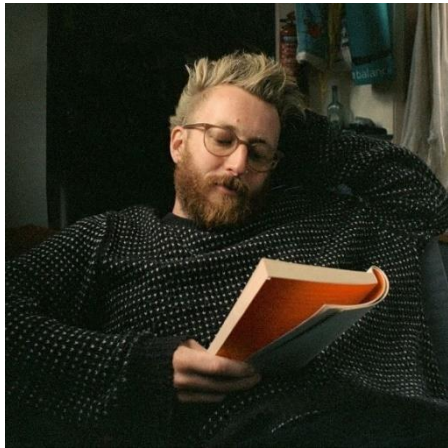
That's Nice, Love

Written and illustrated by Owen Gent

Published by Book Island

Owen Gent is an artist and illustrator based in Bristol, England. 'That's Nice, Love' is his first book for children.

'My style is to tell a little bit of a story but then not fully explain the whole thing. It's about implication and suggestion.'



Synopsis

'That's Nice, Love' tells the story of a child and their parent or carer going on a walk to the local park. The child climbs an enormous tree and wants to share all the amazing things they can see, but the adult is preoccupied with their phone and repeatedly responds with 'That's nice, love'. The child encounters snakes, monkeys, leopards and other beautiful creatures as they explore the tree. When they eventually get home, the child proudly displays the treasures they collected on the walk, such as leaves, feathers and conker shells. The adult only notices them after the child has gone upstairs to bed, and then puts down their phone to listen to the adventures they missed.

Themes covered

- family relationships
- loneliness
- technology, including mobile phones
- imagination

Links to other children's literature

The books listed below could work as companion pieces alongside 'That's Nice, Love'. Some of them have distracted family parents as the main theme of the story, some touch on it incidentally. The longer stories are suitable for Years 5 and 6 but the picturebooks can be used with a wide range of age groups.

Picturebooks

Look Up! by Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adeola

Not Now, Bernard by David McKee

Footpath Flowers by JonArno Lawson and Sydney Smith

Gorilla by Anthony Browne

Rhinos Don't Eat Pancakes by Anna Kemp and Sara Ogilvie

Journey by Aaron Becker

Mummy Time by Judith Kerr

Tisha and the Blossom by Wendy Meddour and Daniel Egnéus

The Lost Book by Margarita Surnaite

Our Table by Peter Reynolds

Come Away from the Water, Shirley by John Birmingham

Longer stories

The Last Bear by Hannah Gold

Seed by Caryl Lewis

A Library of Lemons by Jo Cotterill

Picture Perfect by Serena Patel

Children of the Quicksands by Efua Traoré

The Song from Somewhere Else by A.F. Harrold

City of Ghosts by Victoria Schwab

Things for the children to look out for and think about during reading

- When do the adult and the child first make eye contact?
- Does it matter that we are never really sure of their relationship?
- What 'treasures' does the child pick up along the way, and from which animals?

Front cover

What do you notice when you look at the front cover? How does it make you feel? Does it remind you of anything?

Back cover

Compare this to the front cover. What is different? Does it give you any clues about what might happen in the story?

Endpapers

Look at the endpapers at the front and back of the book. What do you notice? What do you think the author might be trying to say? Have you, or anyone you, ever spent too much time looking at a phone or computer screen?

Activity: With a partner, list five emotions you might feel when someone you know and care about is not listening to you properly.

Pages 6-7

Look at how the child is walking. What does that tell us about how they might be feeling?
What is the adult doing?

Why are the child and the adult shown on different pages when they are actually holding hands?

Activity: Body language is a very important way of communicating. How could you use your body to show you're happy? Nervous? Excited? Tired? Angry? How would you show you are listening to somebody and interested in what they are saying?

Pages 8-9

What do you notice about the illustration on page 8? Why do you think the illustrator might have chosen to draw it this way?

The child chooses to climb the big tree. What are your favourite things to do when you go to the park? Ask people in your class what they enjoy too.



Pages 10-11

Why do you think the adult keeps saying 'That's nice, love'?

What else have you heard people say when they are not listening carefully?

Pages 12-13

The child can see squirrels playing musical instruments made from natural materials. What instruments do you recognise? How has the illustrator shown that music is being played?

When the child says 'It's like a whole new world up here', what do you think they mean?

Activity: If you were going to create 'a whole new world', what would it include? What would it be like? Draw it and write three sentences about what you would find there.

Pages 14-15

What do you think is the child hanging upside down from? There are some clues on earlier pages if you look very carefully.

How do you think the child is feeling now?

What could the parent have said to make the child feel safe?

Pages 16-17

What do the monkeys give the child to wear as a crown?

What can you see in the background of the large illustration?
How would it feel to be the 'king of the monkeys'?
What type of animal would you like to be the king or queen of?

Pages 18-19

How does our impression of the leopard change at the top of page 19?
How does the child help the leopard? Does this remind you of any other stories?
Have you seen the 'leopard' anywhere else in the story? Where?

Pages 20-21

The child is flying as high as the sun. This is called a simile. What else could the child be flying as high as? Think of three ideas.

Activity: Finish these similes, and then write three new ones with a partner.

I'm running as fast as...

I'm diving as deep as...

I'm climbing as quickly as...

I'm being as brave as...

Talk about the colours used in the artwork on page 21. What do you notice about it?

Pages 22-23

When the child finds their adult still sitting on the bench looking at their phone, how might they feel?

What does it mean when the child says the adult is right here but feels far away?

How is the child walking now? Why do you think that is?

Pages 24-25

Who is the child waving to?

What time of day is it? How do you know?

What are the magical things that the child is talking about?

Where have you seen them before in the story?

Where is the child going?

What is their body language telling us about what they might be thinking?

Activity: Work together as a class to create a table of 'magical things' in your classroom. What will you include?



Pages 26-27

When does the adult realise that the child is upset?

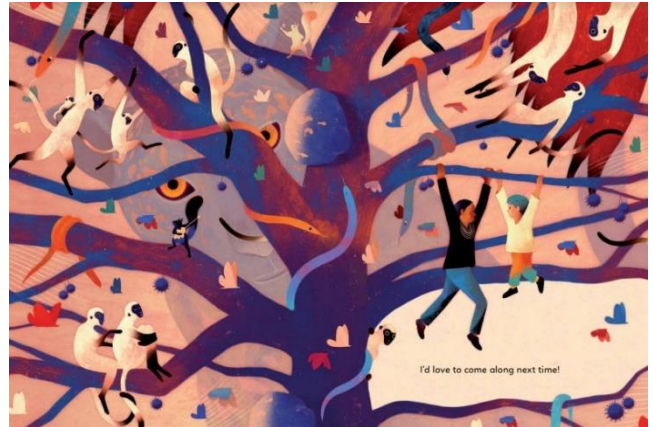
What do they do with their phone?

There is a lot of text on page 27. Why do you think that is?

Instead of 'That's nice, love', what does the adult say this time?

Why is the word amazing in capital letters?

How much of the child's adventure do you think actually happened? Does it matter that some of it might have been happening in their imagination?



Pages 28-29

What creatures can you see on the page?

When the adult says they'd love to come along next time, what do they mean?

What might be different on their next adventure?

Compare this illustration to the ones on page 9. Think about two things that are similar and two things that are different.

Activity: Why is it important for people to pay attention to each other and not to their phones or computer games? Create a poster that helps them remember the reasons.

Activity: Have you ever felt as if you have not listened properly to someone or as if they have not listened properly to you? In a small group, act out a short conversation which shows 'poor listening' and then one which shows 'good listening'. What are the main differences?

Activity: As a class, talk about these questions.

- What did you most like about the book?
- Was there anything you did not like?
- Did it remind you of any other stories or of anything else?
- Did you notice any patterns in the story?
- Was there anything you found strange or surprising?
- Do you have any questions about it?

Teaching notes created by Jon Biddle, primary teacher and English lead, Empathy Lab advisor, UKLA National Council member and coordinator of the national Patron of Reading scheme. Twitter: @jonnybid