

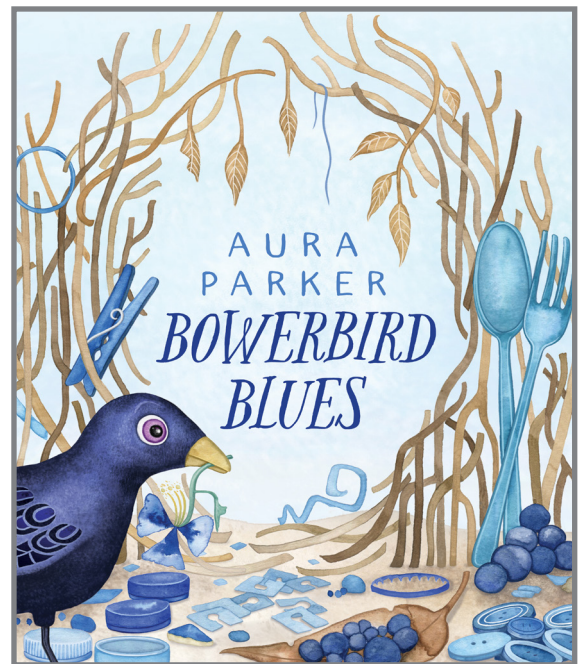
Bowerbird Blues

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR
AURA PARKER

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

I am a collector. Always looking, finding ... and keeping!

Bowerbird loves blue. Magnificent cobalt. Brilliant, vibrant blue! But something is missing. What could it be?

This new picture book from Aura Parker stars a beautiful bowerbird on the search for blue! It's a moving story of longing and connection, that unfolds as the bowerbird's search sends him soaring across the sea, sky and city. He swoops and snatches vibrant treasures for his collection, and soon his bower—a mix of natural and unnatural objects—attracts something greater and more fulfilling than he could ever have imagined.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

AURA PARKER is a writer, illustrator and designer who creates prints, textiles and picture books. Her work is joyful, imaginative and brimming with details to explore. She works from a studio in Sydney.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What can you see happening on the cover of this book?
 - What is a bowerbird?
 - What do you think the bowerbird on the cover has been doing? Why do you think this?
 - What do you predict might happen in this story?
- What are some of the blue things that the bowerbird has found? Look carefully at the illustrations in the book, and identify as many of the items Bowerbird has collected as you can.
- Where do you think Bowerbird has found all the blue items? What do you think bowerbirds collected before there were people to provide blue pegs and straws and bread tags?
- As a class, go on a walk around your school or local area. Before leaving for your walk, separate into small groups, and have each group choose a colour to look for. On your walk, individually search for items that are your group's chosen colour. Be careful not to take anything that is being used, or to damage property. Take a photo of anything you can't take with you (eg. letterbox, bicycle, t-shirt, etc).
 - Once you return to school, print any photos, then spread out all your collected items, and organise them into at least three distinct sub-collections. Discuss the different ways each group has arranged their items.
 - Which group found the most items? Why do you think this was the case?

- Which colour was the hardest to find, and why do you think it worked out this way?
- Use your items to help you create an artwork based on your chosen colour theme. You might like to create a collage using some of your found objects, or you could draw and colour pictures of them, trace around them to create interesting shapes to colour, or simply use your photos and photos of the items you brought back.
- As a class discuss what ‘The Blues’ are, and what it means when we say someone has the blues, or is feeling blue.
- After reading the story, discuss the book. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
 - What was Bowerbird searching for in the story?
 - What did it take for Bowerbird to feel content that he no longer had something missing?
 - Where are all the places that Bowerbird went on his search?
 - What did Bowerbird do with his collection, and why?
 - What colour was the other bird, and why do you think Bowerbird was searching for them?
 - How did Bowerbird feel at the end of the story?
 - What do you think happened next, and why do you think this?
 - Reread the story. Have any of your opinions about what is happening in the book changed? Why/why not?
- What is a bower, and why would a bowerbird be named after one?
- In pairs or small groups, collect grass stems, leaves, and twigs, and try to build a model bower of your own. Once you have finished, discuss with the class the following:
 - What was the hardest part of this activity?
 - Did you manage to make a bower with your collected pieces of foliage?
 - What would have made the activity easier?
 - How do you think bowerbirds manage to make their bowers?
 - What is the one thing you have that bowerbirds don’t, that means it should have been easier for you?
- As a class, watch a documentary, or a short informative nature video featuring bowerbirds and their habits. After you finish watching it, discuss what you have learnt from the video, and create a painting of a bowerbird inspired by both the book and the video. Caption your painting with one fact you have learnt about bowerbirds.
- In the book, Bowerbird talks of finding something cobalt as well as many things that are blue. This is because cobalt is actually a type of blue. What sort of blue do you think cobalt is? What are some other words for different types of blues that you know? In small groups or as a class, brainstorm, and try to come up with as many different words for shades of blue as you possibly can. Once everyone has run out of inspiration you might like to use the internet to help you find some more words describing shades of blue!
 - Individually, create a geometric pattern on a large piece of paper, and paint each segment in a different shade of blue, captioning each segment with the name of the relevant shade.
- How did reading the story make you feel? As a class, discuss all the different feelings that Bowerbird might have experienced over the course of the story, and try to find as many different words to describe these emotions as you can.
- The below author note from Aura Parker details her reasons for creating *Bowerbird Blues*. As a class, discuss the quote below where she tells us of all the things from which she drew inspiration, and all the ideas that she was trying to convey. Which of these different reasons do you find makes the most sense on an emotional level to you? What types of things do you draw inspiration from when creating something new; be it an artwork, a story or an interesting thought you wish to share?

‘My bowerbird falls in love with the colour of the sea and the sparking blue of the sky, but nothing seems to satisfy. I wrote *Bowerbird Blues* for lots of reasons, most of all, to try and capture a feeling, of longing for connection, for a craving which turns out to be for someone, instead of something. I wrote it for the joy of making, building, crafting, and finding out what you care for, or what matters most to you. I wrote it as a celebration of colour. I wrote it for a love of nature, and passion for our fragile environment, as an abundance of plastic pollution is clearly on display. Australian Satin Bowerbirds are savvy collectors, connoisseurs of colour and careful arrangers of their treasures with intense perfectionist hearts! They create a bower to attract their mate, and an interest in their fascinating behaviour spurred the story along.’ —Aura Parker, 2023