

The Dictionary Story

AUTHOR

OLIVER JEFFERS

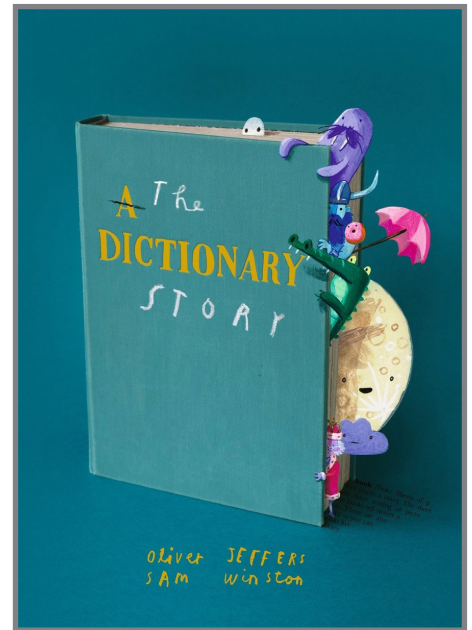
ILLUSTRATOR

SAM WINSTON

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

Dictionary wishes she could tell a story just like the other books. So one day she decides to bring her words to life. How exciting it is to finally have an adventure on her very own pages! But what will she do when everything gets out of control—all in a jumble—and her characters collide, causing the most enormous tantrum to explode. This isn't what she wanted at all! How on earth will she find sense in all this chaos? Her friend Alphabet knows exactly what to do and sings a song that brings calm and order to Dictionary's pages once again.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Oliver Jeffers is an artist whose work ranges from figurative painting and installation to illustration. His picture books include *Lost and Found*, *How to Catch a Star*, *This Moose Belongs to Me* and *The Day the Crayons Quit*, all of which have been translated into over 30 languages worldwide. Oliver's talent has been recognised by several high-profile awards, including the Irish Book of the Year and the Blue Peter Book of the Year; as well as shortlists for the British Book of the Year, the Roald Dahl Prize and the Kate Greenaway Medal. He was winner of *Time* magazine's Best Book of the Year for *Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth*, and awarded an MBE in 2022 for services to the arts.

Find him online at oliverjeffers.com and on X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram as [@OliverJeffers](https://www.instagram.com/OliverJeffers).

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Sam Winston is a fine artist who exhibits internationally and whose books can be found in many special collections worldwide, including New York's Museum of Modern Art, the Getty Research Institute, the Tate Gallery London, and the V&A Museum. His work is also collected by the Library of Congress and commissioned by the *New York Times*. He is also the author and illustrator of *One & Everything*.

Find him online at samwinston.com and on Instagram as [@samwinston](https://www.instagram.com/samwinston).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Romi Sharp is a qualified Early Childhood and Primary School educator based in Melbourne, with a passion for art and children's literature. She currently works as a freelance publicist and digital marketer, copywriter, curriculum writer, video animator, book reviewer and picture book writer. Romi is the founder and director of the Australian support community for children's authors and illustrators, Just Write For Kids (est. 2014) and its subsidiary promotional service, Books On Tour PR & Marketing.

STUDY NOTES**BEFORE READING**

- Take students on a 'Library Hunt' in their classroom or library. Ask them to find texts based on different categories or genres, including: Picture books, chapter books, fairy tales, magazines, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, non-fiction texts, decodable readers, audiobooks, newspapers, comics, cookbooks, travel guides, etc. Name some similarities and differences between a few of the above texts. Ask students if any two (or three) categories have been combined into one? For example, have they seen a non-fiction narrative picture book? Have they seen a picture book in novel form (graphic novels)? Have they seen a narrative in a dictionary?
- Look at the cover of *The Dictionary Story*. What genre/s or categories do they think this might include?
- What is the purpose of a dictionary? What is the purpose of a story?
- Can a dictionary tell a story?
- What do you see on the cover? What do you think this book might be about? What does it make you wonder? How does the cover make you feel?
- Do you think this book will be helpful? How?

WHILE READING

- What can you tell about the pictures/illustrations in this book? How does the opening line remind us about what we know about stories? Why might this one be different?
- Can books decide how they want to be read? Can books change their purpose? What do you think about Dictionary 'bringing her words to life'?
- What is happening to Dictionary's words when the characters come to life?
- Use the illustrations to infer what is happening.
 - What might happen next?
- Who do you think is creating the story—the Dictionary or the characters?
- What might happen if all the letters and words get mixed up in a dictionary?
- How will calm be restored?
- What did you think of the ending?

AFTER READING

- What is the story about? What is the main idea? How did it make you feel? Do you have a part that you relate to or enjoyed the most?
- What are the main themes or messages in the story?
- Dictionary has been 'anthropomorphised' in this story. What does that mean? What did you learn about Dictionary? How is Dictionary like a human? What are some of her character traits, thoughts and feelings? What are the important aspects about what she believes to be good and correct?
 - Create a character profile of Dictionary.
- What did you learn about the other characters in the story? Make a list of the characters and their attributes. Were they well-intentioned, mischievous or unaware? Do you think they agreed with Dictionary's decisions?
- Make a list of all the feelings and emotions identified in the story. Then, match the feeling to the correct character.
- Did Dictionary's purpose change from the beginning to the end of the story? What was different and what stayed the same?
- What are the relationships like between different characters in the book? Alligator and Donut? Cloud and Moon? Ghost and Puddle? Tornado and all the characters? Are they positive or negative? How do you know?
- How can you describe the language used by the author? What is the intention of the story? Can you find both fictional and informative information in the text?
 - How does the author use humour to make the story engaging?
- What do you like about the illustrations? What kinds of media have been used?
 - What do you notice about the styling/design, colours, textures, perspectives, placement of text, facial expressions and body language of characters?

- How has the illustrator used them to express the different emotions, actions and focal points of the story?
- Does this story follow a typical story arc? Briefly plot the introduction (setting), problem, events (in order), resolution and conclusion.
- Create a Venn Diagram showing the similarities and differences between a dictionary and a story book.
- What is your favourite word in the dictionary? Write its definition and use it in a sentence.

English

Alphabet Knowledge

- Sing the Alphabet Song.
- Write the alphabet in order (both upper and lower case).
- Make the alphabet with materials, like letter magnets or tiles, magazine letters, playdough letters, etc.
- Focus on a letter a day. Say the sound/s, letter name, words that begin with the letter, pictures that represent the words, alliterations, etc.
 - Write a list of words for the focus letter in alphabetical order.
- Play alphabet matching games.

Spelling 'tion' as in Dictionary

- How many 'tion' words can you find in the text?
 - Say the words out loud.
 - Clap the syllables in each word.
 - Write the words broken up by syllables. Eg. D/ic/tion/a/ry

Nouns, Verbs and Adjectives

- Locate in the book the nouns, verbs and adjectives relating to the actions and feelings occurring in The Dictionary's Story.
 - How many of these terms can be found in the dictionary?
 - Add to these lists and create sentences including some of these terms. Illustrate your sentences with pictures of Dictionary's characters or put yourself into a scene.

Literary Devices

- Find and list the examples of the following in the story:
 - Alliteration
 - Onomatopoeia
 - Metaphors/puns
 - Rhyme.

Can you add your own to these?

- What do you notice about the patterns of the words or language?
- Write a favourite metaphor or pun and illustrate your own way.

Story Sequence

- Discuss how the narrative of *The Dictionary Story* follows 'cause and effect' or 'butterfly effect' actions, where something sets off a chain of events into motion.
- Complete a story sequence comic strip or paper chain showing the events that happened in the book. Use the following sentences, or your own, with pictures, to complete your sequence.
 - Dictionary decided she would bring her words to life.
 - Alligator walked off in search of a snack.
 - Donut did not want to be eaten and rolled away into the Dictionary.
 - Donut tumbled through Ghost.
 - Ghost gave everyone an awful fright.
 - Cloud started to cry.
 - Queen got in the way and this caused a collision.
 - Soap landed on top of Tornado, who swept everything into its tantrum.
 - Alphabet helped everyone sing the song to put them back into place.
- Write an inventive piece beginning with either, 'Dictionary decided she would bring her words to life', or 'When

Alligator appeared, and being hungry he . . . ?

- Use a storyboard to plot out the characters, setting and events. Set it out with a beginning, middle and end.
- Begin the narrative with a sizzling start, such as dialogue, onomatopoeia, action or scene setting.
- Write a short story using all of the terms found on one of the pages in *The Dictionary Story*. For example, on the D page, you will find: chaos, cloud, crayon, dancer, dawn, dictionary, disappear, disco, doctor, donut, dream, dang.

Instructional Texts

- Read the 'How to Use This Dictionary' page at the beginning of *The Dictionary Story*. Note how the author has used humour to write this piece.
 - Write a procedural text with a humorous method for using a dictionary. Include a title, introduction on what the piece is about, materials needed, steps in order and a conclusion.

Science/STEM

- Find out more about Tornado in this hands-on weather experiment (including Soap!). Students can record their predictions, findings and learnings in a table using the headings:
 - What I think will happen
 - What I observed
 - What I learned.

Instructions for this experiment can be found at: <<https://lifeovercs.com/tornado-in-a-jar-science/>>.

- Where does the swirl start?
- What other ways can you create a swirling tornado?
- How are real tornados formed?

The Arts

Visual Arts

- Look at the foreword, and find out how the art was created for this book. Look closely at the images and discuss the techniques applied.
- Re-create a favourite page from *The Dictionary Story* as a mixed media piece, including a combination of photography (of books or the inside of a book) and hand-drawn (and cut out or scanned) characters.

Drama

- Recreate *The Dictionary Story* through dramatisation, either by improvising or retelling the story. Students might like to make and use character stick puppets to act out their play.
- The book explores many feelings. Using body language and facial expressions only, act out the feelings that feature in the story. A partner or the class can guess what is being expressed.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
ROMI SHARP