

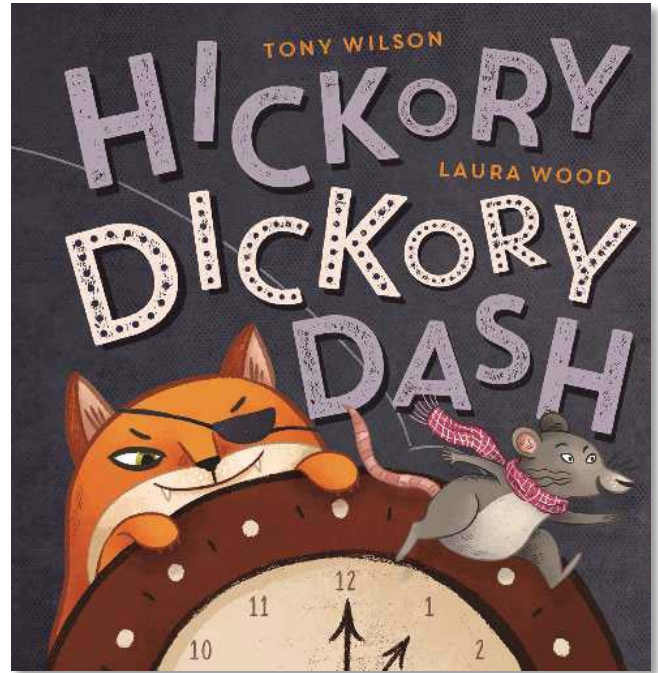
# Hickory Dickory Dash

**Author:** Tony Wilson

**Illustrator:** Laura Wood

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**Notes by:** Rae Carlyle



## Synopsis:

This story is for anyone who has ever wondered just why the mouse was running up and down the clock as it struck one. The rhyme has been told, and song sung, for generations, and in *Hickory Dickory Dash* Tony Wilson and Laura Wood share with us just what could have happened in the preceding few hours to cause a mouse to behave in such a way. With her children vanished, and a cat in hot pursuit, the tension builds as the valiant Mother Mouse continues the frantic search for her missing babies. What will happen to cause her to take up clock-running at the appointed hour, and will she find her children, evade the cat, and manage to get them all safely home? Woods' illustrations mesh seamlessly with Wilson's verses to take readers both young and old along with them on a danger-filled adventure with a satisfyingly happy resolution.

## About the Author:

**Tony Wilson** is the author of much-loved picture books including *Grannysaurus Rex*, *Harry Highpants*, *The Princess and the Packet of Frozen Peas*, and *The Cow Tripped Over the Moon*, which won the Honour Award for the CBCA Book of the Year in the Younger Readers category in 2016, and was selected as the National Simultaneous Storytime title for 2017.

## About the Illustrator:

**Laura Wood** is an independent illustrator living between Melbourne, Bristol and Milan. She grew up in the north of Italy devouring books, drawing on the kitchen walls of her parents' house and imagining animals could talk to her and become her friends. Now she spends her days creating visual worlds and truly enjoying every minute of it.

## Themes

Key Themes: Traditional rhymes, family, home life, self-sacrifice, safety and danger, clocks and

time, persistence, bravery and fear.

### Writing Style

Just as the story has clearly been inspired by the traditional nursery rhyme, so too does Wilson's text echo the original verses. It can be difficult to use a well-known poem or story for inspiration whilst maintaining originality, but Wilson has risen to the challenge. Told throughout in rhyme, the opening couplet of each verse starts with the words *Hickory Dickory* and echoes the poetic form of the original, and just as in the well-loved original rhyme, each verse also ends with the same line as it starts. Within each verse Wilson continues to stick to the same rhythm and metre as found in the old favourite, but he uses two couplets rather than one, allowing for a more detailed explanation of the fast-paced events which are unfolding throughout. Wilson's tale is innovative and engaging, while adhering to the major conventions associated with traditional nursery rhymes and folk tales. The language used is clear and accessible to the very young, highly descriptive, and contains a plethora of onomatopoeic items ideal for an entertaining reading-aloud experience.

### Illustration Style

Wood has illustrated the story throughout using a somewhat subdued and darker palette that invokes both the darker nature of the story, as well as faithfully depicting the muted aspects of lowlight scenes as found at night. The figures are drawn boldly with even colour gradations, and all illustrations are single and double page spreads with minimal white space. Light sources are limited in scope, and the areas without direct illumination from either an interior light or the moon are rendered in greyscale, reinforcing the tension found within the textual narrative, and creating for the viewer possibilities of unknown dangers lurking out of sight. The mice are adorable, big eared, appealing creatures, while the cat has been portrayed as a stereotypical villain complete with intimidating sneer and eyepatch. Wood has chosen to minimise the anthropomorphisation of the characters, limiting it for the most part to the addition of a few minor clothing items and their highly expressive facial reactions, while portraying them as predominantly true to their animal natures in terms of movement and form.

### Study Notes, Discussion Points, and Activities

1) As a class discuss the title and cover illustration of the book. Some points to include in your discussion are:

- What does the picture on the cover show us?
- What can we predict from the title of the story?
- What is happening on the back cover?
- What is the nursery rhyme that this book reminds us of?

2) What was your favourite part of the story, and why? Draw and caption a picture illustrating your favourite parts.

3) How similar is the rhyme in the book to the original nursery-rhyme which inspired it? As a class investigate and compare the rhyme schemes used in both nursery-rhyme and the book.

- 4) What other adventures do you think the Hickory Dickory Mice might have had? In pairs or small groups write and illustrate another verse of their adventures telling what else they might have done.
- 5) How many different times are mentioned in the book, and how many clocks can you find in the illustration?
- 6) Make a chart or table showing all the different times mentioned in the story on both analogue and digital clocks.
- 7) What do you think the cat did after the end of the book? Write and illustrate a short paragraph sharing your ideas.
- 8) When Mother mouse tucks her children into bed, we can see that their bed is made from an old tin. Design and build a piece of mouse furniture from a common household item. You might want to think about what kind of things people often throw away, that a mouse could take to make their furniture.
- 9) Where do the mice hide from the cat, and where does the Mother Mouse think the children might have hidden? Think about your house, and what places would be good for hiding in if you were a mouse being hunted by a cat. Draw a picture of a mouse in the best hiding place you can think of, and write a caption explaining why you think this place is a good choice.
- 10) The Mice all had a very exciting and scary night, with a happy ending. The cat might not have been so happy at the way the mice escaped from him though. As a class, retell the story from the cat's point of view. In pairs or small groups, choose a scene to describe and illustrate from the cat's perspective. Share your scene with the class, and use everyone's scenes to make a Big Book for your class to look at during reading time. You might want to make a display featuring your retelling as well as a copy of *Hickory Dickory Dash*.
- 11) If you were the size of a mouse, what things would you be scared of? In pairs, make a list of all the things you might find scary if you were the size of a mouse. Think of things that can be found in houses, at school, or outside. Paint a picture illustrating the scariest thing that mouse-sized you would be frightened of. Write a caption sharing what is happening in your picture and why it would be frightening.
- 12) Choose one of the illustrations and as a class discuss how the artist has shown the difference between lit areas and shadows. Darken the classroom as much as you can, and then use a torch to shine small circles of light onto different objects and areas within the classroom. What is the difference in the colours of the objects when they are lit, and when they are unlit? Create an artwork of your own inspired by Wood's illustrations that uses colour for objects within a lit area, and grey tones or muted shades for areas that are shadowed or unlit.
- 13) Which rooms did the cat and mouse run through? Reread the story identifying the different rooms that they are chasing through, and make a list off all the places they go. Use your list to help you draw a possible floor plan of the house based on the story - you might need to draw two side-by-side floor plans to show both upstairs and downstairs!
- 14) Act out the story of *Hickory Dickory Dash*. Perform your adaptation at an assembly or for another class.

15) Draw a clock face on a paper plate. Make hands for your clock out of stiff cardboard, and use a split pin paper fastener to attach the hands to the centre of the plate. Make a stand for your clock out of cardboard, and glue it to the stand. Make a cat and mouse model from plasticine, play doh or polymer clay, or you can cut them out of cardboard. Arrange your clock, cat, and mouse to make a Hickory Dickory tabletop scene. Use your clock display to practice your time-telling skills.

16) Onomatopoeia is where a word sounds like the noise it is describing. As a class, reread the story and make a list of all the onomatopoeic words that have been used in the book. Why do you think the author chose to use so many onomatopoeic words? How does it make you feel when you read them aloud? Make a second list of as many other onomatopoeic words as you can think of.

17) Choose your favourite word from the lists made in activity 16, and design a font that in your opinion makes you think of the sound of the word. For example you might want to write *bang* in big, dark letters with a wobbly edges and a bold outline, or *squeak* in small pink letters, with sharp edges and corners. Look at the different fonts that have been used on the page where the mouse runs up the clock. Make an A4 poster featuring your word in your own font. You might want to decorate it with geometric shapes, or with pictures of objects making the sound your word describes. Share your poster with the class, and use them all to make a wall display in the classroom.