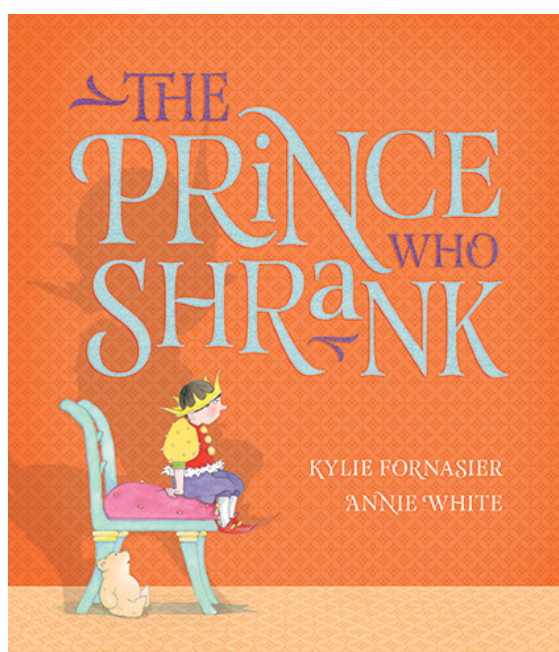


The Prince Who Shrank

written by Kylie Fornasier

illustrated by Annie White



Ages	4+	Category	Picture Book
ISBN	978-1-74276-091-9	Size	287 x 248 mm
Binding	Hardback	Pages	32 pp

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BACKGROUND

Synopsis

The story opens with 'There was once a young prince who made everyone around him feel small', drawing readers in to a fairytale world ruled by the demanding and rude child prince. Nothing the castle servants do is ever good enough for him; he insults the cook's food, the gardener's roses and the washerwoman's laundry, making them all feel 'small as a castle mouse'. A mouse is shown running away from the prince's trail of ill-humoured destruction – this mouse will appear in several later spreads to signal the prince's changing size.

One morning the prince awakes to discover that he is physically shrinking. His teddy bear, standing on the end of the bed, is shocked as well. The prince calls his servants to his bedside. They can't hide their initial amusement at his predicament, but they attempt to satisfy the prince's demand, 'Un-shrink me at once!'

The cook mentions a special soup he'd made that had caused his nephew to grow a foot overnight. The prince demands he prepare it, then spends hours eating it, standing on a chair with a scowl on his face, not getting any taller. Eventually he gives up, saying to the cook, 'I've probably grown smaller, you silly man.'

Next the gardener talks about how he helps the roses to grow in winter by mulching them. The prince, now shorter than the roses, demands the gardener mulch him; he stands in wet soil and mulch for hours without success, accusing the gardener that he's 'probably grown smaller, you silly man'.

The washerwoman suggests soaking and stretching the prince as she does shrunken clothing, and he once again demands her assistance. Drenched, the prince is pegged to the washing line for hours in the cold wind, but again this does not make him bigger. He cries, 'I've probably grown smaller, you silly woman.'

The prince has indeed shrunk more – he is right 'for once'. On a stark, mostly blank page he is shown standing only a head taller than the teddy bear that stood on his bed earlier, and approximately three times bigger than the mouse. For the first time, his facial expression is not of petulance, disdain or rage, but rather of shock and confusion.

The next day, even smaller, the prince stands on a castle balcony looking out over his kingdom. He decides that to look big, he must feel big, so he thinks about his big kingdom and how mighty he is. However, he keeps shrinking.

The prince calls for his servants again and orders them to tell him things that are good about him to make him feel big. None of them can come up with anything and the prince walks away with tears in his eyes, feeling very small.

He goes for a walk and, dwarfed by some sunflowers, realises that while nothing he has tried to make himself physically bigger has worked, he can make his heart bigger. He returns to

the castle and compliments the servants on their work. The servants are both surprised and pleased. The prince is no taller than before, but he feels 'as tall as the tip of a tower'.

The prince wakes up the next day and feels different.

The final page of the book shows the prince and his teddy bear throwing up their arms up in a dance of joy. The prince has his eyes closed and a big smile on his face. He is once again much bigger than his teddy bear.

Annie White's pencil-and-watercolour illustrations on a white background give a soft, expressive richness to the story. The figures and landscapes are all lit from the top, with subtle shadows directly underneath, contributing to the (literally) timeless feel of the book.

Themes

Respect, appreciation, compliment-giving, self-worth, kindness, size, growth, fairytales, royalty, feudalism.

Kylie Fornasier's background and process

Kylie Fornasier is a teacher–librarian in a primary school library by day and an author of children's and young adult books in her 'spare' time. *The Ugg Boot War*, published by Omnibus Books, was her first book for younger readers. She has published a young adult novel called *Masquerade* with Penguin Books Australia. Kylie also teaches a weekly writing group for 12–18 year olds through WestWords. Though at the time of writing she is 27, Kylie sometimes wishes she were seven again. She lives in Western Sydney with her family and an ageing beagle. Her goal is to fill the world with books that inspire people, make them laugh and make them wonder.

Since she was a child, Kylie has loved stories with a fairytale quality that are funny and a little peculiar, like *The Prince Who Shrank*. The idea for this story came to Kylie one morning when she was running late to her picture book writers' group meeting and didn't have a story to take along for critique. Suddenly, the idea of a young prince who shrinks came to her and she wrote up the first draft of the story that morning to take along to the meeting. It took many more drafts before the prince became who he is today.

For more information, visit kyliefornasier.com.

Annie White's background and process

Annie White grew up in Geelong, Victoria. Her childhood was spent on the beaches of the Great Ocean Road, climbing very tall trees (and occasionally being rescued), delighting in the worlds of *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Magic Faraway Tree* and A.A. Milne, and drawing endlessly at the kitchen table.

After studying Art and Design, Annie worked in advertising before moving into full-time illustration. Annie has illustrated over 60 books for children and her work has appeared in

many places, from jigsaw puzzles to murals. She particularly enjoys working in the field of children's literature and likes to communicate her ideas clearly and simply using expression and movement.

Annie says:

When I first read through Kylie's text, I could immediately picture the characters she described. There was a definite feel to their nature but she had left plenty of room for me to continue with the process of filling out their personalities. This combined input of the author and the illustrator is what makes picture books so special.

Character sketches and a storyboard were submitted to the publisher for approval. Next came detailed roughs drawn in proportion to the finished book size. It was at this stage that I was quite conscious of keeping all the elements in the story in proportion with each other.

Lack of continuity jumps out at the reader straight away and it is something I like to get right at the roughs stage. In this story, the prince shrinks on a couple of occasions so it was important to show this correctly. Introducing his teddy into the illustrations and using the castle mouse were helpful in showing his reducing size.

Once all the bumps have been ironed out and a colour sample has been approved, I can start the finished illustrations. For this book, I used watercolour paper, pencil and paint and worked to a same-size format.

I still illustrate everything by hand and can't imagine myself ever being clever enough to get the computer to do my bidding to a standard that would make me happy.

'When all the drawing and painting is done, I lay the illustrations out in sequence for a final look before they are couriered off to the publisher, leaving a swathe of rough sketches and pencil sharpenings and that slightly empty feeling you get when you leave your child with someone else for the first time.

Then it's on with the next project.

For more about Annie, visit her website: anniewhite.com.

STUDY NOTES

This story can be enjoyed on a number of levels, and these notes cater to a range of different interest and ability levels. Please select the activities and questions that best suit your students.

Before reading the book

- Show students the front cover and discuss what they see. Why do they think the title of the book is so big? Why is there a big shadow behind the prince? What impression do they get of the prince?
- Ask students to predict what they think will happen in the book. Why do they think the prince has shrunk? What do they think the prince will do about it?

While reading the book

- Why do they think the prince is so rude to his servants?
- How would they feel if they were the prince's servants?
- Why did the prince shrink?
- What should the prince do to un-shrink himself?

After reading the book

Encourage student discussion as a class or in small groups.

- Have the students ever felt 'small'? Why?
- How can the students make other people feel 'big'?
- What other unusual ways could the servants have tried to make the prince grow?
- What do the students think might have happened to the prince if he hadn't decided to make his heart grow bigger?
- Can the students name any fairytales that are similar to *The Prince Who Shrank*? How is it similar to those stories? How is it different?

Writing and drawing activities

- The author uses similes to describe how small or big the characters feel, for example, 'as small as a castle mouse'. Ask students to compile a list of similes used in the book, then write their own similes: for example, as small as a _____, as big as a _____.

- Neither the prince nor the servants have names in the book. Ask students to give one of the characters a name and write a background for them, such as their favourite colour, where they came from, what their dreams are.
- Students can write anonymous compliments to each other on Post-It notes and leave them in students' tubs, chairbags and student-made 'letterboxes'. (Depending on the group, the teacher may want to review the 'compliments' before they are delivered to ensure they are appropriate.)
- Write a letter from the prince to his servants, expressing his appreciation for their work.
- Design an invitation to a party hosted by the prince to celebrate his new attitude.

Visual literacy

- What techniques has the illustrator used to show size throughout the book?
- The mouse and the teddy bear are characters added by the illustrator. Look carefully at each of the times they appear. Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to add these characters?
- The illustrations in *The Prince Who Shrank* are very expressive. Look at one double-page spread and describe how facial expression and body language are used to convey what the characters are feeling.
- Describe the colours and tones used throughout the book. How do they make you feel? How do they affect the story?
- How would you describe the lines and shapes used in the illustrations? Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to use these kinds of lines and shapes?
- Talk about the point of view of the illustrations. What angle(s) are used? (For example are they high-angle shots, low-angle shots, long shots [full body], mid-shots [from the waist up], bird's-eye views, close-ups?) Pick a viewing angle that is not used in the book and sketch or imagine a version of one of the double-page spreads using that angle instead. How does it change the meaning and feel of the illustration? What does this tell you about the point of view that the illustrator has chosen?
- Look at the spread 'For once, the prince was right. He had shrunk some more.' How would you describe the use of space here? How does it make you feel? Why do you think the illustrator and designer have chosen to do this? What effect does this have on the story?