

## TEACHER NOTES

### Scary Night

Lesley Gibbes / Stephen Michael King

Title: *Scary Night*  
Author: Lesley Gibbes  
Illustrator: Stephen Michael King

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

##### **Author:**

**Lesley Gibbes** Lesley Gibbes grew up on Sydney's Northern Beaches and Wagga Wagga, in country NSW. In 1991 she graduated with a Bachelor of Education (Primary) from The University of Sydney and began teaching in Sydney's inner west at Concord Public School, where she specialised in drama and dance. Between 1999 and 2008 she taught at a number of other public schools in NSW, and is currently on leave after having her children, Austin and Georgia. She began writing in 2011 and is a member of the Children's Book Council NSW and the NSW Writers Centre. *Scary Night* is her first book.

##### **Illustrator:**

**Stephen Michael King** is renowned worldwide for picture books like *The Pocket Dogs* and *Where Does Thursday Go?* Books he has both written and illustrated include *The Man Who Loved Boxes*, *Henry and Amy*, *Emily Loves to Bounce*, *Mutt Dog*, *Leaf and A Bear and a Tree*. Several of his books have been shortlisted by the CBCA, and they frequently appear on children's voting lists, such as YABBA. Among the 50 or more books that Stephen has illustrated for others are the Piglet series, written by Margaret Wild and published by Working Title Press, *Piglet and Mama*, *Piglet and Papa* and *Piglet and Granny*.

**SYNOPSIS** Once upon a scary night three friends set out on a journey. Hare with hat. Cat with a cake and Pig with Parcel. But where are they going in the dead of the night, tip-toe creeping in the pale moonlight? It is a mystery! And it is scary! On the way they have to cross over creeks and pass cool and rocky caves. But they never give up – until, at last, the mystery is solved.

**WRITING** Lesley Gibbes has written a rhythmical, rollicking read-aloud book with a lot of suspense and a dash of surprise. The opening sentence introduces the setting (a scary night), the characters (Hare, Cat and Pig, and the plot (a journey to somewhere unknown) - *Once upon a scary night, three friends set out on a journey*. But before they can get to where they are going they have to face up to some scary challenges. Lesley Gibbes has created a repetitive predictable story structure that invites the reader to join in. There are three main sequences – the crocodiles, the bears and getting there at last. Each sequence

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begins with the three friends setting off – *Hare with a hat, Cat with a cake, Pig with a parcel. Over hill and over dale, through the woods and down the trail.* Then they are challenged – *Across the creek, Watch your paws, crocodiles have snapping jaws.* They are scared but they don't give up. *Did they give up? Of course they didn't! On they went.* The next sequence then begins, following the same pattern - *Hare with a hat, Cat with a cake, Pig with a parcel.* Lesley Gibbes uses different literary devices to set the mood of the story, and to alert the reader to how the characters are feeling. These include rhythm (*But where were they going in the dead of night, tip-toe creeping in the dead of night?*) rhyme (*Along the path and up the stairs. 'Almost there now,' whispered Hare*), alliteration (*Hare with a hat, Cat with a cake, Pig with a parcel*), 'sound' words (*Screeeeeeeaammmmm, Surprise!*), questions and answers (*Did they hide? You bet the did!*) The pace of the story changes from the steady rhythm of the friends setting out, to them being pulled up and confronting their fears, to them setting out again. When, at last, they reach the end of their journey, the pattern changes – there's no more shaking, no more screaming, just friends together - *Happy birthday, Goat. And goat was tickled pink!*

**ILLUSTRATIONS** Stephen Michael King created these illustrations using pen, brush, ink and digital compilation. The delightful drawings enrich the story, and show details that add humour and feeling to the story. The illustrated story begins on the title page. The three friends have just stepped out into the moonlight, and seem to be thinking 'What are we doing?' How does the illustration convey this meaning? The characters are huddled together. They have large circle eyes with carefully placed dots, and their bodies are tense. Throughout the story the interplay of the moon and the landscape helps to set the scary mood. There are shadows and the eerie shapes of trees and rocks, and the silhouettes of the bear and a ghost in the cemetery. From the beginning the pictures provide some clues to the mystery of where they are going – the cake and the parcel they are carrying, the castle in the distance. The artist uses colour to increase the intensity of the characters' fears. Note the orange-red background on the '*Screeeeeeeaammmmm*' page, and the brilliant green crocodiles. As they get closer to their destination the sky becomes lighter, friendlier. The castle steps, that we saw in the distance, earlier, form a bold, dark silhouette, but the characters are more relaxed. '*Almost there now*', *whispered Hare*. Cat seems to be smiling. Then there's a light, bright rush to the warm, gentle ending, showing a happy and relaxed group of friends

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#### DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

- This rhythmical, rollicking read-aloud book invites shared reading. You can change the pace of the reading, and the tone of your voice to capture the scary mood and to play up the humour
- Give the children time to look at the pictures, make their own observations, ask questions, and reflect on what might be happening in the story. Help the children to create their own ‘sense’ of the story. Take time to let the children linger over each page, or move on when they are ready
- Share your own reflections with the children. Talk about how the characters look on each page and what they are doing. Point out some aspects of the pictures that might make the characters feel scared
- Observe the children as you are reading – are they listening with anticipation about what is going to happen? Are they scared? Can you make the reading scary and funny at the same time?
- Help the children find the rhythm and pattern of the story, prompting them to join in with certain phrases - *Over hill and over dale, through the woods and down the trail*. You may like to try beating out the rhythm on your knee as you read
- Use call and response with the questions and answers – You ask the question: *Were they scared?* And get the children to answer: *You bet they were!*
- Everyone can join in the ROARS! SCREAMS! And the SURPRISES!
- At the start of the story ask the children about what the characters are carrying. Ask the children where they think Hare, Cat and Pig might be going with these
- Ask the children why they think the friends are going out at night. Write down their answers
- Encourage the children to tell and illustrate their own ‘scary night stories
- Find words and phrases in the story that describe the characters’ sense of fear. Look at the font in the story. How does the way that the text is used extend our response to the story? Make a list for display using shaky, big and little words and phrases
- Talk about how the illustrations create atmosphere and emotion. Talk about how the illustrator shows the difference between the scary parts of the book and the relaxed and happy ending
- Ask the children to write and illustrate your own scary stories
- The children can create their own characters. Make the characters look scared, happy, roaring and screaming. The children can look carefully at the pictures to get some drawing tips about facial expression and body language
- Create pictures using Stephen Michael King’s techniques. Do the drawing first, with crayon or waterproof ink and then add the colour over the top, using watercolours, and various size brushes

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- Use wider brushes to do the background washes, and finer brushes for more detail, such as grass, leaves, stars, etc. Try drawing outlines with old-fashioned pen and ink or fine nib pens
- If you have access to iPads scan in or insert your drawings and colour them using an iPad drawing / painting app
- With the children, retell the story using model animals – a hare, a cat and a pig, crocodiles, a bear, and a goat. With the children, make props - trees, hills and dales, trails, and the moon
- Dramatise the actions – tip-toe creeping, shaking with fear, running through the woods, snapping like a crocodile
- Find out more about Stephen Michael King at his website: <http://www.stephenmichaelking.com>