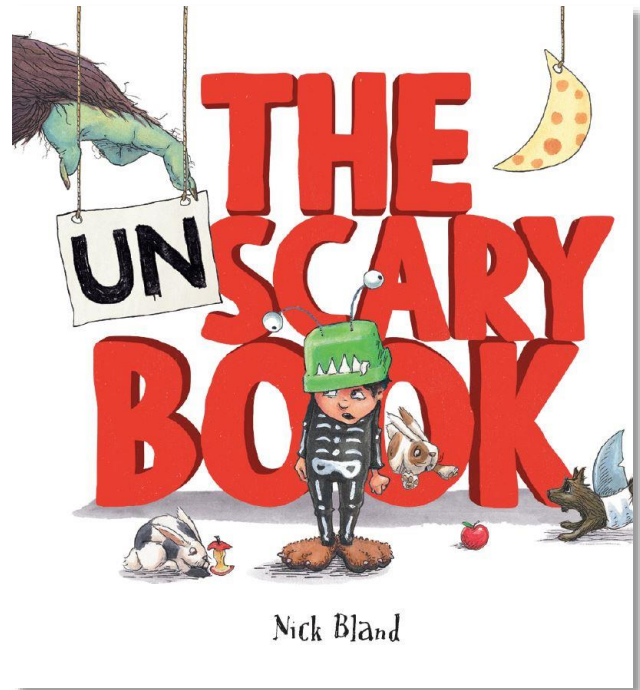


# The Unscary Book

Author and Illustrator  
Nick Bland



## Synopsis

In this delightful sequel to *The Wrong Book*, we once again meet Nicholas Ickle, a little boy who is trying very hard to introduce a scary book - but is consistently frustrated by the characters and objects which appear. While the characters in *The Wrong Book* had nothing in common other than the fact that he didn't want them to be there, the characters in *The Unscary Book* are for the most part not just wrong, but most decidedly un-scary in every way. Right up until the monster makes an appearance. Nicholas Ickle is delighted, after all a monster is much scarier than rainbows or apple trees! The monster however is just passing through but Nicholas is having none of that and drags it back by the tail so that finally a book in which he stars can be at least a little bit the way he had envisioned it.

## About the Author/Illustrator

Nick Bland is one of Australia's bestselling authors and illustrators. His books, including *The Fabulous Friend Machine*, have been published around the world. In 2010 *The Wrong Book* was shortlisted by the CBCA in the Early Childhood category. Nick lives in the Northern Territory.

## Themes

Books; genres; scary versus pleasant things; humour; determination and persistence; monsters.

## Writing Style

*The Unscary Book* is written in the first person throughout from the point of view of Nicholas Ickle, a small costumed boy. Like its predecessor *The Wrong Book*, Bland has employed metafiction throughout, breaking the so-called fourth wall by having his protagonist directly address the reader regarding the construction and contents of the book. The language used is appropriate to the age of the intended audience, and Bland makes good use of repetition to encourage a comfortable predictability. Adjectives are varied and interesting, and humour is found in the expectedly unexpected nature of the different characters being introduced.

### Illustration Style

Created using watercolour and ink, Nick Bland's artwork consists predominantly of double page spreads, with the figures rendered on a white background. Depth and perspective is created using careful shadow shading and overlaying of characters, while the completely white background complements the metafictional nature of the narrative. The visual narrative fully supports the concept that this is a book filled with self-directed characters strolling across the pages. Bland has coloured his figures using tones that are both bright and surprisingly dense, a palette that nevertheless retains the softness intrinsic to watercolour.

## TEACHER NOTES

- 1) Before reading the book, look at the cover and discuss the artwork and title. Some things to include in your discussion are:
  - What are the different creatures and objects on the cover of the book?
  - How is the front cover different from the back cover?
  - What do you think this book might be about? Why do you think this?
  - What is the little boy wearing? Why might he be wearing those clothes?
  - What sorts of things might you find in a scary book?
  - What sorts of things might you find in an **unscary** book?
  - What makes something scary?
  - What might make something unscary?
- 2) What does it mean when we add 'un' to the start of a word? Can we add it to any word? What types of words can we add 'un' to and have it make sense? What are some of the other prefixes that we can add to words to make their opposite? Create a chart exploring these ideas and as a class discuss what you find.
  - In pairs or small groups, draw a chart with four columns.
  - In the first column write four words where you make the opposite by adding 'un' to it eg 'happy, tied'.
  - In the second column write four words where you don't make the opposite by adding 'un', but which would still make sense if you did add 'un' eg 'scary, fluffy'.
  - In the third column write four words where adding 'un' does not make sense at all eg 'cat, banana'.
  - In the final column write four words where we add something else to make the opposite eg 'im/possible, dis/order'.
  - As a class, combine the charts to create a whole-class chart that includes all the words everyone has thought of. Discuss the chart and what you can learn from it. Some things to include in your discussion are:
    - What do the words in each column have in common with each other?
    - Are there any differences between the different groups of words in each column, and if so what are they?
    - How many types of prefix appear in column four, and do you think that there are any others that could have been included?

- 3) Create a scary/unscary picture. On one half of a page draw a picture of the most unscary thing that you can think of (that didn't appear in the book), and on the other half of the page draw a picture of the same thing, but a scary version. For example you might draw a cute fluffy friendly kitten on one side of the page and on the other side draw the same kitten only with crazy eyes, big claws and fangs.
- 4) As a class learn and sing a song (or several songs) about a rainbow. Are any of your songs scary? Paint a picture of a rainbow, and perform your songs for another class or at an assembly while holding your picture up. If you prefer, you can use your pictures to make a backdrop for your performance.
- 5) Read *The Wrong Book*. How can we tell that *The Unscary Book* is the sequel to *The Wrong Book*? As a class make a list of differences and similarities between the books.
- 6) As a class, act out *The Unscary Book*. Perform your act for another class or at assembly.
- 7) Nicholas Ickle is wearing a scary costume, with a hat that looks like it was made from an ice-cream container. Using Nicholas Ickle's hat as inspiration, make a scary hat or mask of your own from an ice-cream container.
- 8) In the story, Nicholas uses lots of good words that describe things which are scary, and lots of other good words to describe things which are not scary at all. As a class discuss all these descriptive words that Nicholas uses in the story, and sort them into two groups. Create a scary/unscary word poster for these words. Draw a line down the middle of a large piece of paper, and write all the scary descriptive words on one side of the line, and all the unscary descriptive words on the other side. As a class brainstorm and think of as many other descriptive words as you can that Nicholas could have used to talk about all the unscary things in the book, and about the scary things he wanted to appear, and add these words to your poster.
- 9) Create a scary and unscary things word search.
- 10) Do you think that the monster in the book is very scary? Why/why not? What makes something scary or unscary?
- 11) Create an artwork featuring a friendly and unscary monster. Look at the pictures in the book carefully, and try and use some of the artist's techniques in your artwork. Think about such things as shadows, white space, and placement of your figures on the page.
- 12) Write a story of your own about something that should be scary but instead is unscary.
- 13) What happens when the monster finally appears? How do all the other characters in the story react to its appearance? What does this tell us about the monster?
- 14) Some of the words in the story are written in a different font. As a class discuss why you think that this has been done this way. Some things to include in your discussion are:
  - What are the words that are in a different font?
  - What do the words in the different font have in common with each other?
  - What does the font look like - how would you describe the shapes of the letters?
  - Why do you think that this font was chosen?
  - Is the colour of the words in the different font important? Why/why not?

- How does having these words written in a different font affect your understanding of the story? How does it make you feel when you look at these words?
- 15) Create a font of your own for writing scary words in, and another for writing unscary words. Some things to think about when creating your font are colour, size, whether it is even or uneven, if the letters are smooth, if they have sharp edges, if they are curved, or if they use straight lines. On an A4 page write 'scary' using your scary font and 'unscary' using your unscary font. Decorate the page around your words with pictures of scary and unscary things.
- 16) Write a poem about a monster who is eating ice-cream.
- 17) How do you think the other characters in the book might be enjoying (or not enjoying) the story? Write about what happens in *The Unscary Book* from the point of view of either the ice-cream man, the dog, or one of the rabbits.
- 18) Did you enjoy *The Unscary Book*? Why/why not? Share with the class what your favourite part of the story was and what you liked best about it.