



OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Picture book
Title	Don't Let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!
Author/Illustrator	Narelle Oliver
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Teachers' Notes

Don't Let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!

Written and illustrated by
Narelle Oliver

Teachers' Notes by Madeline Holmes

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About the Story

When birds go places they don't belong, they get up to all kinds of mischief. With its gorgeous illustrations and rhyming words and repetition, *Don't Let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!* is ideally suited to accompany classroom learning.

About the Author/Illustrator

Narelle Oliver was born in 1960 and grew up in Toowoomba, Queensland. Her father was a keen amateur photographer and her mother a watercolourist and art teacher. As a child Narelle was constantly exposed to the delights of artistic creativity, and not surprisingly she herself enjoyed drawing, painting and reading. A highlight of her childhood was regular family trips into the countryside to gather ideas and material for various artworks.

When she began to study for a Bachelor of Education degree, Narelle majored in design and printmaking. It was during this period that she discovered the world of contemporary children's picture books. After graduating she taught for several years at the Queensland School for the Deaf, 'living and breathing picture books and sign language'. She also tutored in the Language and Children's Literature courses offered by the Faculty of Education at the University of Southern Queensland.

Narelle's first book, *Leaf Tail*, the story of a lizard, was published in 1989. The project took her more than three years to complete. Like most of her books, it was inspired by natural environments she has explored, and her interest in natural history. It was followed in 1991 by *High Above the Sea*, a CBCA Notable Book, and *The Best Beak in Boonaroo Bay*, which was shortlisted for the CBCA's Picture Book of the Year in 1994. In 1995 *The Hunt* was published: it won the Picture Book of the Year award in 1996, and was also shortlisted in that year for the Wilderness Society Environment Award for Children's Literature. *Sand Swimmers*, published in 1999, was also extremely successful, being shortlisted in 2000 for the Queensland Premier's Award and the CBCA's Eve Pownall Award for Information Books, winning the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales Whitley Award (Best Book for Older Readers, 1999), and winning the 2000 Wilderness Society Environment Award. *Mermaids Most Amazing* was a CBCA Notable Book in 2001, and Narelle's *Baby Bilby, Where Do You Sleep?* was judged an Honour Book in two sections of the CBCA's 2002 awards – a

rare distinction. The *Very Blue Thingamajig* won the BILBY Award, an Australian children's choice award, in 2003, and more recently *Home* won a NSW Premier's Literary Award and was shortlisted in the 2007 CBCA Awards, the 2006 Queensland Premier's Literary Awards and the 2007 Wilderness Society Environmental Award for Children's Literature.

Narelle is unusual among Australian illustrators in that she writes all her own books. Interestingly, she has published a book that she has written but not illustrated! – a title in the *Omnibus Solo* series, *What a Goat!*, illustrated by fellow Queenslander David Cox. Narelle lives in Brisbane with her husband Greg, an environmental scientist, and their children Jessie and Liam.

Most of the illustrations in Narelle's picture books use linocut prints and linocut rubbings often combined with other media such as coloured pencil, water colour, pastel, collage and even photography – depending on the feel required for the story.

Study Notes for Teachers

1. *Don't Let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!* is a great starting point for visual literacy learning and teaching children to think about how we process meaning. It is important to reread picture books as children will learn new things with each reading.

- On the first reading just show the children the illustrations instead of reading aloud to them. This way they can create their own meaning and their own ideas for what the birds in the story might be doing.
- When you read the story aloud for the first time, emphasise that we read the words from left to right.
- See how children respond to the plot. What do they think the story is about? Do they know what a warning is? Ask them to describe the story to their neighbour and to go home and describe it to their family.
- Use the illustrations in *Don't Let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!* to talk about pictorial clues and demonstrate the way images tell stories. On each page ask children to describe what they think the birds are doing. Do they think the birds are acting normally?
- On one reading of the book, pay close attention to all the different objects in the illustrations and ask children to identify what they see.

- After you have read through the story, test how well children remember what they have heard by asking questions like ‘why can’t you let a spoonbill in the kitchen?’ and ‘how many stilts join the ballet?’

2. Use *Don’t Let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!* for activities and discussions on rhyming words and syllables.

- To begin ask children to describe the language used in the story and see if anyone suggests that some words sound similar or are repetitive.
- Explain that words rhyme when they have similar sounding endings. Ask children to experiment with the words they know and to see if they can group together words that rhyme. Prompt learning by using classroom objects and saying things like ‘bird rhymes with ...’
- Once they grasp the concept of rhyming words, have children make up their own rhyming quatrain about an animal of their choice using *Don’t Let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!* as a guide.
- Use the story to introduce the idea of syllables. Breaking down words prepares children for learning to spell, read and pronounce words.
- Teach children to associate syllables with a beat. As you read through the book, ask children to clap their hands to the sentences.
- Have children repeat the sentences of the story back to you. Ask them to put their hands beneath their chins so they can feel how many times their mouths move on each word. You could also use a mirror to demonstrate this idea.
- For older children give each student a sentence from the story and a piece of paper that has a long rectangular box divided by lines:
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Ask children to cut out their words in syllables and place them in the boxes.

3. *Don’t Let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!* can be used as a reference for learning about different bird species and to introduce the idea of habitats:

- Make a list of all the birds in the story.
- Each time we are introduced to a bird, we see it in its natural environment and then in an unusual location or engaged in an unusual activity.

Have a discussion about why the birds create so much chaos and havoc in the different settings. Suggest that these birds don't belong in these environments and talk about where they do belong.

- You can use the idea of a child's home to describe a natural habitat. It is a place where you feel comfortable, where you have a food source, where the climate suits you and where everything is familiar.
- Find out if any of the birds from the story are familiar to children and ask them to choose one to research its life cycle.
- Using the illustrations as guides, ask children to describe distinguishing features of each bird. Have them turn to their neighbour and describe what they see on the pages.
- Ask children to go outside and see how many different birds they can spot. If you have access to a camera, you can take photos of the birds to hang up in the classroom.
- Ask children to make their own bird identification book, using the story's illustrations as a guide. They can take them home and see if there are any different bird species in their backyards they can add to their books.
- If possible, visit your local zoo or wildlife park so children can see the birds from the story. Children who cannot travel can view video footage of the birds.

4. *Don't Let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!* is a great starting point for drama games and creative fun:

- Have children create their own bird masks from paper plates so they can dress up as the characters from the story.
- On a reading of the story, ask children to mime the actions they hear. See if they can recreate the scenes in the story in tableau form.
- Ask children to come up with their own warnings for different birds or animals. As in the story, each warning can begin with 'don't let the ...'.
- Ask children to act like the different birds in the story using the descriptions they hear.
- Have children imagine they are a bird flying high in the sky and ask them to describe what they might see.

- Narelle uses different art techniques to create the illustrations for her book. Encourage children to create their own mixed-media illustrations for their rhyming quatrain. Show them how they can use paper and crayon to create a rubbing from a natural object. Ask them to go outside and collect something like a leaf or a piece of bark. Have them hold the paper of the object and use the side of their crayon to rub across the bumpy section.