



In the Evening

Written by Edwina Wyatt

Illustrated by Gaye Chapman

Published August 2015 by Little Hare

Synopsis

In the Evening is about a bold squirrel called Charlie and a shy squirrel called Oscar, and how they eventually become friends. At first, Oscar is so shy he avoids every one of Charlie's attempts at friendship, and in the end Charlie gives up. That's when Oscar realises his mistake and summons all his courage to return Charlie's overtures of friendship. The result is a wonderful new alliance.

Themes

This is a story about friendship, but it is also about shyness and boldness, fear and bravery, introversion and extroversion, action and inaction. Essentially it is about the trials, terrors and joys of finding and making friends. A case study in the highs and lows of social interaction, it is suitable for discussion about communication styles, personality types, feelings and emotions and moods, for examining visual literacy, as well as for the simple enjoyment of reading beautiful writing and viewing high-quality art.

Writing style

Emerging author Edwina Wyatt is an exciting, fresh new voice in Australian children's picture-books. *In the Evening* is her second book, and is her first with Little Hare. It is written in prose, but Edwina's use of language make it read like poetry. Edwina uses alliteration, repetition, alternation between long sentences and single words to create emotional effects. She paces her sentences to match the mood of the story as it unfolds, sometimes using long, smooth and flowing sentences, sometimes short and sharp sentences and sometimes a series of single-word sentences. Through her use of language, Edwina is able to instil a sense of urgency when the mood and action is urgent, of loneliness when the mood is lonely, and of high-spirited joy when the action is lively. The 18th century poet Alexander Pope once said, 'The sound must seem an echo to the sense', and Edwina's writing style embodies this advice. *In the Evening* was inspired by a poem by Emily Dickinson, a section of which is quoted at the beginning of the book.



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Illustration style

Gaye Chapman is an award-winning picture-book illustrator and also a highly regarded fine-art practitioner who exhibits her paintings in reputable galleries. For this story she has chosen to try and convey the mood of the story, with its combination of winter chill and lonely evenings, as well as the hustle and bustle of cheerful activity in the surrounding community. Painting in watercolour washes, and using simple pencil-lines, she has adopted a combination of abstract and figurative styles: a lightly drawn and slightly abstracted woodland setting, along with carefully drawn main characters. She uses colour to convey mood—blues, greys and greens for sadness and loneliness, and warm yellows and oranges for happiness, cosiness and comfort. Some of the elements of setting have been drawn with the left hand for a sense of added spontaneity and lightness of touch.

Author/illustrator background

Edwina Wyatt is a qualified lawyer and teacher. Her stories are whimsical explorations of characters and their often idiosyncratic relationships, and reflect her fascination for how we are both passengers and pilots in the stories of our lives.

Edwina lives on the south coast of New South Wales with her husband and their son.

Gaye Chapman is an artist and performer who uses drama, 'right-brain' thinking and synaesthesia 'games' as teaching tools in her dynamic art workshops and talks.

Gaye is a visual artist of international standing and is one of the most significant painters working in Australia today. She holds a PhD in Contemporary Art and has been exhibiting since 1976, her comprehensive body of work critically acclaimed.

Gaye has been awarded many prestigious literary and fine art prizes, including the QLD Premier's Literary Award, White Ravens selection, eight CBCA awards, the Archibald Prize Salon des Refusé and is a multiple-finalist in the Sulman, Waterhouse, Kedumba, Glover and Portia Geach prizes.



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Study notes

1. This story is about friendship, but it is also about moods. It was inspired by a poem that describes the lonely feeling of winter afternoons. What moods can you think of that might suit other times of day? Write a short poem about one of these times of day, including the mood that matches it.
2. Find a poem that you like, and write a completely new story inspired by your favourite few lines from this poem.
3. An artist uses colour to create a mood. Find a page from *In the Evening* that seems to suggest loneliness. Which colour does the artist use? Find a page that seems to suggest happiness. Which colour has the artist used here? Paint a picture using colour to express a specific mood.
4. An artist can also use **composition** to create a mood. **Composition** is the arrangement and position of objects and figures on the page. Find a page that seems lively. How do you think the artist has created this impression? Draw your own picture to suggest liveliness. You can also use composition to create pictures that suggest boredom, bossiness and other moods and feelings. Try doing this, using only circles!
5. Artists also pay attention to the empty space on a page. Find a page or spread from *In the Evening* that seems empty. What mood does this emptiness seem to create? Why do you think this is? Write a list of feelings that you get when you look at this page. Find your favourite illustration in the book and write down all the feelings you experience when you look at that page.
6. The author of *In the Evening* uses language to create a mood. For example, in some places she uses long sentences and in other places she uses short sentences. What mood or feeling is suggested when she uses long sentences? Write a short paragraph about your trip to school this morning. See if you can create the mood of the journey by varying the length of your sentences.
7. The author has also made use of **alliteration**, or words that begin with the same sound. **Alliteration** is sometimes used simply to make the reading experience playful and enjoyable. Examine the first two spreads of the story and see how many times the author has used alliteration. Write some sentences of your own that use alliteration.
8. Some other techniques the author has used are repetition, single words instead of sentences, and lists. See if you can find where she has used all of these techniques. Then write a paragraph describing your favourite time of day (such as sunrise, sunset, dusk, midday, night) using repetition, single-word sentences and lists.



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Activities

- Re-write the story of *In the Evening* as a shared writing activity. Ask students to choose a new main character and setting for the class story. After writing, allocate each pair or group of students a page from the story to illustrate. Bind the book and keep it in the class library.
- Refer to the first page talks about evening noises, ask your students what they notice when they look outside their house in the evening? It may be cars, lights, specific noises etc.
- Have your class write a list of all the things that happen in the 'evening' in the book; then ask the children as a class to list out things that they do in the evening after a long day of school. You can then compare the two lists and see how many similarities and differences there are.
- Ask the children if they have any friends in their neighbourhood. Then ask how they became friends to begin with — this may be a class discussion.
- Refer to when Oscar was too shy to say hello to Charlie. Have the class act out ways in which to overcome shyness.
- Ask the class if they think Oscar took Charlie for granted and why. Then ask if they think they take anyone for granted and why it's important not to take people for granted.
- As a class, research friendship. Write a basic report on friendship that includes their opinion on friendships, then the proper definition of friendship etc.