

Where is Bear? Teacher Notes

Written by Jonathan Bentley
Illustrated by Jonathan Bentley

Published by Litte Hare, February 2016

SYNOPSIS

Where is Bear? Where can he be?

No one goes to bed without their faithful bear and the little boy in this book is doing everything he can to find Bear. But not all in this book are what it first seems to be, and this irresistible story has a surprise in store!

Jonathan Bentley is an award-winning illustrator and artist and an international favourite. In this adorable book he again displays his talent for drawing dangerously huge yet endearing animals alongside delicately young but domineering children. *Where is Bear* is a story that engages and astonishes on many levels.

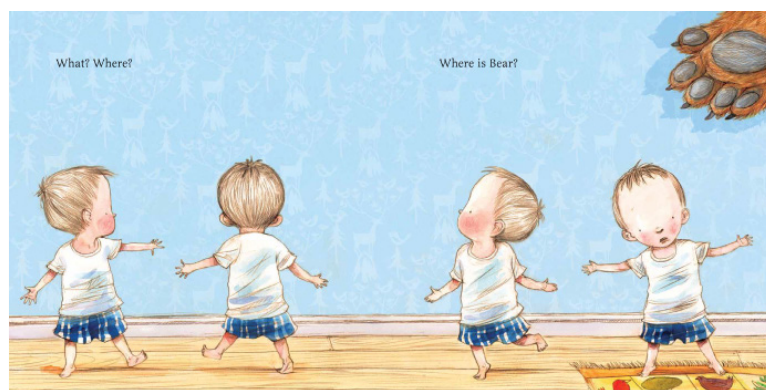
THEMES

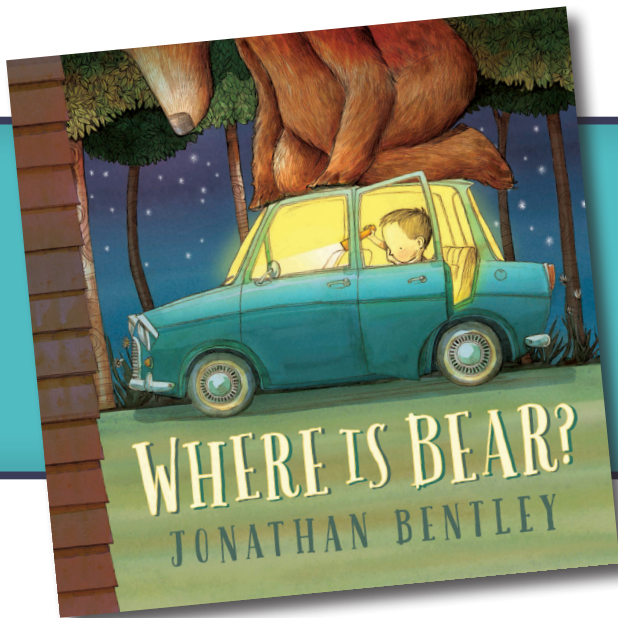
Key themes: dramatic irony, double dramatic-irony, seeing and not-seeing, apparent and actual.

This deceptively simple picture-book is based on a complex play of double dramatic-irony.

A small boy searches throughout the house for Bear, all the while seemingly oblivious to a vast bear that dwarfs the boy in every picture. Having looked everywhere, the little boy appeals directly to the reader to ask if the reader has seen Bear. Readers, of course, believe they have seen Bear all along. But the big bear is not who the boy was seeking ...

The twist to this story is twofold—there is a seeming dramatic irony, with the reader apparently knowing what the character apparently does not know. The double dramatic-irony is that the reader has been deliberately led to believe he or she knows better than the little boy, who seems to be seeking a bear too huge to miss. However, it turns out that the reader has assumed wrongly. The joke is not on the character in the book, but on the reader.





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WRITING STYLE

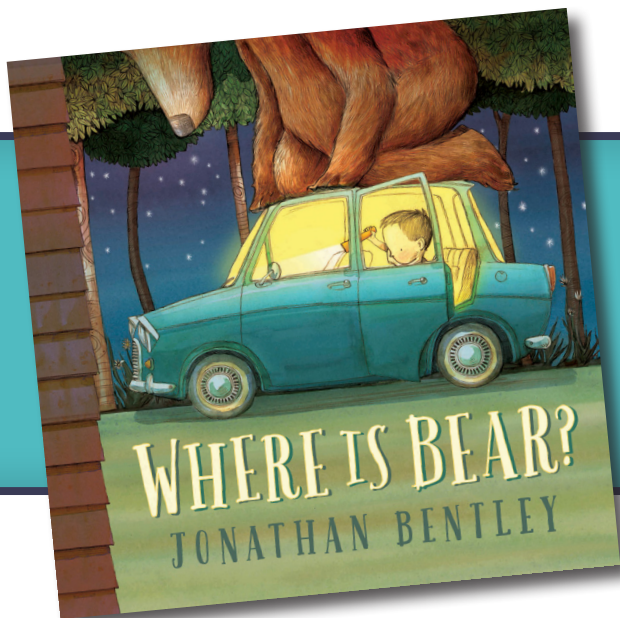
Jonathan Bentley is best known as an illustrator, but sometimes he turns his hand to being both author and illustrator. *Where Is Bear?* is his second book as both author and illustrator (his first was *Little Big*). In *Where Is Bear?* Jonathan's writing style is simple and brief. However, it invites a number of different responses from the reader: sometimes the reader is kept at a distance, and sometimes the reader is invited to enter the story. Jonathan also packs a lot of ideas and surprises into very few words.

There is no descriptive text. The words represent only the thoughts and utterances of the main character as he searches for Bear through the house and garden. Most of the time, the little boy seems to be thinking to himself, or perhaps he is thinking aloud: it is left to the reader to decide. At one stage, however, the boy turns directly to the reader and asks for help, and even then seems to respond to what the reader has said.

Inviting the reader to engage with the story has a surprising effect, and comes at an important moment in the narrative. It jolts the reader out of a position of separateness from the narrative by encouraging the reader to believe she or he can help the boy find Bear. This jolt or surprise also feeds into the greater surprise on the following spread, where the boy finally finds Bear ... but not the bear the reader was helping the boy to find.

The reader is surprised on three levels: by being invited to engage with the fictional character, by discovering the boy was seeking a different bear, and by discovering that the reader themselves had been wrong all along.





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ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Jonathan Bentley's illustration gives the impression of realism, even though it is lightly sketched with pencil and watercolour washes. His settings and the bear appear to be particularly realistic, with most attention being given to the bear.

Jonathan's depiction of the little boy, on the other hand, is slightly exaggerated, with a bigger head and smaller hands and feet than would be found on an actual child. The boy's facial features are also stylised: he has a very high forehead, and his eyes are minimally drawn as simple dots. He is often depicted with just eyes and a small nose with no mouth, and only occasionally with raised eyebrows. Even so, the boy shows a broad range of emotional expressions, which Jonathan suggests by slightly altering the position of the eye-dots in relation to the rest of the boy's face. Despite the realism of the bear, Jonathan has drawn it with facial expressions of emotion that would be more usual on a human than an animal's face.

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

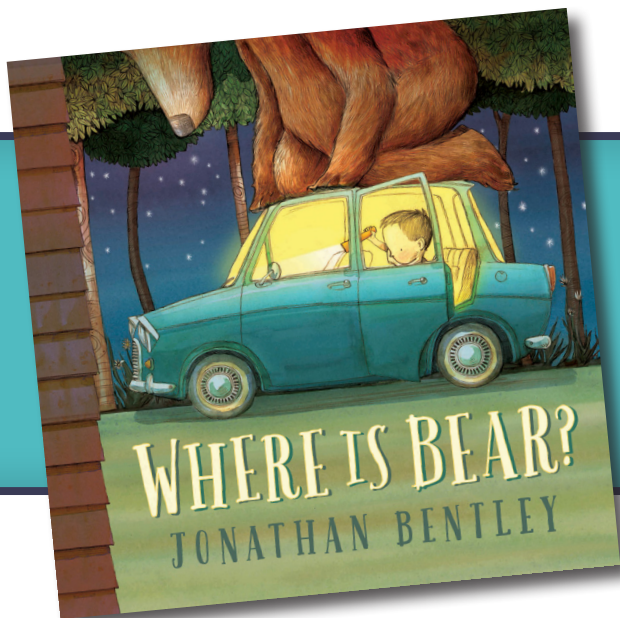
As a little boy, Jonathan Bentley liked football and drawing. When he was about eight years old he realised he wasn't going to be good enough to play football for Leeds United, so he concentrated on drawing instead.

When he left school he studied at Brighton Polytechnic. Jonathan worked as a builder's labourer and kitchen hand for many years before he became a full-time illustrator, and he worked in London and Sydney before moving to Brisbane, Australia.

Jonathan has been an Editorial Illustrator at the *Courier Mail* newspaper for ten years, and has illustrated books for Margaret Wild, The Wiggles and Andrew Daddo.

Jonathan likes to work with a range of materials including acrylics, oils, and line and watercolour, and he looks forward to the day when he has a big barn-like studio somewhere in the countryside.

Jonathan has illustrated many picture books for Little Hare. Amongst his most recent titles is the international bestseller *Duck, Red Galoshes, Daddy Kiss, Pink, A Hare, A Hound and Shy Mousey Brown*, *Little Big* and CBCA shortlisted title, *A House of her Own*.



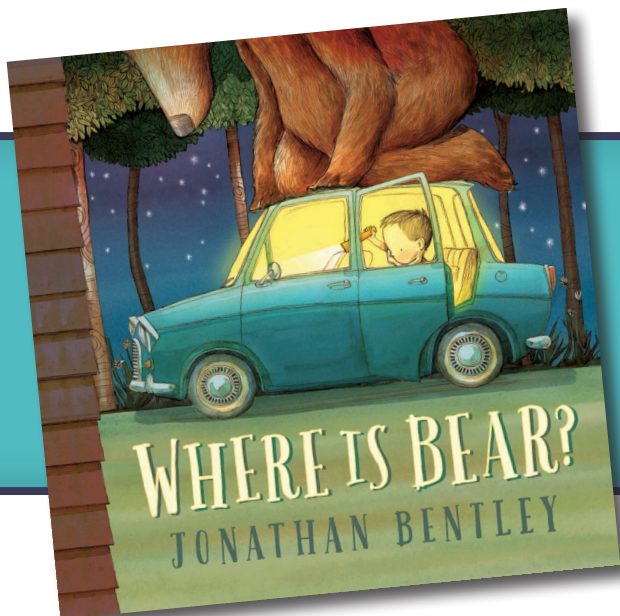
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STUDY NOTES

1. Jonathan Bentley has written this story using very few words. Who seems to be saying the words in the story? Who is the person speaking to in different parts of the story?
2. When drawing people's faces, Jonathan uses very few pencil marks. What are these marks? Even though there are so few marks, what can these marks tell us about the character?
3. How many different emotions can you find on the various depictions of the little boy and how would you describe these emotions? How many emotions can you find depicted on the face of the big bear, Theodore?
4. One of the spreads in *Where Is Bear?* has no text. How do we know this is a part of the story, even though there are no words? Do we need words to know how the boy and Theodore are feeling here? What is Theodore feeling? What is the little boy feeling? How can you tell that this is how they are feeling?
5. Illustrations in picture books often tell us more about the story than the words do. Choose a page from *Where Is Bear?* and describe what the picture is telling us about what the little boy wants, what he knows, and what he doesn't know.
6. Near the end of this story we discover that the big bear is called Theodore. He was given this name because the name Theodore is often shortened to become a word we now use to describe toy bears. Do some research to find out what this word is, and why we use it.
7. The story of *Where Is Bear?* plays a trick on the reader. What is this trick?



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ACTIVITIES

- Write a list of places that Bear could have been which were listed in the book.
- Re-write the story of *Where is Bear?* as a shared writing activity. Ask the students to choose a precious toy that has gone missing that they can't be without. After writing the story, allocate each pair or group of students a page from the story to illustrate. Bind the book together and keep it in the class.
- Ask your students to act out *Where is Bear?* using new settings. See what fun, creative places they might think Bear would be hiding.
- Invite students to bring their favourite toy to school for an afternoon picnic. Begin the day by reading *Where is Bear?* Then get the students to write down the emotions they would feel if they lost their favourite toy.
- Ask your students to write about their favourite toy and why it's their favourite. Get them to describe what makes the toy special, and how the toy makes them feel when they are together.
- Discuss with the class the various emotions that can be expressed during times of worry or anxiety. Why does the boy in the book react so dramatically to something he has lost? What is it about Theodore that makes him search high and low for his toy? Discuss the themes of love, comfort, worry and anxiety and why these emotions play an important role in growing up.
- As an individual task, get your students to re-write the story from the Bear's point of view.

