

# Bin Chicken

Author

**Kate and Jol Temple**

Illustrator

**Ronojoy Ghosh**



## Synopsis

Once, Ibis lived in Egypt, a sacred bird with white feathers by the banks of the Nile. Now though, she lives in the city and fossicks and forages through rubbish piles and in bins for food. The other birds all look down on her and sneer. They call her names, they comment on her smell, and they denigrate her for her eating and living habits. Ibis, however, does not let their opinion affect her. Instead of feeling ashamed of her place as a scavenger of rubbish, Ibis teaches her chicks to take pride in their heritage, and most of all in being adaptable survivors who are perfectly suited for the world they find themselves living in.

## About the Author

**Kate and Jol Temple** are the award-winning authors of many picture books and fiction titles for children. Their book, *Room on Our Rock* was the winner of the prestigious 2020 Charlotte Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction for Children, an award recognising fiction that has the potential to transform children's lives by inviting compassion, imagination and wonder.

They are ambassadors for Raising Literacy Australia and regularly visit schools and festivals talking to kids about writing and ideas.

## About the Illustrator

**Ronojoy Ghosh** has successfully worked in the advertising industry around the world for many years. He has written and illustrated many children's picture books, including Mem Fox's bestselling *I'm Australian Too*. His first book *Ollie and the Wind* was shortlisted for the 2016 CBCA Book of the Year.

## Themes

Key Themes include: Family, adaptability, history, wildlife, urban environments, pride, survival, self-confidence and self-perception.

## Writing Style

Written throughout in the third person from the point of view of Ibis, the text of *Bin Chicken* has a main narrative crafted entirely in rhyming verse. Richly descriptive, the authors have incorporated a wealth of adjectives within the verses of the story, suiting it to being read aloud and encouraging discussion and learning amongst a very young readership. Humour is compassionately employed within this gentle

modern story, and Kate and Jol Templeton succeed in crafting an appealing protagonist from the unlikely and oft-maligned Ibis.

### Illustration Style

Digitally created, Ronojoy Ghosh's artwork consists entirely of full page spreads. Ibis and her chicks are portrayed realistically, while the minor characters are at times shown as having anthropomorphic tendencies. Backgrounds are universally soft-toned and Ghosh frequently employs subtle colour gradients and shading in his portrayal of skies. Foreground figures and features are crisp edged and detailed, and stand out clearly against the large sweeps of pastel hued skies and landscape. The visual narrative parallels the textual narrative faithfully, and there is a secondary textual narrative within the illustrations presented in the form of speech bubbles and the text upon protest-signs held by various minor characters.

## TEACHER NOTES

- 1) Before reading the story, as a class look closely at the cover and title, and discuss what you can see on it. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
  - What is the picture of?
  - What type of bird do you think is in the picture?
  - Where is the bird?
  - What is it doing and why?
  - What is a *Bin Chicken*?
  - Why might it be called a *Bin Chicken*?
  - What do you think could happen in this story - what sorts of things might a *Bin Chicken* do?
- 2) How can we tell that the artwork in the first pages is of Egypt?
  - Try and identify three separate features of the illustrations which indicate that it is set there.
  - How would you draw a picture that people could tell is in Australia, just by looking at it?
  - As a class discuss what things are seen as quintessentially Australian both here and abroad.
  - Create an artwork of your own using the illustrations in the book for inspiration, and including at least three elements to inform the viewer that it is an Australian scene.
- 3) What do you think that the yellow ring and yellow tag on Ibis' wing are?
  - Why do you think they are on there?
  - As a class, or in small groups, discuss the wing tag you can see on Ibis in the story, and your hypotheses about its purpose.
  - Have any of the students in your class seen a bird with a wing tag or ankle band?
  - If you have, what sort of bird was it and where was it?
- 4) After concluding your discussion in activity 3) above; in pairs, small groups, or as a class research Australian wing tag projects, and create a poster or a slideshow presenting your findings. Some things to discover in your research are:
  - What is a wing tag?
  - Why are there projects that are tagging birds?
  - Which types of birds are being wing tagged?

- What do the researchers who tag the birds hope to find out?
  - What do the different colours of wing tag mean?
  - Where did the Ibis in the story get her wing tag, and how can we know this?
  - What do you think is the most interesting thing that the researchers have already discovered?
  - How can people in the community participate in this sort of project?
- 5) What places have you seen Bin Chickens hunting for food? As a class survey your school and discover all the places that your local student body has seen Bin Chickens. Some questions to include on your survey might be how often students see Bin Chickens, how many they have seen, and what they have seen them eating. Once you have completed your surveys, collect all your data and display it in at least two different graphical formats.
- 6) When Ibis returns home to her nest, she is met by four *soft, fluffy chicks*. How soft and fluffy do the chicks look when they are covered in rubbish peels and old tins? In small groups discuss the contrast between the mental image painted by the description *soft, fluffy chicks* and the reality of garbage-coated baby ibis as seen in the illustrations. What effect does this contrast have on your enjoyment of the story? Does it add to the humour?
- 7) In the story there are a lot of descriptive words used. Do you know what they all mean? As a class re-read the story, making a list as you go of all the interesting and descriptive words you come across. Discuss the different words and their meanings, and write a brief definition of each word next to it on your list. Individually choose one of the words from your list and create an artwork illustrating the word and its meaning. You might choose to draw a short comic strip, paint a portrait or landscape, or even craft a collage. Title your artwork with the word you have illustrated, and caption it with your definition. Collect all the artworks to create a class word-art display.
- 8) What do you think is the funniest part of the story? Why do you think this part is the funniest, and what makes it amusing?
- 9) Go on a walk around the school grounds or in the local area and see how many different birds you can spot. Take a notebook or tablet with you to record what you see. For each sighting you will want to record:
- What the bird looks like.
  - Where the bird is.
  - What the bird is doing.
  - How many of the same type of bird are gathered in the same place.
  - What the name of the bird is (if you know it).
- 10) In pairs, use the information you collected in activity 9) to help you create an artwork showing all the different bird life you saw in your local area, and what it was doing. Caption and label your artwork so that your data is easily understood.
- 11) Ibis tells her chicks about all the different ways that they are well suited to scavenging through urban rubbish collections for food. Can you remember what they all are? Draw a picture of a Bin Chicken, and carefully label all the different features and characteristics mentioned in the book, and how they help the Ibis thrive in the city.
- 12) Ibis used to live in the wild along riverbanks and in swamps, but now, like the family of ibis in *Bin Chicken*, they often live in the city. What other native and wild animals have found a new ecological niche in settled and urban areas? As a class discuss the different wild animals you have seen near

your homes, and in pairs or small groups research how they survive in human-affected environments.

- 13) Look carefully at the picture near the end of the book where Ibis and her chicks are all perched on a bin in front of a city skyline. Using this picture for inspiration, create a collage with an interesting skyline silhouette as the background. Your skyline might be of a town or city, like the one in *Bin Chicken*, or it could be of a forest or hills, or even a combination of both! As in the book, create your skyline using two different shades of the same colour, and craft your foreground figures in more detail using contrasting colours.
- 14) Ibis's nest is crafted from a collection of old and broken things she has found. As a class, reread the description of her nest, and use it as inspiration to help you create a sculpture inspired by *Bin Chicken*. Create your sculpture from found objects and items in your recycling (not rubbish or compost!) bin. Be sure to thoroughly wash any food containers before including them in your sculpture!
- 15) Ibis survives by eating the food scraps that people throw away, and even builds her nest from rubbish. She can do this because people in Australian cities throw away a LOT of rubbish every day. As a class discuss why it would be better for the environment, the planet, and all the people and creatures who live on it, if we could reduce the amount of rubbish we create. Include in your discussion a brainstorming session where you talk about what we can do as individuals to help reduce the amount of rubbish that is thrown away. In pairs or small groups use some of the points you discussed to help you create a poster showcasing things people can do to help reduce waste, and why it is important that we all do so. Display your posters around the school for everyone in the school community to see and learn from.