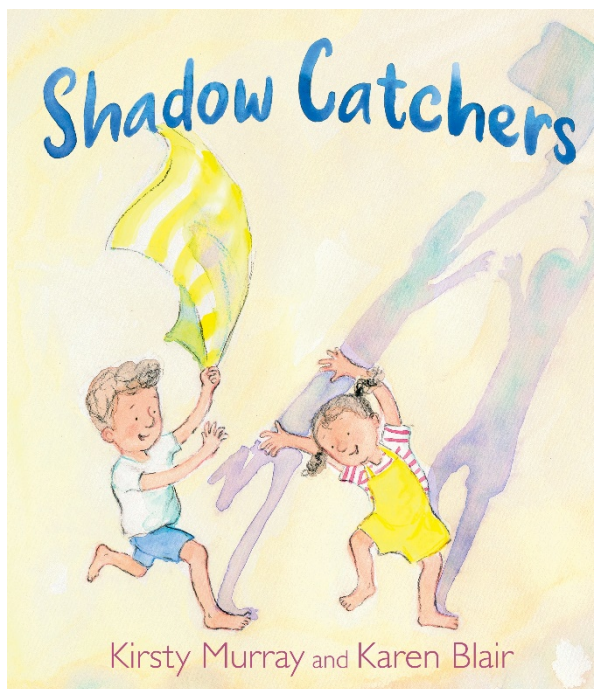


Shadow Catchers

By Kirsty Murray,
Illustrated by Karen Blair



A delightful picture book that celebrates the joy of young children trying to catch their shadows – from the creators of CBCA Honour Book *When Billy was a Dog* and *Puddle Hunters*.

RECOMMENDED FOR

Preschool and K–Year 1

THEMES

Siblings, shadows, play, family, time

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SYNOPSIS

On sunshiny mornings, we go shadow catching.

Inside, outside, in our home and in our neighbourhood, shadows dance around us from morning until night.

Our shadows are so tall, then small, then tall again in sunlight, lamplight and even in the moonlight.

From the creators of CBCA Honour Book *When Billy was a Dog* and *Puddle Hunters* comes a wonderful picture book about playfulness and the joy of light and movement.

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

'This book was a long time in the making. Not long after I finished writing *Puddle Hunters* I began to work on a companion book about being outside that dealt with sunshine and shadows. My granddaughter, Alexandra Harper, often danced with her shadow on our weekly playdates when she was small. I photographed her in playgrounds on sunny mornings with her shadow mirroring every move she made. *Puddle Hunters* was dedicated to Alex because we spent so much time together jumping in puddles but those early playdates also led to *Shadow Catchers* and the idea of the relationship between small children and the wonder of their "other" self as represented in their shadows. Shadows are magical to young children and exploring this magic is central to *Shadow Catchers*.'

Kirsty Murray

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- **Pre-reading activity**

Before reading *Shadow Catchers* look at the title and cover design. Discuss what students think the story might be about and the clues in the picture that make them think that. Ask questions such as:

- Can you explain what a shadow is?
- Can you see the shadows on the cover?
- What do you think the boy and girl might be doing with their shadows on the cover?
- Do you think this is going to be a happy or sad story?

- **Blurb**

Turn the book over, read the blurb on the back cover, then discuss the following:

- The words sunlight, lamplight and moonlight have something in common. Can you tell what it is? Why might light be important when we are talking about shadows?

- **Post-reading activity**

Turn a comprehension test into a game. Ask students to stand up and explain that you will be making some statements about *Shadow Catchers* and that if students think the statement is true they should to put their hands on their head and if they think it is false they should put their hands on their knees. Students sit down when they answer incorrectly and the last person left standing is the winner.

1. Ama and her brother are scared of their shadows during the day.
2. Shadows are very tall early in the morning and late in the afternoon.
3. They disappear in the middle of the day.
4. Their shadows move quickly when the kids are playing in the playground.
5. Anything can cast a shadow...even clothes on a clothesline.

6. Ama's brother is scared of shadows at night-time.
 7. Dad knows how to make shadow animals on the bedroom wall.
- Remind the class about lots of things casting shadows, even clothes on a clothesline. Turn to the second double page spread showing Dad and the children walking down the street and ask if there is anything casting a shadow other than a person? [Hint: the car.] Now turn the page to see if the bird is casting a shadow. Ask students if they can guess why the car casts a big square shadow but the bird casts a small oval shape? Can they come up with a theory about how an object's size and shape might determine the shadow it will cast?
 - The size of shadows isn't just determined by the size of the object casting them. Remind the class that the shadows are tall and thin when the children first leave home and play in the park but are much smaller after they eat their morning snacks. Later, after Ama's nap, they grow tall and thin again. Ask why shadows might change shape at different times of the day? Suggest doing an experiment in the playground to find out more.

Human Sun Dials Experiment Instructions: Early one morning escort preschoolers to an outside area that has loads of space and a hard surface area, and is free of large trees or other objects that might cast a shadow during the day. Mark a large dot on the ground with a piece of chalk and ask one student to stand very still in the spot. Hand the chalk to another student and ask them to draw the outline of the shadow the student on the spot is casting. Ask a third student to measure the size of the shadow using their hands or feet. Ask everyone to think about where the sun is in the sky – but to make sure they never look directly into it. Take a note of the time, size of the shadow and location of the sun on a chart. Repeat this exercise several times during the same day, being careful that the same student stands in the spot each time while other students can chalk the outline. Ideally, the same student should do the measurements during the day if they are using hands or feet.

On returning to the classroom explain what your chart shows and prompt students with questions such as:

- What did we observe about the shadow and the sun?
- Did the sun move? If yes, in what direction?
- In what direction did the shadow move?
- How do the chalk markings change?
- When was the shadow the longest? When was it the shortest?
- Why do you think our shadow changed throughout the day?

NB: Results will be much clearer if you choose a bright, cloudless day for this experiment.

- Follow the previous experiment up with a discussion about other sources of light that can create shadows too. [Hopefully students will mention, lamps, torches, candles, phones, etc.] Explain that the next experiment will be in your classroom using a desk lamp to create interesting shadows.

Shadow Puppet Theatre Instructions: Collect a cardboard box (a cereal box works very well), scissors, tape, a sheet of thin white paper, straws, craft sticks, or skewers and a desk lamp. Simply cut the front and back of the box out. Tape the piece of paper over one of the holes you have created. Cut out some interesting shapes – animals are always good – with the leftover cardboard from the box and tape the straws, craft sticks or skewers to them. Set up your theatre with the audience on the open side of the box, your stick figures behind the sheet of white paper and a lamp behind them.

Try moving the source of light away from the stick figures and see what happens. Encourage students to come up with a theory about why the shadow might change shape.

NB: The Shadow Puppet Theatre is much more effective if your room is as dark as possible.

- Have fun dancing with shadows like Ama does in *Shadow Catchers*. Go outside on a sunny day and put on some lively music so that students can watch how their shadows move as they dance. Add more fun by playing Freeze – that's where you turn the music on and off and everyone needs to stop, freeze and see what their shadow is doing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kirsty Murray is a multi-award-winning author of more than twenty books for children and young adults. Her works include eleven novels as well as non-fiction, junior fiction, historical fiction, speculative fiction and picture books.

Kirsty is an ambassador and advocate for many reading and writing initiatives and has been a writer-in-residence in schools and universities around the world. She loves books, libraries, bookshops, readers, writers, puddles, puppies, and stories – especially stories about kids.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Karen Blair grew up in Perth and enjoyed a childhood of drawing, playing at the river, jumping on the trampoline and dressing up. She has always loved drawing and creating characters. She loves illustrating children and animals enjoying time in the outdoors. Karen lives in Fremantle, Western Australia.