TEACHING NOTES

OWL AND STAR

HELEN MILROY
ISBN (HB): 9781760992156
YEAR LEVEL: K–3
CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY: Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander histories and cultures

ABOUT THE BOOK

Owl loved the sparkle of the stars. He would sit out on his tree at dusk and wait for them to appear. One evening, Owl became worried. His favourite little star had not shown herself. Owl searched far and wide. Where could Little Star be?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Helen Milroy is a descendant of the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. She was born and educated in Perth. Helen has always had a passionate interest in health and wellbeing, especially for children. Helen studied medicine at the University of Western Australia. She is currently a professor at UWA, Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Board Member with Beyond Blue and the AFL's first Aboriginal Commissioner.
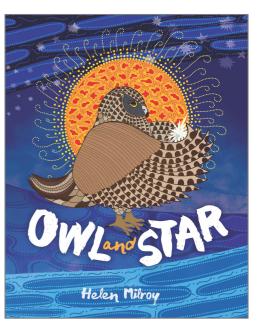
THEMES

- Friendship
- Belonging
- Persistence
- Teamwork
- Looking after country
- Indigenous stories

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

K–3 English
K–3 Science (Biological Sciences)
K–3 Visual Art

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author website: helenmilroy.com

TEACHING NOTES

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Look at the cover illustration. What do you think this book will be about?
2. Read the blurb on the back of the book. Do you think Owl will find Little Star?
3. There is only one name on the front cover. Why?
4. Why is the word 'owl' written with a capital letter in this book?
5. What are the names for the times when day turns to night, and night turns to day?
6. Can you think of any other stories with owl characters? Do the owl characters share any similarities with Owl from this book?
7. Describe the setting of this story (where and when).
8. Owl's favourite time of day is dusk. What is your favourite time of day?
9. What five words would you use to describe Owl?
10. What five words would you use to describe Little Star?
11. Can you think of another word with a similar meaning to these words from the story: bask, slumber, descend, might, soaring, faint, rapidly, diminishing, afar, guardian.
12. In this story, the stars bring hope to earth. Do any parts of nature make you feel hopeful?
13. Was Owl a good friend to Little Star? Make a list of ways you can be a good friend.
14. What personal qualities does Owl show in the story? (bravery, loyalty, etc.) Talk about a time you, or someone you know, has demonstrated each quality.
15. Sun and Moon work together to save Owl and Little Star. How do they each help?
16. What lesson(s) do you think Owl learnt in this story? What lesson(s) do you think Little Star learnt?
17. How do you think Little Star feels at the end of the story? How can you tell?
18. Did you enjoy this story? Which part was your favourite?
19. In this story, each star has its own special place in the universe. Do you think the same is true for people?
20. What question would you like to ask author and illustrator, Helen Milroy?

Creative writing

1. Divide a large piece of paper into three sections. Write or draw what happens in the beginning, middle and end of the story.
2. Write a poem based on this description from the story: 'This was the time when anything was possible, both good and bad: a time of change, of magic.' (p. 2)
3. 'Personification' is writing about non-human things as if they were human. For example: 'The stars especially loved to dance on the waters …' (p. 6) Brainstorm how you could write about a tree using personification. What does it do, feel and think? Use the ideas from your brainstorm to write an imaginative story.
4. This story includes poetic language. This means the sentences 'paint a picture' rather than just telling you what's happening. For example, instead of simply saying 'he flew to the sky', the author wrote 'With all his might, he stretched out his wings, soaring higher than ever before.' (p. 21) Can you find three other examples of poetic language in the story?
5. Rewrite these sentences using poetic language:
   a. The stars were bright.
   b. The sun was setting.
   c. There was a full moon.

Science

1. List the facts you already know about owls. What are you curious about? Write three questions, then research the answers.
2. Draw a picture of an owl, then label the feet, wings, beak, eyes, legs and talons.
3. Do owls live in the place you live? Which species?
4. This story describes a 'cycle of life' (p. 9). Can you think of any cycles that living things depend on?
5. What name is used for the study of stars and space? What word can used to describe a scientist who studies stars and space?
6. Why do some stars shine brighter than others? Why are some different colours? Why do some move?

Visual art

1. How would you describe the style of the illustrations? What medium (i.e. paint, pencil, digital, photography, etc.) do you think the illustrator used to create the artwork?

2. The selection of colours used in a piece of art is called the 'colour palette'. What colour palette has Helen Milroy used in this book? Why do you think these colours were chosen?
3. Which is your favourite illustration from the book? Why?
4. Create an artwork based on your favourite scene from the story.
5. Using a blank template, design an owl feather.
6. The full-page spread on pages 23–24 shows Owl being delivered back to Earth on moonbeams. How do you think Owl feels during this journey? What can you see in the picture that makes you think this way?

First Nations cultures

1. Helen Milroy is a descendant of the Palyku people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia. What is the language group of the area where you live? Do you know any words in this language?
2. Do you know any other stories by Helen Milroy or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors? What is similar and different between the stories?
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have observed the stars for tens of thousands of years and have many stories about the constellations. Do you know the names and stories of any constellations?