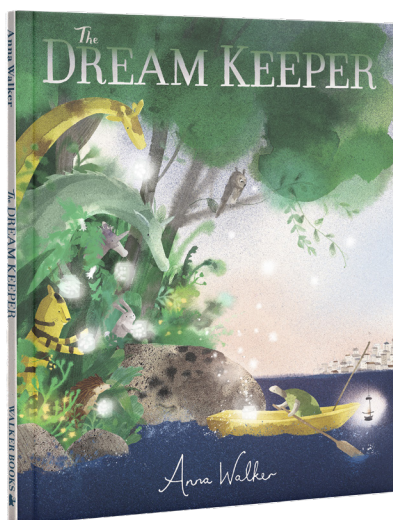


# TEACHER NOTES

Teacher Notes by Belinda Bolliger, Additional Activities by Anna Walker

WALKER  BOOKS

## ABOUT THE BOOK



THE DREAM KEEPER  
CREATOR: ANNA WALKER  
ISBN 9781529520682 HARDBACK  
MAY 2026

**An emotive and exquisitely imagined journey about those small but powerful acts of courage that can lead us to finding strength, hope and light.**

Beyond the city and over the sea is a forest of dreams. At the edge of the forest lives a turtle – the Dream Keeper. In a small boat, the turtle sets off on a tumultuous journey to deliver dreams to sleeping souls in the nearby city. Meanwhile, a young girl, scared in the night by the shadows in her room, finds comfort in her toys ... but cannot sleep. As both stories unfold side by side, the girl and the turtle must each harness their courage and overcome their fears as their worlds collide in the most wonderful, magical way.

**For ages: 3+ years**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Walker is an illustrator and author of picture books, including *Florette*, a *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book, *A Life Song* written by Jane Goodwin and *Mr Huff*, shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards and winner of the CBCA Book of the year Early Childhood. Using traditional media, Anna creates stories inspired by the quiet and sometimes joyful details of life. *The Dream Keeper* is her first Walker book. She lives in Melbourne. Find her online at [annawalker.com.au](http://annawalker.com.au) and on Instagram as [@\\_annawalker\\_](https://www.instagram.com/_annawalker_).

# THEMES

Fear of the dark • Imagination and dreams • Comfort and reassurance • Kindness and helping others • Friendship and community • Nature and magic • Resilience

## CURRICULUM LINKS

### **Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)**

*The Dream Keeper* supports learning across all five EYLF outcomes, particularly through imaginative play, emotional exploration and visual storytelling.

#### **Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity**

Children explore feelings such as fear, comfort and safety; Opportunities to express personal ideas through art and storytelling; Encourages confidence in sharing interpretations and creative responses

#### **Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world**

Themes of kindness, helping others and 'sharing the light'; Collaborative activities build a sense of belonging and community; Encourages respect for others' perspectives and experiences

#### **Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing**

Explores emotional responses to fear and reassurance; Provides a safe context to discuss nighttime worries; Creative expression supports emotional regulation and wellbeing

#### **Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners**

Interpreting a largely wordless text builds curiosity and problem-solving; Encourages imagination, prediction and meaning making; Supports persistence and engagement through open-ended tasks

#### **Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators**

Develops visual literacy through interpreting images; Encourages oral storytelling, discussion and vocabulary building; Supports multiple forms of communication (drawing, speaking, creating, etc.)

### **Foundation – Year 2 Curriculum Links**

**English** (Listening to, viewing and responding to texts; Retelling stories using images and oral language; Interpreting characters, events and emotions), **The Arts** – **Visual Arts** (Creating artworks using imagination and personal experience; Exploring colour, light and visual elements; Responding to artworks and discussing meaning), **Personal and Social Capability** (Recognising emotions in self and others; Developing empathy and understanding; Building positive relationships and social awareness)

# BEFORE READING

## SYNOPSIS

*The Dream Keeper* follows a young child who is afraid of the dark and the shadows in their room. As the child prepares for bed, we are invited into an imaginative parallel world where a magical Dream Keeper creates and delivers dreams.

Through a series of visually rich, mostly wordless spreads, we see the Dream Keeper carefully mix a dream, then journey through a forest, across water and into a storm. Along the way, some of the dream is lost, but the Dream Keeper is helped by a community of animals who 'share their light'.

Eventually, the Dream Keeper reaches the child, delivering a dream that transforms fear into comfort. The shadows that once seemed frightening are softened by light, imagination and reassurance.

The story ends with a sense of calm and safety, suggesting that light, hope and courage can always be found — even in darkness.

## DISCUSS

- Look at the cover of the book. What creatures do you see? What are they holding? What do you think they might be doing?
- Who is in the boat? Can you guess where they might be going and why?
- What can you see in the background? What clue does this give you about where the tortoise might be going?
- What do you notice about the colours?
- What do you think a Dream Keeper does?
- When you open the book to the front endpapers, you can see even more animals. Can you name each animal? Would all of these creatures live together? If not, what does this tell you about what sort of story this might be?

---

# DURING READING: VISUAL LITERACY

## WORDS AND PICTURES

- There is very little text in *The Dream Keeper*. How do we understand a story without many words?
- What do pictures tell us that words sometimes cannot?
- How do we know what characters are feeling if they don't say anything?
- If there were words on the pages that don't have any text, what do you think they might say?
- Work with a partner to retell the story using your own words. Take turns describing what is happening on each page.
- Look carefully at the first page. There are many details in the illustration of the little girl in her bedroom. What do these details tell you about the child?
- What objects can you see? What might they tell us about her interests, personality or feelings?
- How can you tell what time of day it is? What clues are there?
- On the opposite page, we can see the Dream Keeper in their space. What can you see in the picture?
- What details tell you something about the Dream Keeper? What kind of character do they seem to be?
- What do you think the Dream Keeper is preparing? How can you tell?
- What clues in the pictures that follow tell you that the Dream Keeper is magical?
- What do you think the glowing orb (the ball of light) represents? Could it be a dream, a feeling, a memory or something else?
- Why is the orb so important to the story?

## COLOUR, LIGHT AND MOOD

- What do you notice about the colours in the book?
- How do the colours change from inside the child's room to the forest scenes?
- How do the colours change as the story progresses?
- How has the illustrator used colour to show fear or uncertainty?
- Can dark colours be calm and beautiful as well as frightening? Where do you see this in the book?
- How is light used in the story?
- How do colour and light affect how the story makes you feel?

### Activity

- Choose a page with no text and:
    - Write a sentence describing what is happening
    - Add speech or thought bubbles
    - Create a short caption
    - Extension: create a full retelling of the story in your own words.
- 

## AFTER READING

### FEAR AND COURAGE

- What is the little girl feeling at different points in the story? How can you tell?
  - Have you ever felt like that? What helped?
- Draw two pictures: one that shows how you felt when you were scared and one that shows how you felt when something or someone helped you overcome your fear.
- How can imagination help us when we feel scared?

### SHARE THE LIGHT: COMMUNITY AND FRIENDSHIP

In *The Dream Keeper*, when the dream is lost, others step in to help. The animals share their light, showing that even small acts of kindness can make a big difference. This moment highlights the importance of community, friendship and looking out for one another.

- What do you think it means to 'share light' with others? Can light be more than something we can see?
- In the story, how do the animals help the Dream Keeper? Why is their help important?
- How do you think someone might feel when another person 'shares their light' with them?
- What are some ways people can show kindness or help others when they are feeling sad, worried or scared?
- Has someone shared their light with you? Have you shared your light with someone? How did it feel?
- As a class, brainstorm some ways that you can share the light with others. These might include helping a friend, taking turns, saying kind or encouraging words, helping at home, and so on.
  - Record ideas on a chart or poster titled 'Ways We Share the Light'.
- Activity: As a class, create an artwork called 'Our Class Light'. Everybody decorates a paper 'light' (star, lantern, orb). Write or draw on your light one way you can show kindness. Combine all the lights into a large classroom display.

## STORY ARC

*The Dream Keeper* tells two stories at the same time — the journey of the child and the journey of the Dream Keeper. Although they are separate for most of the book, their paths come together to create a single, complete story.

- Who are the two main characters in the story?
- What is happening to the child at the beginning of the book? How is she feeling?
- What is happening to the Dream Keeper at the same time?
- How are their journeys different? (Think about where they are, what they are doing and how they are feeling).
- Can you follow the Dream Keeper's journey through the forest? What happens along the way?
- What happens when the dream spills? How does this moment affect both the Dream Keeper and the child?
- How do the two storylines connect? At what point do they come together?
- How does the child's story change once the Dream Keeper reaches her?
- Why do you think the author chose to tell two stories at once?

## IMAGINATION AND THE DREAM KEEPER

- If you had a Dream Keeper, what dream would they mix up for you? Would it be exciting, peaceful, funny or adventurous?
- What might your Dream Keeper use to 'mix' your dream? (For example: light, colours, memories, sounds, feelings or objects from your day).
- What would your Dream Keeper look like? Would they be animal-like, human-like or something completely different?
- Where does the Dream Keeper live in the story? What clues do we see along the way?
- Towards the end of the book, we discover something surprising about the Dream Keeper's 'island.' What is it? How does this change the way you think about where the Dream Keeper lives?
- Why do you think the illustrator chose to reveal this at the end of the story?
- If you had a Dream Keeper, where would they live? Would it be in the sky, in a forest, inside your room or somewhere hidden?
- Would there be something (or someone) special sharing that place with them? What might be hidden there? Who or what would they live with?
- How would your Dream Keeper travel to bring you your dream? Would they fly, float, sail, ride a unicorn, teleport?
- Once you have imagined your very own Dream Keeper, bring it to life. You might choose to create a drawing or painting, a collage, a labelled diagram, a short poem or a descriptive piece of writing, a mixed-media artwork.
- Create a 'Dream Recipe':
  - Ingredients (starlight, memories, etc.)
  - Method (how the dream is made).

## AND FINALLY ...

- Look closely at the final endpapers. We see a drawing the child has created, showing the Dream Keeper, their animal friends and the turtle island. What does this tell you about what the child has experienced?
  - Do you think the Dream Keeper's journey really happened or was it imagined? What clues support your thinking?
  - Why might the illustrator have chosen to end the story this way?
  - How has the child's understanding of the night and their fears changed?
  - What do you think the drawing represents — a memory, a dream, or something else?
-

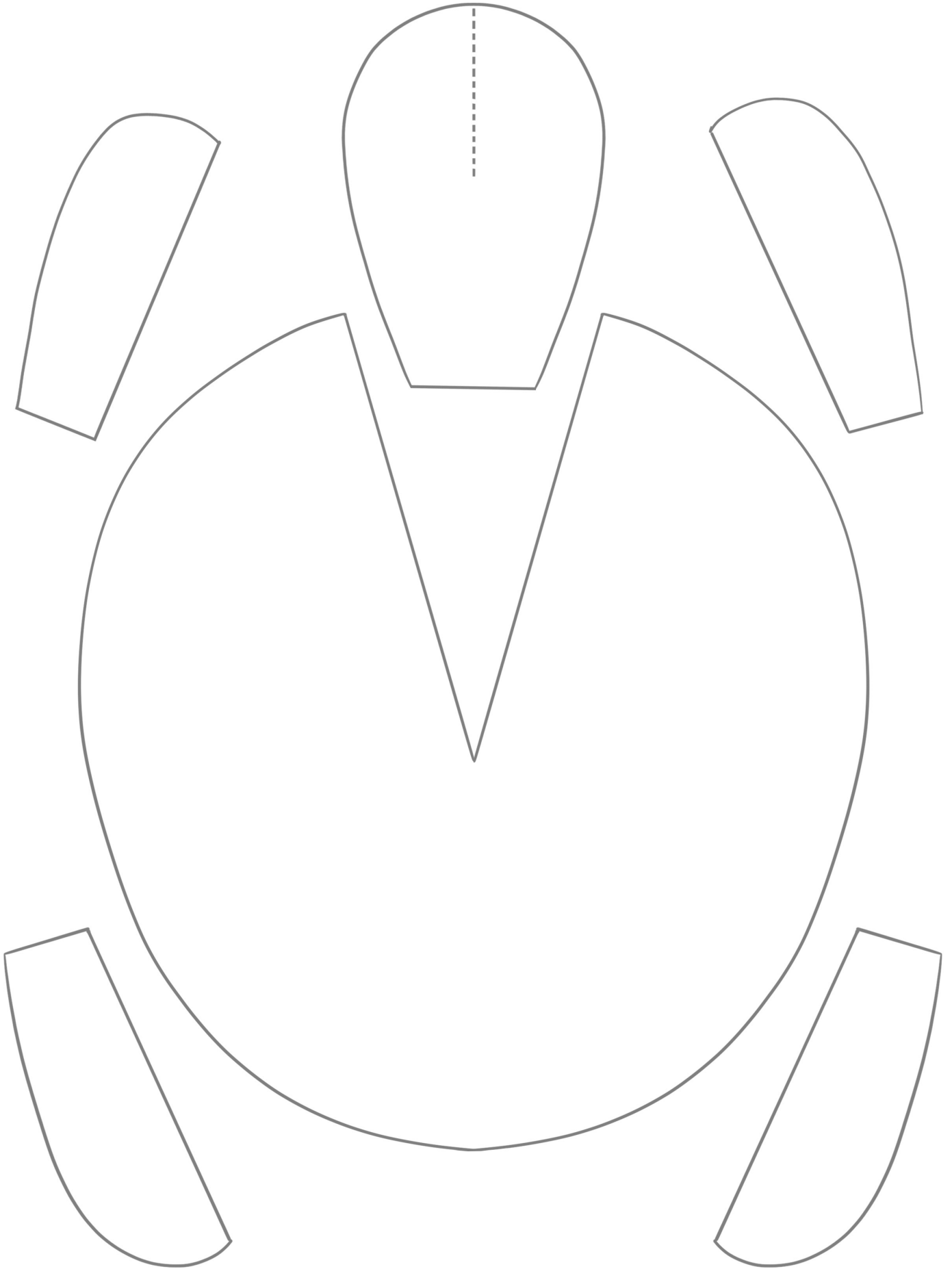
## ACTIVITIES

- Create a Dream Jar inspired by the Dream Keeper.
  - Use a jar, cup or drawing template.
  - Fill it with illustrated or written 'dream ingredients' (for example: stars, laughter, favourite places, memories).
  - Share your dream jar with the class and explain your choices.
- Freeze frame: in small groups, recreate key moments from the story using actions and frozen movements. For example, the child feeling scared, the Dream Keeper travelling, the story, the sharing of light. Some of the class hold their 'freeze frame' while others guess the scene.
- Create a split artwork. One side is night (dark, shadowy, uncertain) and one side is light (calm, warm, safe). Discuss how colour and texture create different moods.
- Draw the Dream Keeper's journey as a map. Include the forest, the water, the storm, where the dream spills, the child's home. Add symbols or a 'key' to explain each part.
- Create a Kindness Chain: everyone in the class writes or draws one act of kindness on a strip of paper. Link them together to form a 'chain of light' and display it in the classroom.
- Create a simple soundtrack for the story. What sounds match each part (forest, water, storm, calm ending)? Use instruments, body percussion and voices to create your soundtrack.
- Write (or dictate) a short message to the Dream Keeper. What would you ask the Dream Keeper for? What kind of dream do you need?

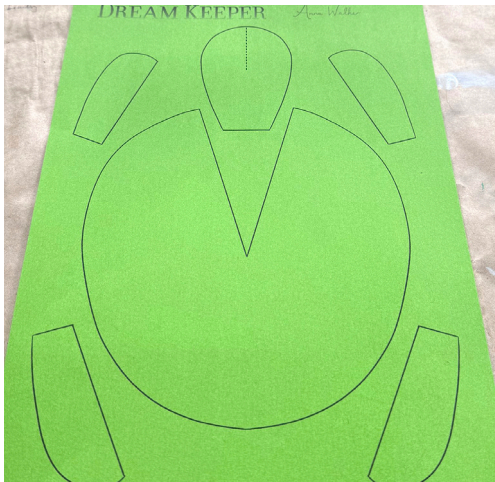
---

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Make your very own paper turtle and forest of dreams (printable cut-out and visual instructions on the following pages).
  - To make a paper turtle and a forest of dreams, you will need coloured paper, scissors, glue, paint and colour pencils.
  - Print PDF on a sheet of A4 paper. You can use coloured paper or print on white and add your own colour!
  - Cut out body, legs and head, including cutting along the dotted line in the head shape.
  - Use a glue stick/sticky tape to close the gap and make a mound in shell and head. Fasten legs under the shell.
  - On a separate piece of paper, scribble and paint textures for the forest and cut out organic plant shapes.
  - Draw eyes on your turtle and gather your paper plants.
  - Stick on the trees and plants to make a forest of dreams! You might like to draw yourself in the forest too!



To make a paper turtle and a forest of dreams, you will need coloured paper, scissors, glue, paint and colour pencils.



Print PDF on a sheet of A4 paper. You can use coloured paper or print on white and add your own colour!



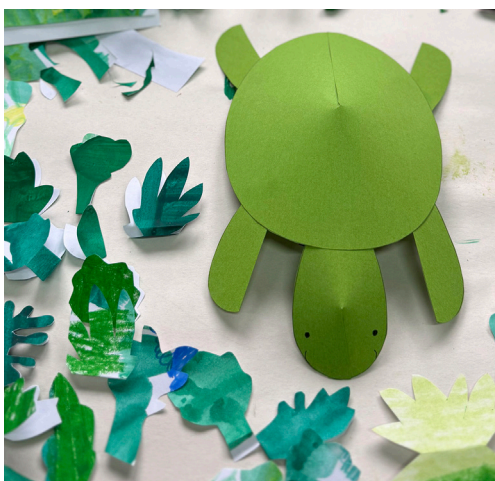
Cut out body, legs and head, including cutting along the dotted line in the head shape.



Use a glue stick/sticky tape to close the gap and make a mound in shell and head. Fasten legs under the shell.



On a separate piece of paper, scribble and paint textures for the forest and cut out organic plant shapes.



Draw eyes on your turtle and gather your paper plants.



Stick on the trees and plants to make a forest of dreams! You might like to draw yourself in the forest too!