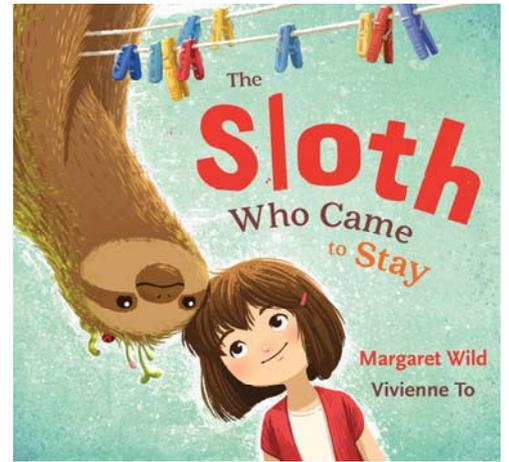


The Sloth who came to stay

By Margaret Wild
illustrated by Vivienne To



July 2017 ISBN 9781760290221
Hardback picture book
Recommended for 3 – 6 year olds

Synopsis

Amy's family is speedy! They are always in such a rush that there is no time to talk or play - until the afternoon that Amy brings home a sloth. Then things start changing very, very slowly...

Style

Wild's simple declarative sentences come alive with To's illustrations in a delightful interplay of words and pictures. The narrative is so simple yet so applicable to modern life. The reader sees the 'speedy' characters develop over a three-week period through the subtle progression of the words and the richly detailed illustrations (including such lovely visual asides as a '5 minute meals cookbook' on the shelves of the home office/dining room early in the story, replaced by a slow cooking cookbook next to the hammock in later scenes).

Themes

• modern family life • pressures • stress • mindfulness • slowing down • pets

Creator Motivation

'I got the idea for the story because people are always asking me what I'm working on at the present time. As I don't like to talk about projects at an early stage, I would say, "Oh, nothing much at the moment. I'm being slothful". So out of my slothfulness emerged a story about how we are all so busy and could perhaps slow down a bit. I think the story has a lot to say to both adults and children – to adults who are juggling work and home duties, and to children whose days are often filled with school, sporting activities and cultural pursuits.'

Margaret Wild

'When I first met with the publisher, we threw around a few ideas of having a different setting, in space, or the future. In the end, we felt that we needed to portray this as a normal, everyday family. The quirk and charm came from this completely unexpected animal turning up at an ordinary family's house. Where did the sloth come from? Why was the sloth in the park? These are questions that don't really need to be answered...but I wanted readers to feel like this sloth could come to your house next, that this family could be your family.'

Vivienne To

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Discussion questions

Pre-reading

- Watch this short trailer from the film *Zootopia* and ask students if they know what sort of animal 'Flash' is? Based on what they have seen, encourage students to come up with some words to describe sloths. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bY73vFGhSVk>
- Before reading the story, show the front cover of *The Sloth Who Came to Stay* to your class and ask them if they think the story will be set in (a) outer space (b) in the jungle or (c) in an ordinary suburban home. What on the cover helped them guess the answer?

While reading

- Read the story through once and ask students if they think the sloth's visit was a good thing for Amy's family. Encourage them to explain what in the story helped them come up with their answer and guide them to think about how the family changed and why this was a good thing.
- Turn to the first page of the story and re-read the text, 'Amy's family was the speediest family in the world.' Ask students to look very carefully at the image of Amy's family running and come up with things in the picture that show us just how 'fast' they are moving.
- What jobs do students think Amy's mum and dad have? What clues in the illustrations lead them to this conclusion? What jobs do Amy's mum and dad do around the house?
- How do the students' own families compare to Amy's family? For example, do both parents work? Do they have siblings? Who does the household chores?
- Turn to the page where Sloth is sitting in the bathtub and ask students to think about how the words LONG and BUBBLES are presented. Explain that these words are in a different *font* to the others on the page and talk about how font can influence how we read something. Now ask students how these words make them feel in this font. Try creating your own font to represent another word, such as 'tall', 'short', 'wobbly' or 'icy'.
- Turn to the page where Amy is explaining to her parents about her day and ask students to re-tell the details based on the pictures they can see. At the end of the exercise, point out that we don't always need words to tell a story.
- Amy and her family look for the red star in the night sky. What is the red star? Why does it look red? Is it really a star? What times of the year might we be able to see the red star in the Australian sky?
- Turn to the last double-page spread and find as many clues in the picture to show that Amy's family have slowed down and are enjoying life more.
- After finishing the story, ask students to write a letter to Sloth asking him to come and live with them, explaining why they might need him, too.

Research sloths

- Where in the world do they live? What do they eat? Why do they move so slowly? Would they make good pets? Why/why not? Are sloths endangered? What measures are being taken to protect the species?

The author

Margaret Wild is one of Australia's most respected picture-book creators whose award-winning children's books are loved by children all over the world. Margaret has published over seventy picture books for young children and she has been the recipient of the Nan Chauncy Award and the Lady Cutler Award for her contributions to Australian children's literature.



The illustrator

Vivienne To is an illustrator and concept artist for film and publishing. She loves drawing interesting characters, creatures and imaginary worlds. She has created designs for several animated feature films and recently art directed *The Lego Batman Movie*. Vivienne lives in Sydney and this is her first picture book.