



### ***THE ENCHANTMENT OF GOLDEN EAGLE***

Written by MARGARET WILD

Illustrated by STEPHEN MICHAEL KING

**RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 7–12 YEARS OLD (YEARS 2 TO 6, PRIMARY)**

**GENRE:** Picture Book, Fable, Fairytale, Allegory

**THEMES:** trust, responsibility, right and wrong, punishment, consequences, fealty or loyalty, forgiveness, atonement, family, friendship, belonging

#### **CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS:**

- English: Literature, literacy and language
- Visual Arts
- Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS)

**NOTES WRITTEN BY:** Robyn Sheahan-Bright

**ISBN (AUS):** 978 | 76118 107 8

## INTRODUCTION

This is a powerful and nuanced allegorical tale about a child, a golden eagle and a forgotten promise from the author of the children's classic *Fox*, illustrated by the beloved creator of *Mutt Dog*.

One day, Ella and her little brother Leif found a fledgling with a broken wing. They took him home, wrapped and fed him, and watched over him for seven days and seven nights.

In time Golden Eagle was well enough to fly away, but he loved the children, so he promised to stay with them at the edge of the dark forest.

Until one day, the wind whispered and the breeze caressed his feathers, and Golden Eagle forgot his promise...

This is an unforgettable tale about love, nature and forgiveness, suitable for readers of *Fox* or *The Duck and the Darklings* from two of Australia's most-celebrated picture book creators.

## Q&A WITH MARGARET WILD

### What do you see as the major themes /essence of this book?

'I think there are a number of themes i.e. forgiveness, compassion, atonement, love, loyalty and friendship.'

### Can you tell us about your inspiration/how you came to write this book? Who is it written for? Any amusing, emotional or powerful anecdotes about the work process and your motivations.

'I've always been interested in the migration of birds. It's amazing that a bird can undertake a long and arduous journey to find its winter home despite never having seen it before – and then make the trip back to where it was born. So that's what I started wanting to write about. However, the story somehow turned into something quite different!

'I've always loved fairytales such as *The Snow Queen* and *The Little Mermaid*, so I tried to create a story that has some fantastical and mythical elements.

'I hope readers will understand that people can say something in anger (in this case, the curse put on the bird). And that those words can be regretted and forgiven. It would be good if this story can open up discussions about consequences, atonement and, especially forgiveness, because if we can forgive, there is the possibility that things can change for the better.'

## Q&A WITH STEPHEN MICHAEL KING

### What do you see as the major themes /essence of this book?

'You have to work with your true nature, but also try to be the best version of that.'

'Some of us need to be grounded while others need to fly but we all need trust, to feel safe and have connection.'

## CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

### BEFORE READING

- What does the cover of the book suggest to your students, about the book and the characters the story contains?
- This is a contemporary fairytale. What other fairytales have your students read?

## ENGLISH

### LITERATURE

- *Literary Devices: Rhythm:* Margaret Wild chooses her words very carefully in order to achieve a storytelling rhythm that matches the feelings conveyed, for example, when the eagle is healing, we are told that: *'The room was warm and dark and quiet.'*  
*Repetition:* Wild also employs repetition in the manner of fairytales. E.g. *'He longed to rest. In a field, on a rock, in a tree. He longed for the chirp of other birds. He longed for the warmth of a wing.'*  
*Inventive Language:* Wild carefully selects words that are descriptive and interesting rather than clichéd. *'Here he is now. Hollowed-out. Tattered. Spent.'*  
Read the story aloud and discuss the various literary devices employed in its telling.
- *Narrative Structure:* The story traces the Golden Eagle's journey and return home. This is a classic traditional tale structure. Discuss other stories that students have read that contain a journey and return home. [See for example, Aaron Becker's wordless trilogy of picture books in **Corresponding Literature** below.]
- *Point of View:* This story is told from an 'omniscient' point of view. This means that the third person narrator tells the story and can also relay to the reader what the characters are thinking e.g. *'When at last he opened his eyes, she knew he'd be all right.'* If this story had been written from a first-person point of view, how would that have changed the narrative?

**ENGLISH ASSESSMENT IDEAS:**

- Write a review of this book with reference to other traditional tales.
- Write an acrostic poem using the letters in Golden Eagle.
- Write a detailed description of the setting in this book – the home of this family.

**VISUAL ARTS**

- *Visual Literacy:* Identify fairytale characters and references in these images, for example, The Three Billygoats Gruff, a dragon, and an octopus.
- *Examine the Cover:* What does the giant wing overarching the three figures of Ella, Leif and Magnus their father holding the Golden Eagle suggest?
- *Examine the Endpapers:* They feature delicate watercolours of the sky and horizon in different hues with some differences in detail. What do the two endpapers suggest to your students?
- *Symbolism:* Flying, and images of the wind are prevalent in this visual text, and Ella is holding a kite in many of the pictures. What other symbols did your students identify in the images?
- *Figurative References:* Stephen Michael King imbues features of the landscape with human or animal characteristics in an evocative way. Invite students to observe the images of the landscape and the sky closely and to identify figures that they can see there.
- *Critical Literacy:* Magnus appears to be going to market to sell plants that he has grown. But what other occupation does he have? Examine the images closely to ascertain what he also does with his time. [Answer: He is a sculptor.]
- *Medium:* Stephen Michael King's delicate and whimsical drawings are overlaid with pastel watercolours. Invite students to experiment with this medium.

**VISUAL ARTS ASSESSMENT IDEAS:**

- Create a new spread for this book depicting a further incident.
- Create an alternative cover for this book.
- Create new endpapers for this book.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (HASS)

Invite students to discuss the following topics and questions:

- *Trust and Responsibility; Actions and Consequences; Right and Wrong:* Why did Golden Eagle leave the children alone? Was he wrong to do so? They were safely hidden but what might have happened to them while Golden Eagle was away?
- *Family, Friendship and Belonging:* Magnus, Ella and Leif are a closely knit family and Golden Eagle becomes one of them after the children find him wounded and bring him home to recover. How would your students react if they found an injured bird or animal? Would their family have welcomed the visitor?
- *Fealty or Loyalty:* How does Golden Eagle demonstrate his loyalty to the family after the mistake he made in leaving the children alone?
- *Forgiveness and Atonement:* Ella is so happy to see Golden Eagle again she has forgiven his brief abandonment of them. She also realises that he atoned for his actions by going on a perilous journey. But most of all she has realised that a bird needs its freedom and that despite his love for the family, he will always be a bird: *'That night as the family celebrates, Ella imagines Golden Eagle's future – he is strong and well, rejoicing in the wind, larking about in the sky as all birds do. But right now, he is here...with them.'* Invite students to discuss these final lines in the book.

## HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT IDEAS:

- Write a short essay about the theme of forgiveness and atonement in this picture book.
- Imagine a different ending to this story.
- Invite students to write about an incident in their lives that relates to this story.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**MARGARET WILD'S** thoughtful, award-winning children's books have been published with great success in many countries. They include *Old Pig* (shortlisted, CBCA Picture Book of the Year), *Fox* (winner, CBCA Picture Book of the Year), *The Dream of the Thylacine* (honour book, CBCA Picture Book of the Year), and *On the Day You Were Born*, all illustrated by Ron Brooks, plus many more, including *Chalk Boy* illustrated by Mandy Ord (shortlisted, 2019 CBCA Picture Book of the Year). Margaret has been the recipient of the Nan Chauncy Award and the Lady Cutler Award for her contributions to Australian Literature, and was IBBY Australia's nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award (Writing) 2022.

See also: 'Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature Margaret Wild' Youtube 2020

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_nolrjvpes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_nolrjvpes)

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**STEPHEN MICHAEL KING** has been described as an artist who 'draws from the inside out', and it is this gentle, intuitive truth that gives heart and playfulness to his work. Stephen Michael King is an internationally renowned, award-winning author and illustrator whose career has spanned over thirty years, producing more than one hundred titles. He has worked with a stable of Australia's best children's book authors including Glenda Millard, Margaret Wild, Nick Bland, Peter Carey and Tim Winton. Books that Stephen Michael King has written and illustrated include *Three*, *Rainbow Bear*, *Mutt Dog!*, *Leaf and Milly*, *Jack and the Dancing Cat*. His books have been translated into over twenty languages, and he is frequently honoured in children's book award categories – including winning the CBCA Book of the Year Award, and the Prime Minister's Literary Award. See also:

<https://www.stephenmichaelking.com/>

## ABOUT THE WRITER OF THE NOTES

**Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM** operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and is widely published on children's literature, publishing history and Australian fiction. In 2011 she was the recipient of the CBCA (Qld Branch) Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Queensland, in 2012 the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Distinguished Services to Children's Literature in Australia, and in 2014, the QWC's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.

## CORRESPONDING LITERATURE

(In alphabetical order of authors)

### Contemporary Fairy Tales and Fables

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Becker, Aaron *Quest* Walker Books Australia, 2015.

Becker, Aaron *Return* Walker Books Australia, 2017.

Gaiman, Neil *Hansel & Gretel: A Darkly Brilliant Fairy Tale* Ill. by Lorenzo Mattotti. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.

Gleeson, Libby *The Great Bear* Ill. by Armin Greder. Walker Books Australia, 2010, Scholastic, 1999.

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Hartnett, Sonya *The Boy and the Toy* Ill. by Lucia Masciullo. Penguin/Puffin, 2010.

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Jeffers, Oliver *A Child of Books* Ill. by Sam Winston. Candlewick Press, 2016.

Lamond, Margrete *The Sorry Tale of Fox and Bear* Ill. by Heather Vallance. Dirt Lane Press, 2017.

Louise, Zanni *Archie and the Bear* Ill. by David Mackintosh. Little Hare, 2017.

McAllister, Angela *A Bedtime Full of Stories: 50 Folktales and Legends from Around the World* Ill. by Anna Shepeta. Quarto UK, 2021.

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Pinfold, Levi *Paradise Sands: A Story of Enchantment* Scholastic, 2022.

Ray, Jane *The Emperor's Nightingale and Other Feathery Tales* WordUnited, 2013.

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Tan, Rae *The Emperor's Egg* Hachette, 2025.

Tan, Shaun *The Red Tree* Hachette, 2001.

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Tan, Shaun *Cicada* Hachette, 2018.

Wild, Margaret *Fox III.* by Ron Brooks. Allen & Unwin, 2000.

Wild, Margaret *The Girl from the Sea III.* by Jane Tanner. Allen & Unwin, 2020.

Wild, Margaret *The Feather III.* by Freya Blackwood. Hardie Grant Children's Publishing, 2018.

Wild, Margaret *The Stone Lion III.* by Ritva Voutila. Hardie Grant Children's Publishing, 2015.

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<https://literacyideas.com/how-to-write-a-fairy-tale/>

Cummins, Kevin 'How To Write an Enchanting Fairy Tale: A Step-by-Step Guide for Teachers and Students' *Innovative Teaching Ideas* 22 January 2025:

<https://innovativeteachingideas.com/blog/fairy-tale-writing-guide-crafting-enchanting-stories/>

Doherty, Berlie 'How to Write A Fairy Tale' *Berlie Doherty* 25 January 2024; 26 April 2022:

<https://berliedoherty.com/how-to-write-a-fairy-tale/>

'Fairy Tale' *Literary Terms*:

<https://literaryterms.net/fairy-tale/>

'Fairy Tale' *Britannica*:

<https://www.britannica.com/art/folk-literature>

Fairy Tale: A Literary Genre' *English Studies*:

<https://english-studies.net/fairy-tale-a-literary-genre/>

'First Nations storytelling' *Australians Together*:

<https://australiansitogether.org.au/teachers/curriculum-resources/unit-guides/foundation-first-nations-storytelling>

'First Nations storytelling' *Australian Museum*:

<https://australian.museum/publications/birds-storybox/first-nations-storytelling/>

'Literary Text Types: Folk and Fairy Tales' *PETAA*:

[https://petaa.edu.au/litportal/litportal/Resources-for-Curriculum/Lower-primary/Reading/Text-types/Literary\\_texts\\_Fairy\\_Myth.aspx](https://petaa.edu.au/litportal/litportal/Resources-for-Curriculum/Lower-primary/Reading/Text-types/Literary_texts_Fairy_Myth.aspx)

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<https://internationalstoryteller.com/types-of-traditional-tales/>



'Storytelling in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures' QCAA *Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority*:

<https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/about/k-12-policies/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-perspectives/resources/storytelling>

'Welcome to the Online Fairy Tales Page' *World of Tales*:

[https://www.worldoftales.com/fairy\\_tales.html#gsc.tab=0](https://www.worldoftales.com/fairy_tales.html#gsc.tab=0)

**WORKSHEET 1**







Colour the image below.



## WORKSHEET 2

### FAIRYTALES TROPE

Name the traditional fairytale figures below and describe them briefly.

	1.
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6.

**Answers (the answers supply one fact about each of the traditional tale figures):**

1. The Golden Eagle, symbolic of protection, strength and resilience, clarity and vision.
2. A Dragon is a mythical fire-breathing creature that often features in traditional tales.
3. Pegasus is the winged stallion from Greek mythology.
4. The Three Billy Goats Gruff, and the Troll appear in the fairytale.
5. Wolves often appear in fairytales such as Little Red Riding Hood.
6. The Octopus in many ancient tales is symbolic of divine power.