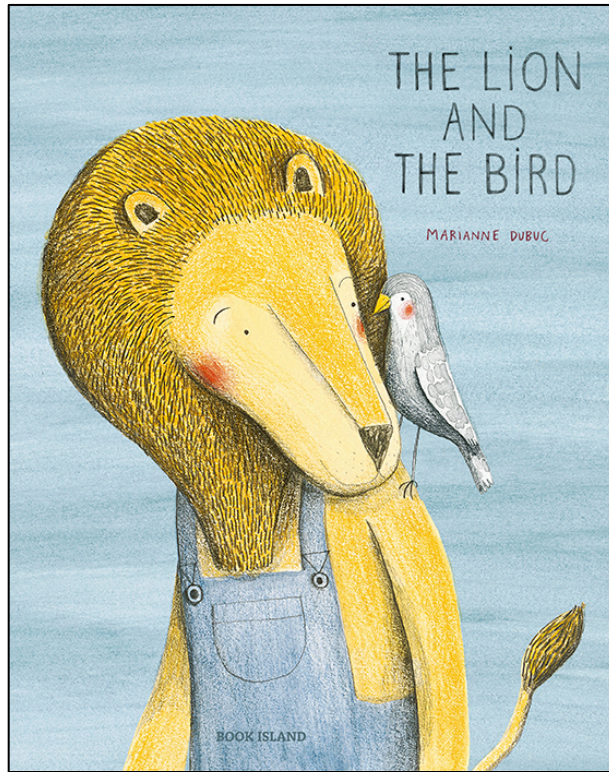




BOOK ISLAND



Teaching Notes

The Lion and the Bird

by Marianne Dubuc

translated by Sarah Ardizzone



Synopsis

This charming book records the friendship between a lion and a bird.

On an autumn day, Lion is clearing out his garden when a small bird falls from a flock overhead and lands, injured, on the ground. Lion bandages the bird's damaged wing and they both watch as the flock flies on, leaving the bird in Lion's care. As autumn turns to winter, Lion provides warmth and companionship, sharing his home and his life with the bird. Spring arrives and one day the recovered bird flies off to rejoin the flock, leaving Lion bereft and alone. Lion continues his solitary life throughout summer, his loneliness echoed in the illustrations. However when autumn returns, so too does the bird, ready for another shared winter.

The Author

French-Canadian Marianne Dubuc is an international award-winning illustrator and writer of books for children of all ages. She studied graphic design at the University of Quebec, Montreal. In 2014, she won the Governor General Award for outstanding illustrations in *The Lion and the Bird*.

Themes

This is a book about friendship. It explores a range of emotions very familiar to young children – friendship, love, loneliness, longing, loyalty and happiness.

The text is simple and spare. Lion finds a wounded bird and they become friends. After some time, the bird returns to its flock and Lion experiences loss and loneliness. Time passes and the bird returns reviving their friendship and happiness.

The parallel simplicity of the illustrations and their gentle, muted colours evoke the feelings of the characters.

Setting the story within the seasons of the year suggests that as the seasons have a natural rhythm, so too do our emotions. The changing seasons are a metaphor for our feelings, which too have their seasons.



Activities

Sharing the book

Students in years 1, 2 and 3 will enjoy this charming story.

Read the book with a small group or with the class. On the first reading, read the text without comment or interruptions. Suggest to the students that they look carefully at the illustrations throughout the first reading, saving their comments until they have read the story through to the end.

At the end of this reading, facilitate a brief discussion about the story. Ask:

Who are the characters in the story?

What happened to them?

What do you think this story is about?

Reread the story, drawing the students' attention to details in the text and the illustrations. Encourage the students to talk about their interpretations of the illustrations to draw out the understanding that Marianne Dubuc uses her illustrative technique to focus the reader on the characters' emotions. At the same time, the style of her illustrations matches the mood of the animals' feelings and helps the reader to empathise with these feelings. Ask:

Have you noticed who is talking in the text?

Think of some words that might describe the range of colours the artist uses. (Soft, gentle, pale, muted, water-coloured, washed-out)

How do the colours the artist uses in the illustrations make you feel?

What do you notice about the background on many of the pages? Why do you think the artist uses so much white space?

Notice the two blank pages that are placed in the winter section. What do you think these pages are symbols of?

How does the artist illustrate that spring is coming? How does she show that the birds are returning?

What colours does the artist use to indicate warmth and cold, day and night?

Look carefully at how the artist has drawn Lion's face. How does she show Lion's feelings through her drawings?



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Making friendship cards

After reading the story, have a brief discussion about friendships. Questions could include:

When do you know someone is your friend?

Is it easy or difficult to make friends?

What are some good ways to make friends?

Fold sheets of A4 paper in half and have the students make cards. They can illustrate the fronts of their cards with drawings or photographs of themselves with a friend and write their friend's name under the illustration.

Inside the card, they can write *You are my friend because ...* Model this sentence with some written examples on a whiteboard but encourage the students to think of their own reasons.

You are my friend because you walk to school with me.

Completed cards can be given to their friend or displayed in the classroom.

Note: Teachers will need to ensure that every student receives a friendship card.

Developing a vocabulary for feelings

Have the class sit in a circle. Read the story aloud, displaying the illustrations so that all can see them. Have the students identify the feelings of the characters at each stage of the story. Model how to play the game, *This reminds me of ...* by reflecting on the emotions of the scene where Lion finds the wounded bird on the ground.

You might say: *That reminds me of when I fell off the swing at the park. It was painful and I cried.* Or you might focus on Lion's feelings and say: *That reminds me of when my little brother fell off the swing and he was really hurt so I cuddled him till Dad came.*

Then, on the next page where Lion bandages the bird, ask: *Does this remind you of feelings you have had?*

Students can have turns telling the group of feelings they can recall or they can work in pairs, sharing with the person next to them. (This allows greater participation.) Prompt them to begin their recall with: *That reminds me of ...*



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When the story is finished, make a group list of the students' feelings that the story evoked. This is a useful activity to extend the students' vocabulary with words they can use to describe their feelings. Make lists of words that describe happy feelings and sad feelings.

Happy feelings	Sad feelings
excited	empty
safe	scared
cheerful	disappointed

Have the students choose some of the listed words and write sentences describing when they felt these emotions.

I felt lonely when my friend moved to Australia.

I was excited when Josh came to my place after school.

Discuss: *Is it possible to be happy all the time?*

What makes our feelings change? (Events, moods, tiredness, hunger, illness)

What do we call feeling about other people's feelings? (Empathy)

Is empathy important? How does empathy help us to be a good friend?

Retelling the story as a play

A group or class can perform this story as a play. Year 1 students will need a greater level of support with this, while year 2 and older students can brainstorm ways to tell this story as a play.

Prompt the students to notice that only Lion speaks in the story. While one student plays the Lion, others can take turns at being the narrator, with each presenting a page of text. The student allocated the part of the bird must mime their part throughout the story while a chorus of "birds" can fly across the stage at appropriate times.

Add music and costumes for a performance at school assembly. Using this text as a performance piece allows students to use gestures, facial expressions and movement to express emotions. There is a limited amount of text to be remembered and there are a range of parts, which ensures that all students can participate.



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Rewriting the story from the bird's point of view

Year 1 students can include the bird's point of view by creating speech bubbles and writing speech for the bird. Model this by putting Lion's speech into speech bubbles and prompting the students to add bubbles and speech for the bird to create a dialogue.

Older students can, as a group, rewrite the story from the bird's point of view. Have students each take responsibility for illustrating one page and work through the story as a group co-constructing the story page by page.

In the bird's version, the first page will show what the birds are doing before they arrive above Lion's garden. The first words of text might be along the lines of *The birds were chasing each other among the clouds*. Have the students work out which illustrations will be completely different to those in the published book and which will show the same scenes. (When Lion and the bird are apart, students must use their imaginations to illustrate what the birds are doing. When the characters are together, they must write what the bird is saying.)

MARKETING & PROMOTION

Our Australian distributor, Dennis Jones & Associates, will be presenting this title to the trade.

