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Leonard Doesn't Dance

By Frances Watts, Illustrated by Judy Watson

Book Summary

All the birds are excited about the Big Beaky Bird Ball – except Leonard. His warble-warble waltz with the magpies is more wobble-wobble, and his caw-caw can-can with the crows is a can't-can't. The puffins are prancing, the rosellas are rocking and you should see the flamingo go-go-go! Everyone is jumping and jiving, but not Leonard.

Leonard doesn't dance.

Then an unexpected encounter changes everything ...

From the award-winning creators of *Goodnight, Mice!* comes a toe-tapping story about finding your own rhythm.

Key Learning Outcomes

- ACELA1462
- ACELA1448
- ACELA1452
- ACELT1581
- ACELT1585
- ACELY1667
- ACELY1659

Themes

- creativity
- individuality
- talents
- learning new things
- giving up
- friendship

Recommended Ages: 3+

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

How many different types of birds can you find in the book?

- Choose one of the birds and make a list of what you can learn about them from the book (what colour are they? where do they live? can they fly?).
- See if you can find out three things about your bird that you don't learn from the book. (You could read a book about them, ask someone who might know, or go to a park or zoo!)
- Make a poster that displays the things you've learned about your bird and present it to the rest of the class.

Images and textures

- In stories like this one, pictures are just as important as the words in helping you understand the story. What do you think about the pictures? Do they make you feel a particular way? Do they show you something about the story that you don't discover through the words?
- The illustrations in this book are very detailed and textured, which allows the reader to imagine the textures of the trees and the birds. Choose one of the pictures in the book. What do you like and dislike about it? How do you think the illustrator has created the textures you see? What might you use to create different patterns and textures in pictures?
- Paint a picture of a tree or bird and use an unexpected object to create texture in your work. (it might be something you find in the garden, or the kitchen or even the rubbish!)

Alliteration

- Alliteration is when a group of words start with the same sound. You can find out more about this here <https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/articles/zq4c7p3>
- One example of alliteration can be found on page 5, when the magpies are described as 'gliding gracefully'. How many other examples can you find?
- As a class, talk about the way alliteration can be used to create sound and movement in a story or poem. Try to come up with three of your own examples of alliteration.

Personal strengths

- At first Leonard is excited to learn how to dance. But the more dances he tries, the more he feels that he isn't good at any type of dance. In your book, write down one thing you wish you could do better. Now write down one thing you're proud of doing well - what do you know how to do that you could teach someone else?

- Your skills are what make you unique, but friendship and community come from teaching these skills to others. Have a sharing day in class where you share something you're good at with the rest of the class – perhaps it's a new dance, or drawing a particular animal, or something you like to cook!

Writing journal

- One of the most important things in a writer toolbox is their notebook. A notebook is where writers write down observations and story ideas, things they've seen and heard that will give detail to their stories. Start your own observation notebook.
- Over the weekend, take a walk in your local park and write down the interesting things you see and hear. Share these with your class when you get back to school, and pick out three of the most interesting to come up with a character that you might like to write a story about. What kind of story would you write about this character? Draw them and share your ideas.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frances Watts was born in Switzerland and grew up in Australia. Her bestselling picture books include *Goodnight, Mice!* (illustrated by Judy Watson), the winner of the 2012 Prime Minister's Award for Children's Fiction; 2006 Children's Book Council of Australia Honour Book *Kisses for Daddy* (illustrated by David Legge); and 2008 Children's Book Council of Australia award-winner *Parsley Rabbit's Book about Books* (illustrated by David Legge). Her young adult title *The Peony Lantern*, set in nineteenth-century Japan, was shortlisted for a NSW Premier's Literary Award in 2016. For more, visit www.franceswatts.com

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Melbourne illustrator Judy Watson works from her home studio with views over bushland and the Sweetwater Creek. Her work is accompanied by the sounds of many wild birds, bees from the hive in her garden and the rambunctious wrestling of her two dogs. Occasionally one of her hens will crow. (Yes, they do.)

She has illustrated over 20 children's books but read a lot more. Her first picture book, *Goodnight, Mice!*, won the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Children's Fiction. She has teamed up again with Frances Watts to create *Leonard Doesn't Dance*. It is her most colourful book to date.

judywatson.net