

Title:	There's No Such Thing
Author:	Heidi McKinnon
Publisher:	Allen & Unwin
Price:	\$19.99
ISBN:	9781760877279
Publication Date:	April 2020
Audience:	3-6
Reader:	Carolyn Walsh, Allen & Unwin

Synopsis:

Bear can't sleep.

Did you *hear that?* Did you *feel that?* *What was it?*

It wasn't a hungry giant or a blood-sucking spider or a fire-breathing dragon because there is NO SUCH THING...

Is there?

Style:

An exercise in apparent simplicity, this book features bold graphics to tell a story that will delight a very young audience.

But in the so-called simplicity there is much to interest and intrigue. There are shapes, creatures (real or imagined – we are not quite sure early on) and textures that speak of a worrying world out there beyond Bear and Ted's tent.

The story is told largely in dialogue between the two likeable characters, with the occasional onomatopoeic sound bursting out of the illustrations. However, the words are only part of the story as the viewer fills in gaps via illustrations that, as in all good picture books, amplify the text in interesting and unexpected ways.

Authors' Background:

Heidi McKinnon is an author / illustrator who lives in sunny Melbourne. Heidi has a background in art and design. Her books are mostly based on true stories, except for one.

Heidi's first picture book, *I Just Ate My Friend*, was shortlisted for numerous awards, including the Children's Book Council Crichton Award and has been published around the world, including in the USA, France, Japan, China and Korea.

Heidi has a dream of one day living in the jungle, as long as there are no spiders.

Suggestions for classroom discussion and application:

- Before opening *There's No Such Thing* look at the title and cover design and ask questions such as:
 - What sort of animal is the larger character? What do you think the smaller character might be?
 - Look at the face of the larger character and see if you can guess how he is feeling?
 - Is the smaller character feeling that way, too? What things on his face tell you this?
 - Do you think this story will be told in the daytime or night? What things on the cover give you a clue?
 - Look closely at the title of the book. Can you see anything different about the letter o in the word no, the letter h in the word such and the letter g in the word thing?
 - Do each of these funny letters (o, h, g) remind you of monsters? Why?
 - Can you think of a time when someone said to you, 'There's no such thing'? Why did they say that to you?
- Read the story through once and then put the book down and ask students:
 - Why do you think Bear gets so scared by everything outside his tent?
 - What does he imagine every time he hears or feels something?
 - Is Ted as scared as Bear?
 - What does Ted say to calm Bear every time he becomes scared?
 - Bear wasn't right to be scared about monsters, but he was right. Can you explain?
 - Did you like the way the book ended? Why?
- Explain to students that sometimes the way a word is presented on a page tells us more than the word itself. Turn to the page where the word *Screep!* appears and encourage students to (a) describe the differences between this and the words on the opposite page and (b) how the way it looks changes the sound of the word when it is read out loud. Now turn to the page where Bear screamed 'SOMETHING TOUCHED

MY FOOT!' and describe how the way the look of the word/sound ‘GAAAAAAA!!’ tells us a lot about how Bear said it.

- Ask students if they have ever heard the saying, ‘A picture is worth a thousand words’ and discuss what the saying means. Turn to the page where Bear finally closes his eyes and is thinking of nice things. Look closely at the nice things he is thinking of and make a list of as many as you can. After compiling the list can you guess what Bear cares about more than anything else? [Hint: food]
- Ask students to go back to the book’s cover and describe how the illustrator has shown Bear is scared and Ted is happy. Explain that illustrators are very good at drawing feelings using simple techniques such as straight or curved lines for smiles. Open the book and look closely at Bear and Ted’s expressions and how they change in the story. Note that eyes and eyebrows are particularly important here and how Bear’s fear is shown by moving his pupils from side to side, changing the size of his eyes, and changing the angle of his eyebrows. Now ask students to look at Ted’s face and find examples of how his eyes and eyebrows change as the story progresses. How has the illustrator shown him calming sleeping [eyes are u shapes], half awake [one eye is at an acute angle and one is a round circle], wide awake [both round circles], grumpy [eyebrows angled inwards and extra close to eyes] or surprised [eyebrows lifted high over the eyes]. Encourage students to practise drawing faces awake and asleep, and with lots of different emotions.
- Ask students if they found the book’s ending funny and why? Talk about what they thought might happen at the end of the story as it was being read to them and how the real ending differed from what they expected. Why is it funnier that Ted makes the final discovery when Bear is asleep? Can students name any other books, movies or TV shows where there was a surprise twist at the end?
- Ask students to explain what they liked and didn’t like about the book? Ask them if they would recommend their best friend read this story and why?