

The Owl Who Got Left Behind

By Martine Murray & Illustrated by Anna Read

Publisher: Parachute Press

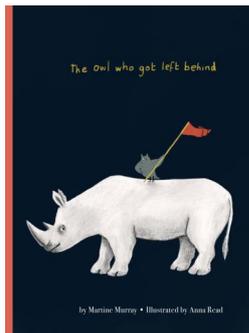
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One moon-lit night on a faraway beach, somewhere in the mists of time, an owl is grieving the departure of his friend who has sailed away in the pea-green boat. When a passing rhino tries to comfort him, he almost misses out on the best friendship he will ever have.

This is the first in a series of tales, in which Owl and Rhino dramatise the familiar patterns, mishaps and tenderness of friendship and relationship. While Owl is anxious, heady, and adventurous, Rhino is calm, constant and compassionate. But together they find a mutually enhancing equilibrium. In this story and via humorous and poignant illustrations, Owl and Rhino are swept up in the strange dance of losing, longing, and refinding.

A quiet love story about almost overlooking what we do have by longing for what we can't have.



Teacher Notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher. A full version is available on our website.

Themes:

- Friendships
- Relationships

Discussion Questions:

- The owl in this story is left behind as his friend sails away. There are many ways we might feel left behind. Sometimes it is because we can't keep up. For example, sometimes we can't join in with our older siblings, because we are younger than them and can't play in the same way. Sometimes we feel left out because everyone is singing a song we don't know. Or sometimes we feel left out of a conversation because we aren't confident enough to join in. We can even feel left out just because we feel or appear different in some way. In what ways have you felt left behind or left out? What does it feel like? Have you seen other people be left out of a game? How can you help include others who have been left out or left behind?
- The Owl is so miserable that he doesn't even notice a tasty mouse or the lapping sea. When we are sad sometimes all we can see is our own sadness and yet the world is there to draw you out and console you with its beauty, its mysteries and ever-changing view. Whatever we put our attention on grows. When you are sad, what do you put your attention on? Are there things that cheer you up? Write a list of all the things that cheer you up when you are sad. Try to make this list into a poem. Make a card for someone with a picture on the front and the poem inside it and then give it to them. How did it make you feel to give this and how was it received?

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- Rhino plonks herself on her heavy bottom. Owl flaps and fidgets. How has the author used the animal's physical qualities to evoke character? Do you know other books where animals are used in this way? Think about an animal you know, it could be a pet or a wild animal. What words describe them? Try to be particular. Use verbs - how does this animal move, sleep, rest, run, and hunt? How would a mouse move for instance, and how would an elephant move? What does this tell us about that animal? Now think about someone you know? Can you also find words to describe them, the way they move, or laugh for instance? Try to find words that tell us something about this person. If you were an animal, what animal would most do you think would align with you? Can you draw yourself as this animal?
- Owls are meant to be wise. In ancient Greece, the goddess Athena who symbolised wisdom was often depicted with an owl next to her. Why do you think owls were associated with wisdom? The ancient Greeks thought that owls had an inner light that meant they could see in the night. What is wisdom? Is it something that helps us see what is otherwise unseen by those who aren't wise? Seeing something in the darkness? Having insight? Owls have big eyes which make them look solemn, but which also suggest sight. What is the relationship between seeing and wisdom or insight? Why are older people often the ones we see as being wise? Is it because they have "seen" more of life? Have you had experiences that have "shown" you something about life or disclosed something to you that was otherwise hidden?
- The Owl who got left behind is a story of how two animals become friends. Why is friendship important? What do you love about your friends? Do a drawing of a friend and write on it all the things you value about them. Perhaps you could give your friend this drawing. Do you like being a friend? Can you imagine befriending someone who is lonely? Have you ever done this? Using your own experience write a story about making friends.
- Rhino is kind to Owl. She stays by him because he is sad. Can we learn to be kind? Could you start a kindness project in your class? You would need to find and look for opportunities to be kind. For instance, if someone is left out, how can you include them? Is there someone who doesn't have a friend? Can you be friendly to them? Can you make it a project so that each week you can try to do three acts of kindness? This could be giving a compliment. Helping someone. Being friendly to someone. Showing an interest in them and their concerns. At the end of the week, each person could write down their three kind acts and how it made them feel to do the acts.