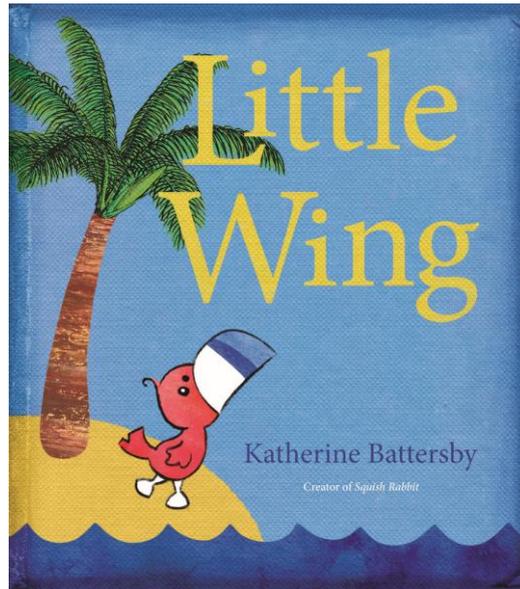


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LITTLE WING

Katherine Battersby



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian
in context with the Australian curriculum
(English)

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SYNOPSIS

The smartest bird lives alone on an island with only books for friends. Teaching himself to read and write, he learns all manner of things, but still feels that something is missing from his life. Unsure of his place in the world, he sees a creature that looks somewhat like him, flying in the sky and he starts to wonder

...

Little Wing is a tender story about perseverance, curiosity, determination and the joy of learning. More than that, it explores the importance of belonging and identity.

THEMES

Identity and Belonging:

- Little Wing is trying to find out who and what he is, and where he belongs.

Loneliness:

- With only books for company, Little Wing becomes lonely.

Courage:

- Little Wing has the courage to learn new things, take risks and push himself beyond his boundaries.

Perseverance

- It is through Little Wing's perseverance that he eventually finds his true self.

Curiosity:

- Little Wing has an inquiring mind, and is always willing to learn new things.

WRITING STYLE

Little Wing is written in third person, past tense. Much of the narrative is told through the beautiful illustrations that allow for extensive visual literacy. The written text is uncluttered and shows Little Wing's courageous, curious and delightful character. He may be little, but he is determined to find his place in the world. It is suitable for younger readers, but also has applications for older students.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading, examine the title page. What clues are we given about Little Wing and his life? Make predictions about the text from this page.

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- After reading the text, compare the end pages at the front and end of the book. How do these contribute to the narrative?
- Examine the books that Little Wing reads. What are these books about and how do they relate to the text? Use these subjects to learn more about the Dewey Decimal system and to locate books in your library.
- Why do the books teach Little Wing ‘almost everything’? Why is the word ‘almost’ italicised? What does he still have to learn?
- What is it that Little Wing is missing in his life? How does he know that something is missing?
- When Little Wing realises he isn’t in any of his books, why are the books surrounding him illustrated without colour?
- Why isn’t Little Wing happy being a builder or baker?
- What is your favourite illustration in *Little Wing*? Why is this your favourite? Discuss with a friend.
- Little Wing learns about all sorts of things that fly. Borrow books from your library about flight. How were these inventions created? What role did perseverance and courage play in making these objects fly?
- Create a table or poster that includes as many flying creatures as you can. Label each creature. (Differentiation: Write a brief report for each creature explaining how they fly.)
- Little Wing draws diagrams of how the bird uses its wings to fly. Choose another animal that moves in a different way (such as a snake or dolphin) and draw a diagram to explain how it moves.
- How does Little Wing show courage?
- What can you learn about yourself from reading books such as *Little Wing*?
- What obstacles does Little Wing face in trying to learn to fly and find his home? How does he overcome these challenges?
- To help teach Little Wing more about himself, create a poster with information about birds. Include their common features as well as facts about diet, habitat, behaviour and appearance.
- How have books and reading helped you in your own life? Share examples of books that have meant a lot to you.
- What role does the island setting play in the text? How does it add to the narrative?
- What does Little Wing learn about himself in *Little Wing*?
- Who in your life gives you ‘little wings’ to help you?
- Write and illustrate a sequel to *Little Wing*.

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- Use *Little Wing* to examine modality. Make a table to help understand this language feature:

small		
		tallest
	smarter	
big		
	short	
		happiest

- Working with a partner, choose one of the other birds on the island at the end of the book. Create a dialogue to perform between Little Wing and that bird to perform to your class.
- Have you ever felt like Little Wing? Share with a friend or write a reflection to explain.
- Create a display of *Little Wing* by creating an island on the back wall of the classroom. Have students make a feather each, writing on it what message they received from the book.
- Recreate your favourite page from *Little Wing* by using collage, similar to Katherine Battersby's artwork.
- How important is it to feel a sense of belonging? How important are family and friends to you? Write a reflection to share.
- Create a story similar to *Little Wing* that explores themes of perseverance, courage and belonging using a different species as your main character.
- Make your own paper airplanes, or have a kite-flying afternoon at school.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

Little Wing and I share a lot in common. As a girl, I spent much of my time lost in books, fascinated by the other worlds captured and released within them. I loved to learn by reading about other people's lives and, much like Little Wing, I was also looking for myself reflected in the pages; searching for others like me. But I've also had to learn to live outside of books, too. I had to stretch my wings and learn through trying things out and sometimes making mistakes and eventually I found others in the real world that were just like me. It's no surprise, then, that themes of identity and the search for belonging have crept into my story.

Little Wing is also about learning to fly (both literally and metaphorically) and having the courage to make big changes in your life. In the way that life sometimes imitates art, as I was finishing this story I met someone quite special

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and ended up making the decision to move to Canada to be with him. So Little Wing and I have really gone on this journey together – it is a story I started on my dining room table in Australia, listening to tropical birds through my open window, and finished on a desk overlooking a snowy street in Canada. Little Wing and I both glimpsed something special which helped us to fly, and, funnily enough, we both ended up moving to the other side of the world because of it!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katherine Battersby is the critically acclaimed children’s author and illustrator of *Squish Rabbit*, which has been published in Australia, the USA and China. Her picture books have been shortlisted for the Crichton Award, named Notable Books in the Early Childhood category of the CBCA Book of the Year Awards and shortlisted for the Speech Pathology Book of the Year Awards. She has also had many short stories published in magazines and anthologies. In another life, Katherine worked for many years as a paediatric occupational therapist, specialising as a children’s counsellor, and she has also studied graphic design. She grew up by the beach in North Queensland and currently divides her time between Brisbane (Australia) and Ottawa (Canada). Visit her at: www.katherinebattersby.com