

Stitches and Stuffing

TEACHERS NOTES

Written by Carrie Gallasch and illustrated by Sara Acton

Published by Little Hare in August 2017

SYNOPSIS

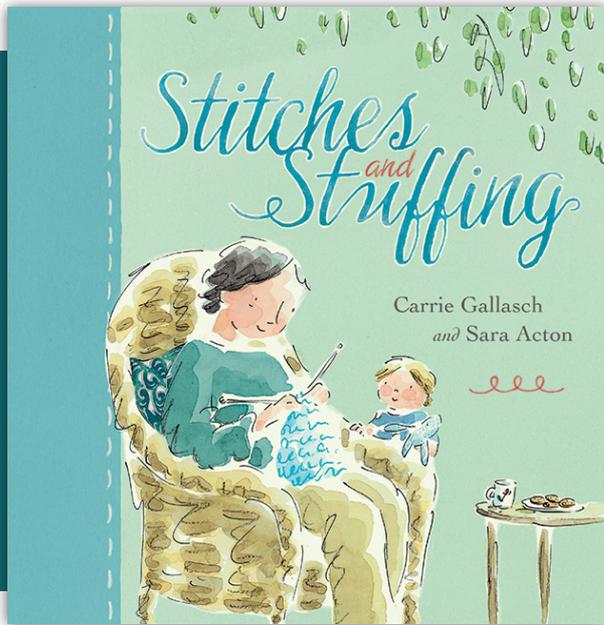
Adeline's beloved Bunnybear goes with her everywhere, but one night he is damaged by the dog. Nanna sews Bunnybear back together, but this new Bunnybear is stiff and strange and Adeline puts him on a shelf and leaves him there. Then Nanna goes away, and Adeline realises it is not just stitches and stuffing that holds Bunnybear together ... it is love.

THEMES

Stitches and Stuffing explores oldness and newness, familiarity and strangeness, change and resistance to change. When Adeline's Bunnybear is chewed up by the dog and Nanna remodels him, Adeline puts her beloved toy aside because he is too different from what he once was. But then Nanna goes away, and Adeline's heart goes out to the newfangled Bunnybear in a different way. *Stitches and Stuffing* suggests that, when circumstances or friends change, they can sometimes attain greater value than they previously had. Like Adeline, we can learn to look past change as a negative thing, and embrace its new worth.

WRITING STYLE

Stitches and Stuffing is the first book by author Carrie Gallasch. Her writing style is understated, her voice is assured, and she avoids dwelling on emotive language to achieve her purpose. She expresses the minimum of action and feeling, and instead modulates pace and rhythm for emotional and narrative effect. The early section of the narrative is told in a lively, almost colloquial voice. For example, the opening sentence claims that Adeline and Bunnybear had been together 'since ... forever', an exaggerated way of expressing a long period of time, and that would be scientifically unverifiable. The following sentences tend to be long and rhythmic, extending over subsequent pages without a break, and even encapsulating an entire bedtime routine. As the drama escalates, the rhythm changes: the sentences become short and abrupt. Then, as the action continues to unfold, they grow longer and more gently rhythmic again. The final shorter line echoes the second line of the story, reinstating the sense of continuity that was disrupted by the dramatic events of the main narrative.



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ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Sara Acton is a rising star in the world of picture-book illustration. She uses trademark spontaneous ink-and-watercolour washes, and exhibits a keen observation of children, portraying a spectrum of childhood emotions with the minimum of mark-making. These qualities make her perfect for gentle domestic narratives that depict a safe and carefree realm of childhood, and lend warmth and assurance to narratives that touch on difficult feelings and experiences. Sara's minimal mark-making is complemented by carefully selected colours in a restricted palette, creating a coherence that underlies and binds together the world of the narrative.

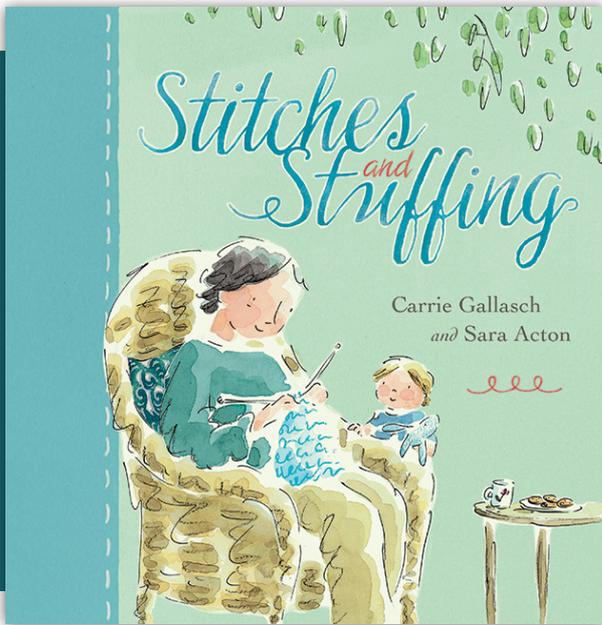
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carrie Gallasch is an early childhood teacher in rural South Australia. Her passion for children's literacy began twelve years ago, when she first experienced reading aloud to her students. Now with children of her own, Carrie has an excuse to follow them barefoot in the garden and be inspired by the mischief they get up to. She loves nothing more than a great story and a great coffee, but not necessarily in that order. *Stitches and Stuffing* is Carrie's debut picture book.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Sara Acton is an award-winning author and illustrator. Sara grew up in the Cotswolds in England and always loved drawing, especially people and other strange creatures. She studied BA Hons Fine Art and trained as an art teacher in London. After teaching and practising art in England and New Zealand, Sara moved with her family to Australia.

Sara now lives in a small seaside village on the New South Wales coast, where she enjoys writing and illustrating for children in her studio, while drinking tea and eating far too many biscuits. Her first picture book, *Ben and Duck*, won the 2012 Children's Book Council of Australia Crichton Award for new illustrators.



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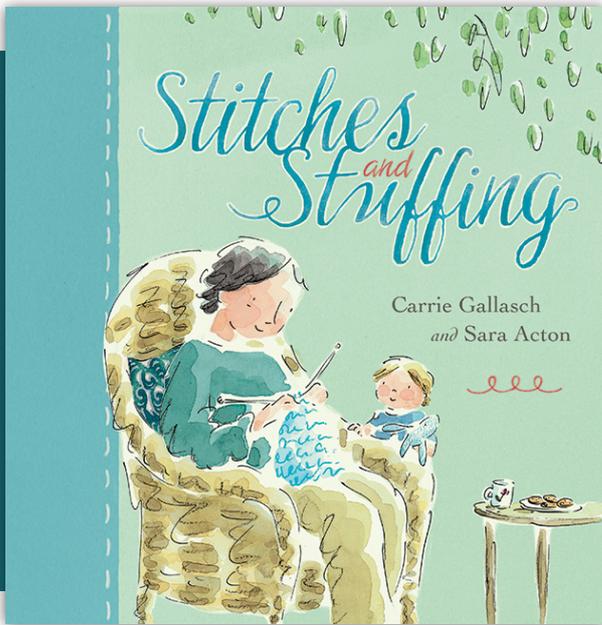
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STUDY NOTES

1. The first sentence of the text states that Adeline and Bunnybear had 'been together since ... forever'. This is a hyperbolic (or exaggerated) statement, yet most readers are likely to understand what is meant by this. Think of other ways in which we use hyperbole to express something that is important to us. How does the use of hyperbole inject significance into a statement? Consider statements about time and space (including size and number) in particular.
2. At what point in the story does the structure of the sentences change? What are the main features of the two sentences that describe these dramatic events?
3. What are the dominant colours on the pages of *Stitches and Stuffing*? Find other books illustrated by Sara Acton and consider whether the colour choices differ from book to book, and how these choices complement the themes and emotions of the texts they illustrate.
4. In the second half of *Stitches and Stuffing*, how does the colour yellow become significant to the meaning of the narrative? Look at other picture books to determine how (or whether) other illustrators employ a specific colour for narrative purposes.





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ACTIVITIES

1. The story centres on the relationship between Adeline and her Bunnybear, who have 'been together since ... forever'. Have your class bring in their favourite or oldest teddy bear and have a classroom show-and-tell.
2. *Stitches and Stuffing* also explores change and resistance to change, where Adeline learns to look past change as a negative thing, and embrace its new worth. Have your class explore ways of dealing with change, from a new pair of shoes to moving house.
3. In the story, Adeline takes her Bunnybear outside to play in the garden and on the beach. Following on from the first activity, have your class take their teddy bears outside and have a teddy bears' picnic!

