

not so Scary bear



Teachers' notes

Written and Illustrated by Ruth Waters
Published by Windy Hollow Books

Note from the author

1. What was the inspiration for the story?

I first had the idea of *Not So Scary Bear* when I was on a very rare weekend away (sometimes you need a break from the norm for the sparks to ignite). At the time I didn't know the full story but I did know I wanted to create a book for my 2-year-old son Sam about being yourself, and not what mum, society or even yourself believes how you *should* behave. In particular, the gender stereotypes that we place on our child, other children, grown-ups and, especially, ourselves.

I, therefore, decided a bear – scary but often depicted as cuddly - would be best suited to carry the title role! A bear that believes he has to frighten all the other forest creatures - as this is clearly what bears are supposed to do - *but* would prefer to spend his days at home knitting and his nights gazing at stars through his telescope.

That is, until an unlikely friendship blossoms between himself and Not So Quiet Mouse (who, incidentally, also happens to have his own anti-stereotyping battle going on ... but that's another story!

2. What was the illustration process?

As my first book, this was a steep learning curve but I gradually found my own way. I had initially created the book solely for the eyes of my son Sam as a gift for his second birthday. It was some of the illustrations from this that I sent to Windy Hollow publishers and to my amazement led to a publishing deal. However, when I knew it was going to, hopefully, be seen not just by Sam, I decided to revisit some of the illustrations and, in particular, how to lay out the illustrations so that the words too had space to live and flow.

Once I had created the sketches in pencil and a dummy version of the picture book, I decided on the colour palette. As the story is set in a forest, I decided upon autumnal colours. I then used acrylic paint and a paint roller to create sheets and sheets of paper to use for my collage. Next, it was all about cutting, gluing and making an almighty mess! I also enlisted the help of my eyebrow tweezers for the extra fiddly bits, such as attaching the sixteen claws to the bear's hands and feet. The finished illustrations were scanned and I was then able to make minor edits, such as removing any visible bits of glue!

More details on the illustration process can be found here:

<https://www.ruth-waters.com/book-illustrations>

<https://www.facebook.com/ruthwatersillustrations/videos/403315093436275/>





Activities

Before Reading

Take a look at the cover and see if you can guess what this book may be about.

Does the bear look scary?

Why do you think the title is Not so Scary Bear?

After Reading

Why do you think Scary Bear had to hide his true nature?

What so you think is the most important thing to Scary Bear?

In what way does the story challenge the stereotype of bears?

Why do you think the author made the main character a bear and why has she chosen a mouse to be his friend?

Look at the titles of the books on Scary Bear's shelves. Can you come up with some other funny bear related book titles?

What books do you think would be on the mouse's shelf?

Art

Ruth Waters has used collage to illustrate this book.

Try using collage to build your own forest scene

Writing

How would the Not So Scary Bear story be different if it was told by the mouse?

Can you make up your own story about the mouse, the fox or the owl?

