

RABBY BRAVE



PATRICK GUEST & TOM JELLETT

Rabby The Brave TEACHERS NOTES

Written by Patrick Guest and Illustrated by Tom Jellett

Published by Little Hare, March 2018

SYNOPSIS

'By the morning, Snuggles was in big trouble.'

Leon has had his soft toy, Rabby, by his side since his first birthday. When baby Lily is born, Leon and Rabby find two new friends in Lily and her soft toy, Snuggles the elephant. The four of them play together and go on all sorts of adventures. But one night, Snuggles is left outside and, by morning, is seriously injured. Leon can't sleep knowing that Lily doesn't have Snuggles to comfort her, so he comes up with a plan. Together, he and his parents take parts of Rabby and use them to save Snuggles, creating Captain Rabby in the process! Together, Leon, Lily, Snuggles and Captain Rabby sail out over the jumbling, tumbling seas once more.

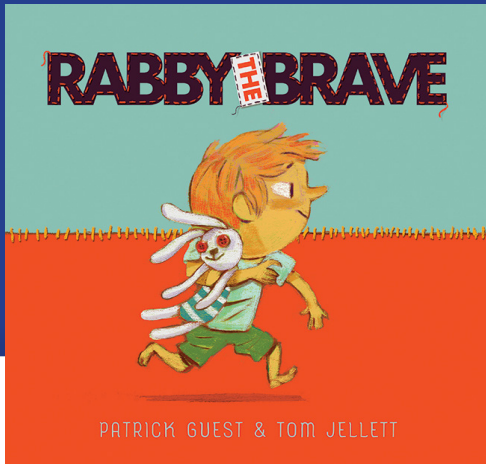
THEMES

Rabby the Brave was inspired by a friend of the author who became an organ donor. When Leon selflessly recognises that he and Rabby can do something to save Snuggles for his little sister, he shows an enormous amount of compassion. This story, told in simple, relatable terms, will engage young readers with themes of empathy, compassion and what we are able to give up to help others. It introduces the concept of organ donation without mentioning it explicitly. Rabby and Snuggles represent those who face challenges, and those who make sacrifices to help them, themes that children will recognise from many of their daily interactions.

The book covers such themes as:

- Empathy
- Loss
- Bravery
- Compassion
- Sacrifice
- Family
- Love





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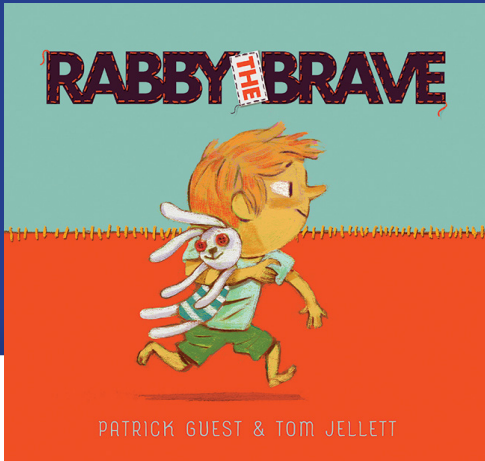
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WRITING STYLE

Patrick Guest uses simple, pared back language to introduce young children to sophisticated themes. He sets up the significance of the relationship between Leon and Rabby from page one, introducing their bond in simple terms of Rabby being there from the beginning, loving Leon unconditionally, and being Leon's favourite friend. Guest builds on these concepts when he introduces Lily and Snuggles, likening the younger pair to the older, and expanding Leon and Rabby's adventures to include Lily and Snuggles, tying the four of them together in adventures, without over-explaining the significance of this. This early setup allows Guest to continue to use short, simple sentences when he introduces the more complicated ideas of Snuggles being injured, and of Rabby sacrificing parts of himself to save his friend, themes echoed in the sacrifice that Leon makes to help Lily, who is hurting because of the loss of her friend.

The sparse language — there are rarely more than two sentences to a page, and the sentences themselves are incredibly short — allows young readers to imagine themselves into the story, inviting empathy by giving them prompts to bring their own experiences to the reading. Phrases such as 'Rabby was his favourite' are specific enough to locate the reader in the story, but have a sense of general familiarity to them, and children reading and exploring the book will recognise the importance of having a comfort toy or object from their own lives. This is further supported by the places Leon, Rabby, Lily and Snuggles play, and the types of adventures they go on — all children will be able to relate to adventure play, to the rich worlds created during that time, and to the importance of the people (and toys) involved.





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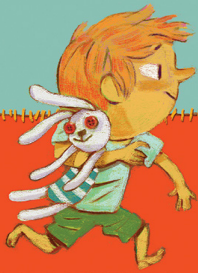
ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Tom Jellett's illustrations support the tone of the book, but also help readers interpret and relate to the text. The whimsical, almost aged, style of illustration – accompanied by the bright golden tones of the colour palette – sets up an emotional landscape that supports themes of imagination, play and childhood. The simple blocks of colour used in the background of the pages mirrors the simple language of the text, and draws readers' attention to the images, inviting them to make the connections between the action taking place in the pictures and the text.

As the story unfolds, and the four main characters set out on their adventures together — climbing volcanoes, riding elephants and sailing over jumbling, tumbling seas — the illustrations signal the importance of imagination in this play, and reinforce the importance of the toys to the children. When the text says that they are climbing volcanoes, even though we can see from the illustrations that they are climbing a mound of cushions, young readers know from experience that in that space, in that moment, they are climbing volcanoes. And so when Lily can't sleep because Snuggles is damaged, readers know that Snuggles is not just a toy, but a friend, a family member. The combined illustrations and text signal to young readers that they are being taken seriously, and that the creators of the book understand their shifting realities and the importance of the things that anchor them in home and family.



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AUTHOR BACKGROUND

Born into an ever-growing family of ten (plus pets), **Patrick Guest** was raised in the Melbourne beachside suburb of Seaford. His childhood consisted of footy, running through the tea-tree, Dungeons and Dragons, and ten-part harmonies in the family's bright orange, spluttering VW Kombi van. Even as a child, Patrick was writing stories, starring in his own Powerful Patrick series: a major hit with his mum, dad and rabbit Snowball.

Confusion, insecurity and his desire to be Michael J Fox took Patrick down the corporate path. After gaining a commerce degree at Melbourne University, followed by a three-year stint with a big mining company, Patrick realised he was possibly the world's worst accountant. A dramatic change saw Patrick go back to study physiotherapy and in 2000 he landed his dream job at the Sydney Olympics.

In his own time, Patrick continued his passion for writing: poems for retiring colleagues, love letters to his wife, Lisa, epic emails of adventures abroad and stories gathered from the confessional plinth. And then: a flood. His first son Noah was born, followed by Reuben and Grace. He'd found his life calling and with that, the next half of his career – as a storyteller.



ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Tom Jellett is an award-winning children's book illustrator who is based in Sydney, New South Wales. In 2011 he was included in the editorial category for Illustrators 53, exhibited at the Society of Illustrators, New York.

Among others, his accolades include CBCA Notable Book Award for My Yellow Blanky (2003), CBCA Honour Book in Junior category for Tuckshop Kid (2007) and CBCA Notable Book Award for Harry Highpants (2008).

Tom has been an editorial illustrator for News Limited, working on The Australian, The Weekend Australian and The Daily Telegraph. His work has also appeared in the South China Morning Post, The Week and Medical Observer.

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STUDY NOTES

1. How important is imagination? Which parts of the book are imagined? Are these imaginary parts of the story any less real or important than the rest? Did you have an object when you were younger that brought you comfort? What was it? Why was it important to you? How is it still important to you now?
2. Do any parts of the story seem familiar to you? How does this help you to better understand the book? What parts of your own life does this story remind you of? Can you think of a time when you sacrificed something to make someone you care about happy? What about a time when someone sacrificed something for you?
3. Why is Snuggles in such big trouble after being left outside overnight? What idea does Leon have to make things better? How is Rabby different after the operation? Do you think that this was a good solution? Why do you think it was important to mend Snuggles, rather than just buying Lily a new toy?
4. Where do the illustrations provide additional information to the text? How does this influence your understanding of the book?
5. What emotions do you feel when reading this book? Look at the colours used in the illustrations – are there any particular colours used repeatedly throughout the book? Why do you think this is? How does the colour palette affect your emotional journey through the story?
6. How do each of the characters show bravery? Is bravery the same for everybody, or different? Why?



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ACTIVITY NOTES

1. In the scene after Snuggles has been injured, there is a two-page spread where Lily and Leon both lie awake in their beds. Tom Jellett uses more muted colours in these pages, and removes the orange/golden tones that are repeated throughout the rest of the book. This gives an impression of night, and of coldness and solitude. Discuss the way that colour is used to give a sense of time and place, and also to set an emotional tone for a scene or image. Draw a picture of a child lying awake in bed (it doesn't have to be the same as the picture of Lily or Leon, but it can be). Colour it in whichever way you like. Now try using only cool colours, or using only warm ones. Invite your friends to tell you how your pictures make them feel. How can you change the way someone feels about a picture, simply by changing its colours?
2. Rabby the Brave is a story that has many familiar parts, even though it is unique as a whole. Why do you think it's important for readers to find things that are familiar in a story? Write about a place that will be familiar to the whole class, but do not say what or where it is in the piece. Try to describe the way it looks, smells, what happens there and so on. See if your classmates can guess the place you've written about. What is their response? Show it to someone who isn't familiar with the place you've written about. Is their response different?
3. Rabby the Brave is a story about loss and sacrifice. Is there a time that you've lost or sacrificed something? How did that make you feel? See if you can write a story about the time you lost or sacrificed something, using similar techniques to Patrick Guest – keep your words simple, and your sentences short. Try to capture the important parts of your experience, rather than sharing every moment of it.
4. The relationship between words and images in a picture book is vital. These two elements need to work together to tell one whole story. How do picture books accomplish this? Illustrate the story you wrote earlier, using the illustrations to pick up details you chose to leave out of your text. Try to set your words and pictures together, thinking about what you can leave out of one and put into the other, or where the two might show different things, as Tom Jellett's illustrations show during the adventure play scenes in Rabby the Brave. Put your stories into a book and share them with the rest of the class.