

## These notes are for:

- Primary - kindergarten to year 3

## Key Learning Areas:

- English
- Art
- Science

## Example of:

- Picture book/visual text
- Intertextuality
- Parallel narratives
- Revisionist/alternative narratives

## Experience of:

- Fairytale genre
- Intertextuality/allusion
- Visual literacy
- Storytelling

## Values addressed:

- Doing your best
- Understanding, tolerance and inclusion
- Respect

## Themes:

- Fairytales
- Storytelling & creativity
- Stereotypes
- Truth

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

Walker Books Australia      Ph +61 2 9517 9577  
 Locked Bag 22                      Fax +61 2 9517 9997  
 Newtown, N.S.W., 2042

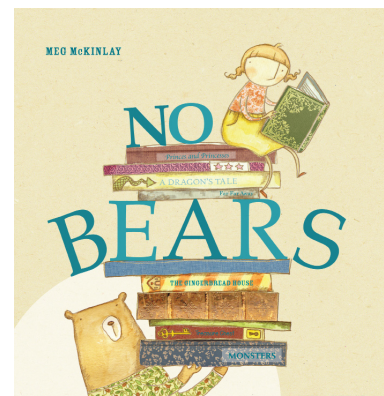
For enquiries please contact Leonie Jordan:  
 leonie.jordan@walkerbooks.com.au

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## No Bears - Overview

### No Bears

Author: Meg McKinlay  
 Illustrator: Leila Rudge  
 ISBN: 9781921529924  
 ARRP: \$27.95  
 NZRRP: \$29.99  
 No. of Pages: 32  
 June 2011



## Outline:

Ruby wants to tell you a story. A story with absolutely no bears. You don't need bears for a book. You need pretty things like fairies and princesses and castles. And maybe funny things and exciting things – but definitely no bears!

However, despite Ruby's determination to banish all bears from her story, one clever bear still manages to wheedle himself into the book, hiding around the edges of the illustrations and eventually taking on a starring role!

This hilarious picture book skilfully appropriates fairytale conventions, containing a range of allusions to well-known fairytale characters, events and settings. The illustrations gradually construct a parallel narrative, playfully reminding the reader to question the "truths" they receive as there is always more than one way of looking at a story.

## Author/Illustrator Information

### Meg McKinlay

Meg McKinlay grew up in Bendigo, Victoria, in a book-loving, TV and car-free household. A poet as well as a children's writer, Meg developed an affinity with the Japanese language after going on an exchange year in high school, and went on to complete a PhD in Japanese Literature. She lives with her family near the ocean in Fremantle, Western Australia, and is an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Western Australia, where she has taught Australian Literature, Japanese, and Creative Writing. Meg divides her time between teaching and writing.

### Leila Rudge

Leila Rudge was born in England and grew up making mud pies with six siblings and Jeni from number fifteen. After completing an Illustration Degree at Bath Spa University, Leila headed to Australia to seek her fortune (and the sunshine). Creating tiny characters for books is her favourite part of illustrating.

## How to use these notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

## Meg McKinlay on writing *No Bears*:

“Curiously, the story that became *No Bears* grew out of my obsession with ducks. I had been writing another book about a duck called Max and every time I sat down to work, he would pop up in my head - QUACK! - and demand attention. It got to the point where everything I wrote seemed to involve a duck. One day, out of frustration, I typed the line THERE ARE NO DUCKS IN THIS STORY! And then I went “ooh” because that had given me an idea. It sounded like the voice of a little girl. A little girl confidently telling a story, thinking she was in charge of it and knew everything about it, but all the while in the background, there were other things going on. Things that only the reader could see. Ducks, in fact. Doing duckish things, and actually driving the story forward.

The idea evolved in fits and starts over a couple of years, and by the time I had a draft to send to my editor, the first duck book, *Duck for a Day*, was already scheduled for publication. I talked it over with my editor and we decided it was best not to do two books about ducks so close together, so we decided to go with bears, which work equally well for the purposes of the story. Since I know all this background, I can't help smiling to myself over the fact that in the end there really are no ducks in this story. And of course, there are no bears either. Honestly.”

## Leila Rudge on illustrating *No Bears*:

“My illustrations always begin with rough sketches that eventually get traced onto watercolour paper using a light box. I add shading with pencil and colour the drawings with watercolour inks. All the elements of an image are then scanned individually into Photoshop where I fiddle around with the composition and add additional textures.

I had lots of fun illustrating *No Bears* and have always loved the idea of images revealing an alternative story to the text. I enjoyed adding funny little details and extra layers within each page so the book will hopefully appeal to a variety of ages - the king's newspaper that depicts the scene from the previous page still makes me smile, not to mention the sneaky godmother! In addition to this, the familiar fairytale references/characters provide a great platform to lead into other stories.”

## Classroom Activities and Discussion Questions

### Before Reading

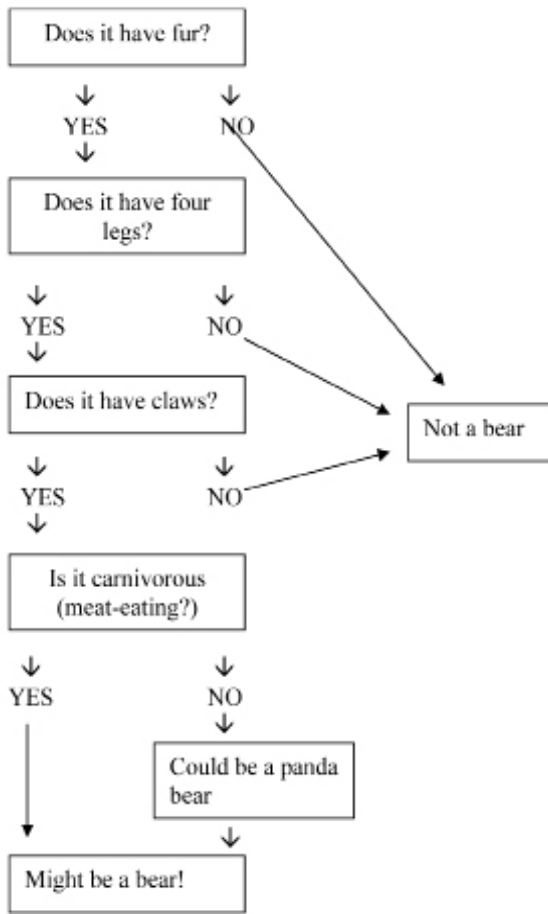
- What is the first thing you look at on the cover of the book? Then where does your eye go? And then where? This is called “the reading path” (the way your eye travels about an image). Why do you think it is called this? Sketch a rough copy of the book cover and draw your reading path on it.
- Listen to the book being read aloud without looking at the illustrations. Then, read the story while viewing the illustrations. Do the illustrations change your understanding of the story in any way? How?

### After Reading

- Ruby decides that there will be absolutely no bears in her book. Is there anything you don't like to read about in books (or perhaps see in films or on television)? If so, what don't you like about the topic? Discuss this with a friend.
- On page 3 of the book (“I'm in charge ...”) Ruby is shown putting a pile of books in the “Bear Book Recycling Bin”. Make a list of books she might put in this bin. For instance, *Paddington Bear*, *The Great Bear*, *The Bravest Bear Ever...*
- The protagonist of the story, Ruby, hates bears. Have a class debate over whether bears are good or bad, with half of the class on the pro-bear side and the other half on the anti-bear side. Make a poster to promote your pro-bear or anti-bear position.
- Make a special display of bear books for the school library.
- Make your own “No Bears” sign for the classroom or library using the stencil provided.
- Choose one species of bear and research it on the internet or in the library. For instance, black bears, brown bears, polar bears or pandas. Include information such as appearance, size, where it is found, diet, lifespan, and behaviour. Present this information in an original format. For instance, a mobile, brochure, or bear-shaped poster.



- After doing some research, copy out the chart below and see if you can add more questions to help people positively identify a bear.



- At the beginning of the story Ruby says of her book, “You can tell it’s a book because there are words everywhere. Words like Once upon a time and Happily ever after and The END.” In your opinion, are these characteristics of a book or a story? How is a book different to a story? Does a book have to have words in it? Pretend that you are a scientist and make a chart which enables a person to identify a book. (You may want to use the diagram above as inspiration.)
- Different lettering (also called “typeface” or “font”) is used throughout the book. When is this different lettering used? Why do you think it is used in these places?
- In her comments on the book, Meg McKinlay writes that the idea for *No Bears* grew out of her obsession with ducks. Have you, or anyone you know, ever become obsessed with a particular subject? What was it? What happened?
- At the start of the book, Ruby lists what she believes are the ingredients of a good story. What things does she mention? Do you agree with her list? Make your own list of things that make a good story. Present this list as an illustrated poster.
- Create a puppet of one of the characters in *No Bears*. Working in a small groups use these puppets to develop a puppet show based on the book.
- Research bears in fairytales or folktales. What examples can you find? Make a list of adjectives to describe how bears are usually presented in these stories.
- Is the bear in *No Bears* the type of bear you would expect to find in a typical fairytale? Explain your answer.
- Who does Ruby think saves the princess? Who really saves the princess? Why is this unexpected in a fairytale?
- Draw and label your own map of a fairytale kingdom using the illustration on pages 7 and 8 (“Yes, perfect! ...”) as a starting point.
- In small groups, brainstorm a list of things that you would expect to find in a fairytale. These could be characters, events, settings, or themes. Which of these can you find in Ruby’s story?
- The illustrations of *No Bears* contain references to well-known fairytales, novels and nursery rhymes. Discuss the following stories and nursery rhymes as a class, then try and locate references to them in the book:
  - *The Owl and the Pussycat*
  - *Little Red Riding Hood*
  - *The Three Little Pigs*
  - *Hansel and Gretel*
  - *Cinderella*
  - *Sing a Song of Sixpence*
  - *Alice in Wonderland*
  - *The Queen of Hearts*
  - *The Gingerbread Man*
- Create a crossword puzzle using words inspired by fairytales. Exchange your crossword with a classmate.
- No Bears* can be viewed as a type of fairytale adaptation or transformation. Compare it with another fairytale adaptation. Some examples include *Dear Fairy Godmother* by Michael Rosen, *The Wolf’s Story* by Toby Forward and *Into the Forest* by Anthony Browne.
- Watch the film *Shrek* (Andrew Adamson, 2001, Pixar-Disney). As a class, discuss how this film is similar and different to a conventional fairytale.
- Draw a Venn diagram showing the differences and similarities between *Shrek* and *No Bears*.
- At the end of the book we see the bear telling Ruby’s story from his perspective. Write the bear’s version of events then record it on tape or as a podcast.
- Look at the titles of the books on the front cover. Write a story to accompany one of these titles.
- Write your own fairytale using some of the conventions of the fairytale genre. Edit, type out and illustrate your story. (You may like to experiment with creative lettering as is done in *No Bears*.) Read your story to a younger class at school.

