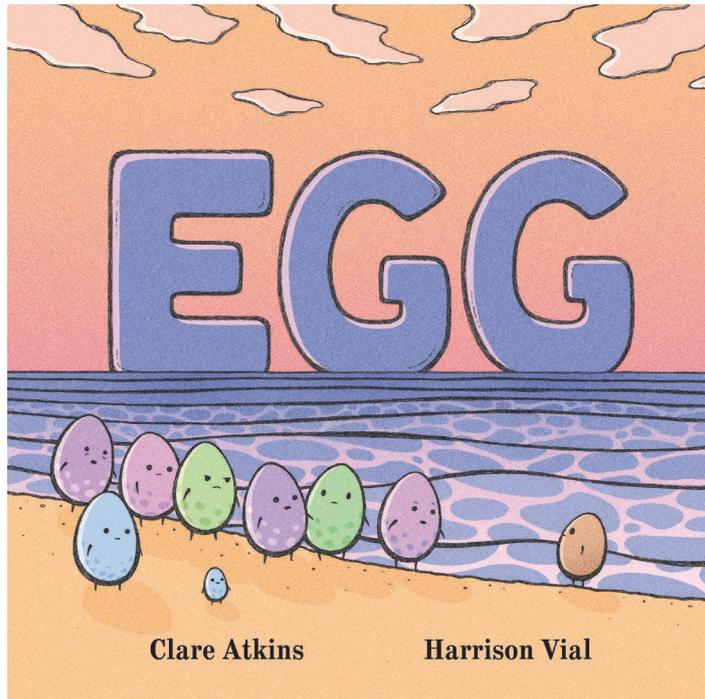


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EGG

Clare Atkins & Harrison Vial



Teachers' Notes

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SYNOPSIS

When an unusual egg drifts ashore, the other eggs on the island are unsettled. This egg is different. What if it starts to stink? What if it hatches? But in an act of kindness and curiosity, Little Egg ventures beyond the small-mindedness of its community, becoming friends with Strange Egg and bravely instigating a future filled with hope.

Thought-provoking and engaging, *Egg* is a beautifully crafted fable that gently approaches themes of displacement, xenophobia, climate change and belonging through Little Egg's open-mindedness and care. With multiple layers, it is both beautiful and rich.

THEMES

- Kindness; Hope
- Courage
- Friendship; Acceptance
- Displacement; Belonging
- Xenophobia; Fear
- Environment; Climate Change

WRITING STYLE

Egg is a thoughtfully structured text that cleverly positions the present-day attitudes of the xenophobic eggs against a nostalgic fable of times gone by, when the 'seas were lower...and the weather was cooler'. The dialogue of the island's inhabitants as they coldly reject the foreigner is seamlessly integrated into each page opening, directly sharing with readers their fear and trepidation. As the story continues, curious Little Egg bravely defies the others, befriendng Strange Egg and encouraging them to do likewise. With Strange Egg comes new life, offering hope and renewal for the entire island. The superb illustrations add a further layer to this timeless and poignant picture book. These multiple dimensions make *Egg* accessible to a wide audience: younger readers will relate to the notions of friendship, acceptance and belonging, while older children will also connect with its themes of displacement, environmental challenges, and climate change.

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STUDY NOTES

- Before reading *Egg*, look carefully at the front and back covers. What predictions can you make about the story? Discuss the use of colour, body language and facial expressions.
- The written text begins, 'Out in the vast blue ocean, something bobs in the waves. Alone.' Make predictions about this aloneness before turning the page. What might have happened to this 'something'? Where might it have come from? After finishing the book, discuss this first page opening. How does the one-word sentence, 'Alone', help readers to empathise with Strange Egg? Compare with the final page opening. How did you feel when the story ended in this way? Share with a friend.
- Why, when the eggs first see the new arrival, do they seem reluctant to help it? How do the illustrations and dialogue share their initial reactions? What would you do if you saw this creature washed up on the shore?
- What is the significance to the story of Little Egg immediately thinking that Strange Egg 'looks like one of us'? Why are the other eggs so hesitant?
- How would you describe the expressions on the faces of the eggs when they are confronted with this new egg? What words would you use to describe their feelings? Create a Word Wall to capture these ideas.
- When the eggs creep closer to Strange Egg, what do you think they are looking for?
- Why is Strange Egg 'scared and silent' when confronted by the eggs? How could the eggs have handled this situation with more kindness and compassion? In the role of Strange Egg, write a journal about this encounter.
- What is it that Little Egg can see that the other eggs can't? What does this tell us about the importance of being brave and having a voice?
- How did you feel upon hearing that 'only rotten eggs float'?
- Have you ever felt like Little Egg or Strange Egg? Share in a reflection.
- Why is Little Egg so surprised to learn that eggs can hatch? What else has changed since the old days? Why does the story share this with readers?
- Look carefully at the page opening on which the older eggs tell Little Egg about the 'dangers back then'. What were those dangers? Were they really dangers? Discuss.
- What is the significance of the island's eggs being 'cooked'? Are the eggs of the island really safe? What dangers do they face without realising?
- How did you feel when the eggs said, 'WHY DON'T YOU FLOAT BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM'? Why, when they speak to Strange Egg, is the dialogue sometimes written in capital letters?

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- Discuss the formatting on the page opening on which the eggs consider rolling Strange Egg elsewhere. Why is it formatted in this way? If they did roll him away, would Strange Egg *really* have a choice, or would they be forcing it?
- Why do the eggs build a wall? How would this make Strange Egg feel? With older students, discuss walls that have been built throughout history to keep others out (for example, Berlin Wall, Great Wall of China, Trump's Mexican wall).
- Why does Little Egg decide to climb the wall? Why aren't they afraid?
- What creates the shade for Strange Egg? Why is he touched by Little Egg's actions? How does this notion of shade, which is also created by the wall, emphasise why the eggs find themselves 'cooked'?
- What is the significance of the curved shape of the steps Little Egg climbs to reach Strange Egg, and the curved line of his words on the following page?
- Describe the friendship between Little Egg and Strange Egg. What do they like about one another? What lessons about friendship can you learn from them?
- Why, when Strange Egg becomes Tree, providing much shade for the eggs, do they ask if there are more trees? What does this show about their changing attitudes? What does this say about the importance of young people to the world's future?
- Why does Tree welcome the birds without hesitation? What is the connection between the bird and its nest to *Egg*?
- How does *Egg* share a story of hope and renewal?
- Which character are you most like in *Egg*? Why? Share in a reflection.
- Re-read the text, this time specifically taking note of Little Egg's facial expressions, body language and dialogue. How are they different from the other eggs? What can we learn from a character such as this?
- Retell this story from Strange Egg's point of view.
- What point is *Egg* making about the power of simple actions such as Little Egg's?
- Read *Egg* in conjunction with *The Island* by John Heffernan or *The Very Blue Thingamagig* by Narelle Oliver. How are they similar and different?
- Discuss the symbolism of eggs in this text. What do eggs represent? How is this revealed in the story?
- Create a class display with Tree. On each of its leaves, write a note of affirmation about your classmates. Decorate with the eggs and birds enjoying its shade.
- What comment is *Egg* making about climate change, and those whose lifestyles and homes are affected by it?
- After reading *Egg*, redesign the front cover to share how this story ends.

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- Discuss the importance of ‘reading pictures’ as well as the written text to fully understand the story. Discuss the role of illustrations in conveying meaning.
- Which is your favourite page of *Egg*. Why is this your favourite? Share with a friend.
- In small groups, create a dramatised version of *Egg*.
- Use Talking Strips to tell your friend about this story.

First...	Next...	After that...	Finally...

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

I wrote *Egg* hoping the story would be playful, fun and a little silly – something kids would have a giggle about and enjoy. But dig slightly beneath the surface and themes of belonging, identity, fear of the unknown, resilience and bravery come into play. I want to plant these ideas in the minds of kids, raising questions rather than providing answers. I see it as a chance for the next generation to come up with their own imaginative solutions to some of the issues we face today, such as discrimination, climate change and living in a time of high uncertainty. I loved seeing Harrison's beautiful illustrations bring Strange Egg and Little Egg's friendship to life as it changes and grows.

ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION

I was very excited to have the opportunity to work on *Egg* for many reasons. For one, *Egg* is my first children's picture book, and illustrating a picture book had been a long-time goal of mine. The excitement of trying something new, coupled with Clare Atkins' great writing, made for an experience which I knew would be an enjoyable one. I found the story of *Egg* to be a very sweet one, and particularly liked the strong friendship that develops between Little Egg and Strange Egg. I remember the effect which children's picture books had on my own upbringing, and the weight which they can hold. With a story like this one which has a very clear promotion of friendship and the importance of being kind to others, I knew how helpful it could be for children today. My motivation was

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therefore to provide illustrations which effectively portrayed the themes and emotions which Clare conveyed in her writing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clare Atkins is an author, scriptwriter, script editor and story developer. She wrote her first novel, *Nona & Me*, while living in the remote Aboriginal community of Yirrkala in the Northern Territory. It went on to win the 2016 Book of the Year in the NT Literary Awards and was shortlisted for the 2015 Children's Book Council of Australia Awards. Her second novel, *Between Us*, won the 2019 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year for Older Readers and was shortlisted for many other awards, including the Prime Minister's Literary Award and NSW Premier's Literary Award. *Egg* is Clare's first picture book.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Harrison is an Adelaide-based illustrator. While studying illustration at the University of South Australia, he developed an interest in children's picture books and animation. He enjoys using a blend of traditional and digital techniques in his work. *Egg* is Harrison's debut picture book.