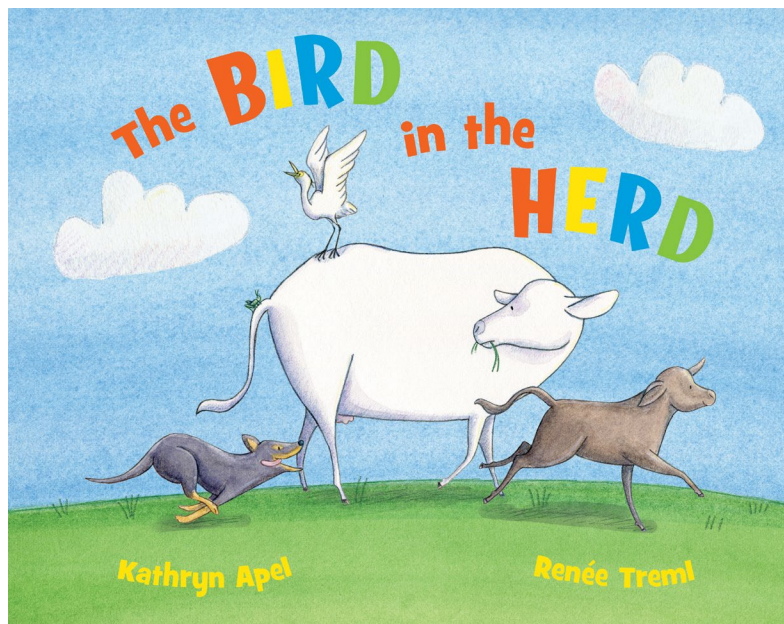


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THE BIRD IN THE HERD

Kathryn Apel / Renée Trembl



Teachers' Notes

Written by a practising teacher librarian
in context with the Australian curriculum
(English)

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SYNOPSIS

Who could imagine the commotion when a herd of cows stirs up bugs and slugs on the farm! With a cheeky bird in the herd stalking its next snack, everything springs into action in this delightful rhyming verse.

Beautiful illustrations invite young readers to join in the fun and watch oh-so-carefully to see what unfolds. Children will return again and again to this wonderful picture book.

THEMES

- Rhyme
- Farming
- Visual Literacy

WRITING STYLE

The Bird in the Herd is written in cumulative rhyming verse, with each new couplet preceding the repetition of previous verses (a little like the 'I went shopping' game), allowing early childhood readers to join in as the story is shared. This is an entertaining and engaging text that encourages active literacy skills, with a fun twist to the storyline. The illustrations provide for an added layer of literacy, as audiences are encouraged to look beyond the written text to observe what else is occurring on each page. *The Bird in the Herd* is an endearing read-aloud picture book that will be enjoyed time and time again.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading *The Bird in the Herd*, look carefully at the front and back covers. What predictions can you make about the story? Discuss the use of colour, rhyme, characters and the body language of the animals.
- Use the end covers of the book as well as the pages in the text to discuss the bird. What is its body language like? Take note of its shadow as the bugs and slugs are first stirred by the herd. Retell this story from the bird's point of view.
- The written text begins, 'Look! A herd of cows.' With a partner, brainstorm what might happen when you turn the next few pages. Check your predictions after reading.
- As you read the text, take note of the words that are written in colourful fonts. Why are they formatted like this? Use these words (see list on page 4 of these notes) as sight words, and to play matching and rhyming games.

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- Discuss the importance of ‘reading pictures’ as well as the written text to fully understand the narrative. Discuss the role of illustrations in conveying meaning.
- Make predictions when the ute comes along to ‘Hoooot! Toooot!’ What might happen next?
- Keep a close eye on the grasshopper that can be found on each page opening once the ‘slugs and bugs’ have been ‘stirred’. Write this story from the grasshopper’s point of view.
- The author has used poetic devices such as rhyme and onomatopoeia to help tell the story. Discuss these devices and the author’s choice to include them in the text.
- Which is your favourite page opening of *The Bird in the Herd*. Why is this your favourite? Share with a friend.
- Create a simple flow chart that shows the cause and effect of the herd stirring up the bugs and slugs.
- Use *The Bird in the Herd* to revise letters and sounds, phonemes and graphemes.
- In small groups, create a dramatised version of *The Bird in the Herd*.
- Create a Word Wall with the vocabulary used in *The Bird in the Herd*. Use these words to write a simple recount of what happens in this story.
- Use Talking Strips to tell your friend about this story.

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

- Choose one of the other animals in the text such as the dog or the horse and write about the day’s events in character.
- Make your own rhyming verses that would be suitable inclusions to *The Bird in the Herd*. Illustrate these verses (eg The trees in the breeze; the sky up so high etc).
- Discuss the page on which there are ‘No cows!’ How can we tell how the drover, horse and dog are feeling? What might the cockatoos be thinking?
- For additional activities, look under the ‘Resources’ tab on *The Bird in the Herd* page on the UQP website (www.uqp.com.au).

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herd	stirred	slugs
bugs	bird	stalks
walks	cow	chow
grass	pass	dog
jog	yips	nips
horse	course	nod
plods	drover	over
saddle	cattle	track
back	rust	dust
Hoooot!	Tooooot!	coot
ute	hoot	toot
helter- skelter	shelter	shrub
scrub		

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AUTHOR MOTIVATION

More than 18 years ago, I noticed a bird in the herd that stalked as it walked past my kitchen window. It was such a fun accidental rhyme, begging to be written! The story unfolded, shaped by my childhood memories of hours spent mustering and moving cattle along the road with Dad and various family members. I wrote the story for my two small farm boys, but they grew up before the book did. (They were fantastic editors in the process, and the rhyme always drew them in like a magnet – so we still had our fun with it!)

The Bird in the Herd is a shout-out to Australia's farming families who are doing it tough year after year, through fire, drought and floods, market downturns and a growing disconnect between rural and metropolitan Australia. I'm hoping the rhyme, coupled with Renée's gorgeous illustrations, will cheer them up and cheer them on – while giving kids of all backgrounds a cheeky peek into life on the land.

ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION

My grandparents were dairy farmers in America and I remember when their neighbours bought a pair of white Brahman cows. They had big black eyes and velvet fur – I had never seen such beautiful cows. When researching Kat's book, I was thrilled to learn they are a common breed of beef cattle in Australia and prone to spooking. I would finally get to illustrate them! The little black calf in the story is based on Kat's beloved cow Cocoa, whom she hand-fed and raised.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kathryn Apel is a born-and-bred farm girl who's scared of cows. She lives among the gum trees, cattle and kangaroos on a Queensland grazing property. Kathryn's picture books include the rollicking rural rhymers *This is the Mud!* and *Up and Down on a Rainy Day*. Her verse novel *Bully on the Bus* was the winner of the 2014 Australian Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature, and a 2019 NCSS and CBC Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People (America).

Kat loves pumping poetry because she can flex her muscles across other genres, to bend (and break) writing rules. A trained teacher, Kathryn shares her passion for words at schools and festivals around the globe.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Renée Treml is the author and illustrator of several successful picture books for very young readers, including *Once I Heard a Little Wombat*, *Ten Little Owls*, and *Roo Knows Blue*. She is also the creator of the highly engaging and funny junior fiction graphic novel *Sherlock Bones and the Natural History Mystery* and its sequel, *Sherlock Bones and the Sea-Creature Feature*. Renée has a degree in environmental science and has a passionate love of natural history.