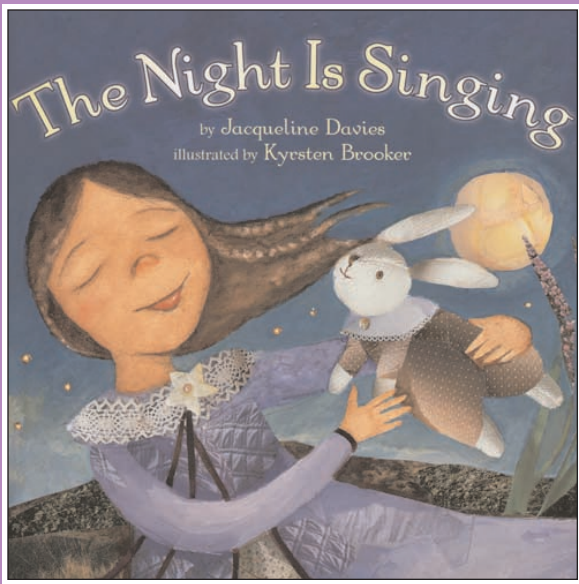




The Night Is Singing

by Jacqueline Davies / illustrated by Kyrsten Brooker

TEACHER'S GUIDE



Ready for bed, a little girl lingers,
listening to the sounds of the night...

*Hear the hissing
Soft as kissing,
From the radiator grate.
Hear the chiming
Tell-the-timing
Of the hall clock striking eight.*

PRE-READING DISCUSSION

Look at the cover of the book. Read the title aloud. What do you think this book will be about? What do you imagine will happen to the girl in this story?

What do you do before you go to bed each night? Are there any routines that help you move from wide awake to asleep? Do you sleep with a familiar object? What is it?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What is the narrator trying to avoid? Why?

What types of things does she hear?

Describe where she lives.

Why can't she get to sleep?

In the end, what happens?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Can you figure out the rhyme scheme in the book? Which lines rhyme? Which ones do not? Why do you think the author decided to write in rhyme?

Why can't the girl get to sleep? What types of things keep you up at your own house? Are there sounds that actually help you get to sleep? What are they?

Describe the setting for the picture book. Is that a place you would like to live? Is it in the city? The country? What do you hear in one that you may not hear in the other?

Do you sleep with a pet or stuffed animal? What does the girl sleep with? Does yours have a special name? What do you think the name of the girl's cat and bunny are?

What are the different sounds of the lullabies? What do the trees say? What about the wind?

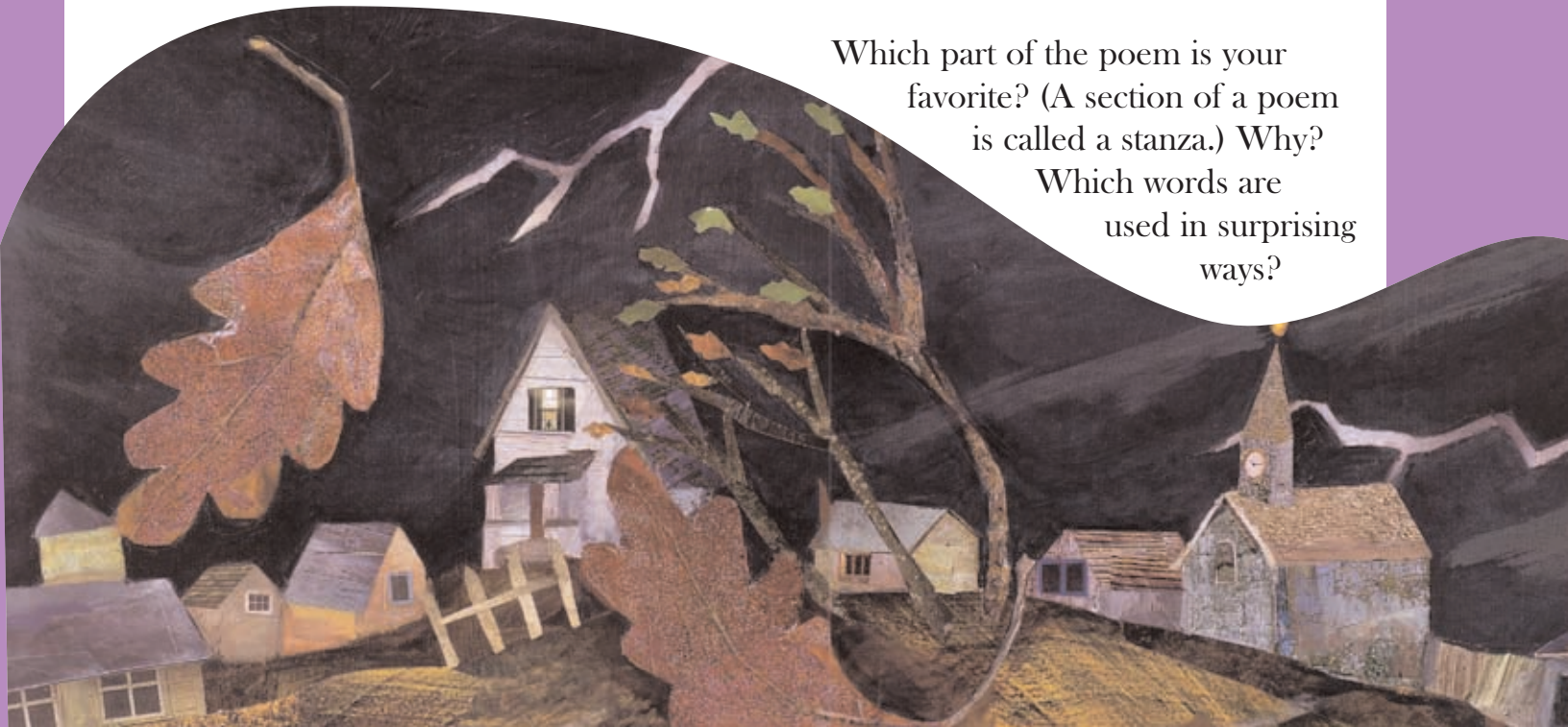
What is the girl afraid of? Are you afraid of the same things? What do you do when you're afraid?

What does your Mama do for you when you go to bed? What's your favorite part of bedtime? What sings you lullabies?

Which illustration is your favorite? Why? Why do you think the illustrator chose the colors she did for the book? What colors do you have in your own room? Do they help you sleep?

What types of things does the illustrator use besides just paint? What does this add to the picture? Does it make you want to touch it?

Which part of the poem is your favorite? (A section of a poem is called a stanza.) Why? Which words are used in surprising ways?



PROJECTS

language

The author, Jacqueline Davies, uses a poetic technique called personification throughout the picture book. This is when you pretend something like a tree or the wind can do something people can do. What do each of the following things do that is like a person:

night, sky, geese, cat, trees

Create your own personifications:

Make a list of ten things you would see on a walk in the woods. Then, make a list of ten things you like to do on the playground. Take something from the first list and make it do something from the second. Voilà! You've learned personification. Draw a picture of your personification identifying what's happening. (Makes a terrific bulletin board!)

music

Can you create a tune to go with the words of the book? Try to sing the lyrics instead of just read them in a way that sounds good to your ear. Repeat the same pattern for each stanza.

-or-

Give the students soft instruments to accompany the reading aloud of the story. After reading aloud a line the students mimic with the instruments the same number of syllables that they heard. (Develops phonemic awareness.)

visual arts

Provide students with a wide variety of paper and other materials (for example, lace, fabric, buttons, labels, wallpaper samples, old cards). Then, have students create a scene from their own home or neighborhood inspired by the collage art of Kyrsten Brooker. (Students may need to paint their own paper to get just the colors and textures they need.)

science of sleep

Brainstorm a list of questions about sleep that your students would like answered and then together, research the topics the library. Here are a few to get you started: Do all animals sleep? Can some animals sleep on their feet? Why do people need to sleep?

math

Can you create a counting game from the book? Open any two-page spread and try to find one of something, two of another, three of something else. Go as high as you can.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

how did you get started writing for children?

I've been writing since I was a child. In kindergarten, I wrote my first book, *The Sad Shape*. (You can see that book and read the story on my website.) But I turned my attention to writing for children about the time I had my first child. In reading to him, I immersed myself in the world of children's literature. I was hooked, and I've been writing for kids ever since.

how did you decide on the rhythm for this book?

The sound of the poem just came to me; I never really "decided" on it. I was looking for something with a lilting, flowing rhythm, and that's the sound I heard in my head. (da-da-DA-da, da-da-DA-da, da-da-DA-da, da-da-DA) To me, it sounds like a waltz, and I love it that Kyrsten's pictures have a flowing, swirling, dancing feeling to them. They're just right for the rhythm of the poem.

what is the most difficult thing about writing for you?

The hardest thing about writing for me is simply finding the time. I have three kids and a yellow lab dog, so my days are pretty packed. But when I do find time to sit and write—ooh, it's heaven. I love inventing people, imagining places, and making up conversations. I love it when something unexpected happens in one of my stories, and I'm the one who's surprised. I love revising text to make it leaner, stronger, more original. Writing is a joy to me.

how do you recognize a good idea? how many drafts do you write?

You know the old-fashioned way of testing spaghetti to see if it's cooked? You throw it against the wall, and if it sticks, it's done. Well, ideas are like that for me. A good idea is a sticky idea—it sticks to my brain. I have lots of ideas for books, but I forget about 98% of them. Some ideas I don't forget; they just stick. I think about them in the car, on line at the grocery store, before I fall asleep at night. If an idea sticks to my brain for a month, I know it's worth pursuing. That's when I start to write.

As for how many drafts I write, that varies widely. *The Night Is Singing* required very little revision, maybe four or five drafts. It came to me all in one piece. But *The Boy Who Drew Birds* went through more than twenty-five drafts.

what advice would you give to young writers?

I have three pieces of advice for young writers. The first is to read as much as you can. The second is to write as much as you can. And the third piece of advice I have is to show your work to a trusted reader—a parent, a teacher, a friend—and ask for criticism. Ninety percent of good writing is re-writing. So do the work to make your good stories even better.



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This teacher's guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and author of the book *Sketches from a Spy Tree*.

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