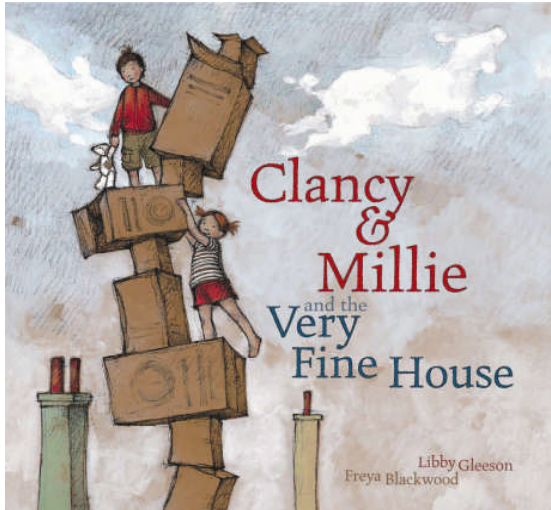


LITTLE HARE



CLANCY & MILLIE and the VERY FINE HOUSE ACTIVITY NOTES

WRITTEN BY LIBBY GLEESON
ILLUSTRATED BY FREYA BLACKWOOD
PUBLISHED BY LITTLE HARE BOOKS,
2009

*Two new neighbours playing 'Three Little Pigs' discover
that friends are what make a house a home...*

Release Date October 2009

RRP \$24.99

ISBN 9781921541193

Reading Guide Ages 3-7*

*Please note that the recommended age range is a guide only and this book may be suitable for use outside of this recommendation.

SYNOPSIS

Clancy has just moved house from a small town to a large city. He is missing his old house terribly - the new house is much too big and much too lonely. How will he ever make it his home? As despair takes hold, Clancy hears a small voice. Soon, with the help of his new friend Millie, Clancy is building towers to the sky and trains to the street outside. They play 'The Three Little Pigs' until together they build the home that Clancy thought he had lost forever.

THEMES

Loneliness

Friendship
Displacement
Home
Belonging

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Libby Gleeson was born in Young, a small town in south western NSW. As a child, books and reading were hugely important to Libby. She remembers going to the library on a Saturday morning and borrowing five or six books and reading them all by Sunday night.



Libby has been awarded armfuls of Australian Book Awards, including the CBCA Award for best picture book (*An Ordinary Day*), best book for younger readers (*Hannah and the Tomorrow Room*) and best Early Childhood book (*Amy and Louis*). She is frequently featured on Premier's short lists and she has also scooped her fair share of International awards, including the Bologna Ragazzi Award.

It is not surprising that In 1997 Libby was presented the Lady Cutler Award for Services to Children's Literature.

Libby is currently collaborating with celebrated illustrator, Freya Blackwood, to bring us *Clancy and Millie and the Very Fine House*, a picture book published in October 2009 by Little Hare.

Libby works full-time and thinks that the writer's life is pretty good!

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

FREYA BLACKWOOD is a rising star in the international world of children's books. She was born in Edinburgh and grew up in Orange in NSW, Australia. Freya's illustrations for *Two Summers* won the Crichton Award in 2004 and the book was shortlisted for the Picture Book of the Year Award in the Children's Book Council of Australia 2004 awards.



Emily Rapunzel's Hair was shortlisted in the Early Childhood section of the Children's Book Council of Australia 2006 awards. Her picture book *Amy & Louis*, which won the 2007 CBCA Picture Book of the Year for Younger Readers, was written by Libby Gleeson and has been published in Australia, the US, Germany, France and Korea. Freya has just illustrated a book written by Roddy Doyle which was published by Arthur A. Levine Books, and is currently working on another collaboration with Libby Gleeson entitled *Clancy & Millie and the Very Fine House* (Little Hare, October 2009). A picture book with renowned children's book writer, Jan Ormerod is also forthcoming (Little Hare), as well as Freya's own offering of *Ivy Loves to Give* (Little Hare, September 2009) which she has written and illustrated. Having spent many years living in Wellington, New Zealand Freya now lives in the Central-West of NSW with her little girl Ivy (who loves to give).

WRITING CLANCY AND MILLIE AND THE VERY FINE HOUSE – Libby Gleeson

What inspired you to write *Clancy & Millie and the Very Fine House*?

I was inspired by the distress my own kids showed when we moved from a tiny house to a very big house. They got lost in some rooms and cried and demanded to go back to the former house. I was delighted to have more room in the big one!

In the story, Clancy and Millie play a game of *Three Little Pigs*. Essentially they are creating their own story through play. How important do you think 'play' is in story building? And what do you hope small children might take away from this book?

I think it's vitally important to play and to learn through play. Forget structured learning for the very young. Self directed play, often by creating a story or a narrative is the way little children work out who they are and where they fit in the world. (I could write a thesis on this but I'll spare you!)

What age groups of children would you like to see reading *Clancy and Millie*? Do you think that there are things that both a three year old and a seven year old might discover in this book?

I think any child could enjoy this. A three year old would take delight in the building of the house via a story that they know. The seven year old would take that too and build on it to imagine that Clancy can accept his new home now that he has played at

building his own and he's found a new friend.

What are your thoughts on Freya's illustrations? How do you feel they have impacted your story?

I love the illustrations. The exaggerated size and emptiness of the rooms accentuate Clancy's feelings. The absurdly high tower of boxes creates humour and fun. Her children are always so gentle and innocent and real and playful.

ILLUSTRATING CLANCY AND MILLIE AND THE VERY FINE HOUSE

– Freya Blackwood

This is your second book with Libby Gleeson, *Amy and Louis*, being the first, which was highly acclaimed! What were the reasons that made you choose to work with Libby again? What is it that draws (no pun intended) you to her stories?

It was just the money actually – no other reason. Nah, I love *Amy & Louis* – it's definitely one of my favourite books, so there was no doubt I wouldn't want to do another. When I first read *Amy & Louis* it quite literally gave me shivers and I knew it was meant for me. I've always loved Libby's picture books and have collected them ever since I became interested in illustrating. I was initially drawn to the combination of Libby's stories and Armin Greder's illustrations. Her stories are understated and allow so much room for an illustrator to come in and build to it and therefore make it their story as well. They have this quality about them that makes you, as the illustrator, get completely carried away and want endless textless double page spreads! I like that Libby just lets you lose with her stories. She either trusts that you'll come up with something appropriate or she enjoys the shock of the final outcome – I'm not sure which!

What aspect of the illustrating process did you love the most in this project?

Once I'd worked out the direction in which I was going to go for the illustrations – and this took quite a while – I really enjoyed the painting. I always enjoy the painting process. But especially with this book because of the process I'd decided to use. I scanned my roughs and had them printed out onto brown paper – the insides of artwork folders actually. Then I just went to painting them. The brown was a lovely colour to start working on – I like it so much more than white paper. From the very first bit of paint you put on it, it looks more and more finished. When you work on white paper there is a long period of painting when it looks like it will never be finished.

What did you find the most difficult?

I did find the initial storyboarding stage very difficult, when I was trying to find a way to tell the story visually. The visuals I got in my mind when I first read the story were nothing like the illustrations of the final book. Margrete, the editor, felt the book could be more unusual than that which I initially storyboarded. So there was an enormous amount of ground to cover before I came up with a satisfactory solution. This took a good deal of time and frustrated scribbles, and I'd nearly decided I couldn't do it, until

one day I crossed the road to eat lunch in the park and when I came back it was all sorted in my mind and I just had to draw it.

The big bad wolf and little pigs that you have painted into the clouds are a wonderful addition to what occurs in the words of the story. How did you come up with this idea? What were you hoping to achieve with this? Was it something emotional?

The clouds firstly provided a link with *Amy & Louis*, but also created an extra dimension in the storytelling. I think I came up with the idea late in the 'roughs' stage when I was trying to visually connect the second half of the book, the three little pigs story, with the first half of the book. I've always loved creating subtle shapes of animals in clouds, so it wasn't such a big leap to think of pigs and wolves in the sky. Though at the time I did feel pretty proud of myself!

Do you recognise yourself as a child in either Clancy or Millie?

Amy & Louis was a story I connected with immediately, but *Clancy & Millie* wasn't so much so to begin with, although I do remember loving the sound of his old house. It was more of a challenge but in the end I had definitely bonded with Clancy and helped him find a creative way to sort out his difficulties.

Were you worried about Clancy and Millie building towers higher than chimney tops?

In *Amy & Louis* the illustrations were all about being understated. While the text told what the children were imagining, the illustrations pictured the reality. In *Clancy & Millie* it was the reverse. So we got to see what Clancy was feeling and imagining – the towering house he was moving into, the enormous rooms, the engulfing neighbouring buildings, the enormous stack of boxes.

What do you hope children might take away from this book?

One of the ideas that developed when I was illustrating the book was that fitting in doesn't necessarily mean conforming. While this isn't at the heart of the themes within the book, it was something I was interested in exploring. While Clancy and Millie built their houses, Clancy was exploring different methods of coming to terms with the move and the new house. He tried a small rickety house and then a larger square, modern construction and finally they came up with something all together weird and wacky. I was really proud of Clancy for coming up with that! He didn't feel the need to fit in with everything around him.

QUESTIONS/ COMPREHENSION

- What sort of house did Clancy first live in? What did it look like? What did it feel like?

- What sort of house does Clancy move to? What does it look like? What does it feel like?
- Why do Clancy's mum and dad like the new house?
- Why doesn't Clancy like it?
- What helps Clancy turn his new house into a home that he loves?
- Have you ever had to move house? Why is it good to move house? Why is it sometimes hard to move house?
- Who is Millie?
- What does Millie do?
- Why are friends important?
- A question for older children might be – what is the difference between a house and a home?
- How important are people in making a house feel like a home? Your family? Your friends?
- Look at the clouds that have been painted throughout the book. What can you see? How do the clouds change from the beginning of the story to the end of the story?
- Look at the illustrations of the new house. They take up most of the page. Look at the little pictures of the old house next to these illustrations. Compare and contrast the two pictures on each page. What are the different feelings that each illustration creates?

ACTIVITIES

- Play act the story of *Three Little Pigs*, just like Clancy and Millie did in the story. Let the children take turns playing the pigs and then playing the wolf. 'Play' is an outpouring of the imagination in a similar way that writing is also an outpouring of the imagination. Both activities create stories.
- Using a good collection of boxes of various shapes and sizes ask the children to create different things; a train, a bridge, a tower to the sky, a house. Part of the purpose of this exercise is to encourage the children to create these things together as a group to build cooperation and friendship.
- Ask the children to paint a picture of their house. Ask the children to then think of some words to describe why they love their home.

Below is a list of words. Which words would you use to describe your home?

- | | | |
|------------|----------|-----------|
| • Big | • Happy | • Noisy |
| • Cozy | • Sad | • Restful |
| • Friendly | • Bright | • Bricked |
| • White | • Lonely | • Wooden |
| • Tall | • Warm | • Cold |
| • Small | • Quiet | |

- Clancy likes to remember the things that he loved about his old house – the cubby house under the kitchen table, the fire in the fireplace, the skylight and the moon in his bedroom. Ask the children to think about a place that they have lived or gone to on a holiday to in the past. Or perhaps they might think of a grandparent's house or the house of a special friend. Ask the children to write a list of all the things that they remember about that place. Create a story about why you loved that particular home.
- Cut out pictures of houses and homes from magazines and create a collage as a group. Don't just rely on Home Beautiful! Try and select a wide variety of homes. Mud brick homes in Africa, tree houses, house boats, sheds, caravans, tents, kombi vans, homes in Asia made of branches, leaves and sticks (try National Geographic). As you create the collage of homes talk with the children about the different sorts of houses people live in and the sorts of things people use to turn them into homes.
- The illustrations for *Clancy and Millie* were painted on the inside of art folders. They give the effect of packing boxes. You can paint artwork on all sorts of papers and textures. Try painting a picture of your home on a piece of cardboard box. Cut pieces of cardboard for the children – say 30cm (wide) x 20cm (tall). After they have painted or drawn pictures of their home, poke through two holes at the top of the picture and thread with string. You or the children might also like to write 'Home, Sweet, Home' at the bottom of the drawing. The picture can then be hung from hooks.

- Paint a large sheet of art card with a light blue paint. Recreate the cover of *Clancy and Millie* using cotton wool balls for the cloud pigs, brown paper for the boxes and fabric for the clothes of Clancy and Millie. You will need to outline the images with a thick black marker first.