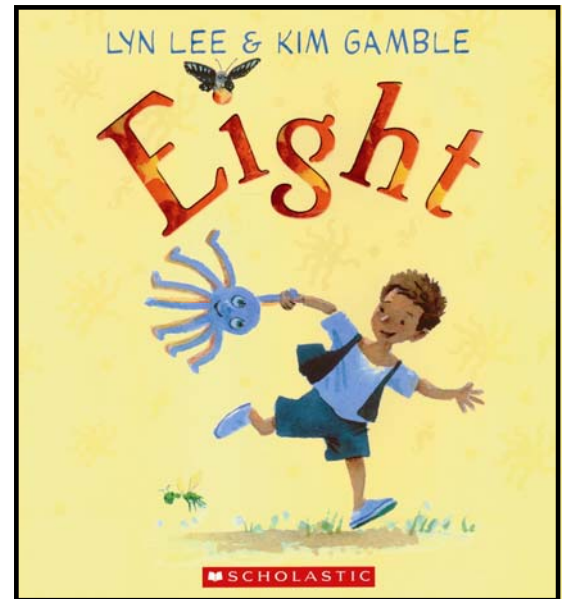


# TEACHER'S BOOK NOTES

## Eight

Written by Lyn Lee

Illustrated by Kim Gamble



### Synopsis

Eight is a plush toy octopus. He and Timmy have been together for a long time, and he is a special toy, the one that goes to bed with Timmy and sometimes even to school with him, too. They are almost inseparable. One day, Timmy and Mum and Dad go for a picnic in the national park, and Eight comes too. They go for a walk in the bush and a row on the river and play near the water.

Suddenly it starts to rain, and Mum and Dad and Timmy gather all the picnic things together quickly and pack up and go home. It's raining heavily now, but Timmy has a hot bath and something to eat and goes to bed. As the storm goes on outside, Timmy wakes in horror to find that Eight is not in bed with him. He must still be at the picnic spot in the national park! Timmy and his parents go to look for Eight the next day, but he is nowhere to be found. Timmy is sad to lose his friend, and wonders about what he is doing. Dad suggests that maybe Eight woke early, and made a raft and sailed down the river. What would he do if he met pirates, Timmy wonders.

While Timmy returns to life without Eight, his toy has many adventures, which may be just in Timmy's imagination, or not ... One day Timmy and Dad are down by the water again, and Timmy is looking in the shallows, finding interesting things. At first he finds a bucket which looks a little like one he has played with once before, and which Eight might even have used for a pirate's hat. He sees something stuck in a mangrove and pulls out a very sodden Eight! They take him home for a spin in the washing machine and the clothes drier, and Eight is as good as new.

Timmy feels now that his friend can sit on his shelf where the boy can see him, as Eight is big and strong enough and brave enough to sleep on his own.

### Writing Style

Lyn Lee has written another very special text to follow her first picture book, *Pog*, also illustrated by Kim Gamble. Her stories are particularly child-centred, and deal with difficult emotional issues

# TEACHER'S BOOK NOTES

- in the case of *Eight*, with separation anxiety. In Lyn Lee's text, and in Kim Gamble's emotionally charged illustrations, Eight stands for Timmy's fear of being alone. When he is reunited with his favourite toy Timmy realises - and the reader realises - that in the meantime he has become accustomed to coping without Eight. He can enjoy Eight as a toy again without relying on him to allay his fear of being alone.

## Points for teachers

- Fantasy and reality are combined in the story of Eight's adventures. How does the artist suggest fantasy intersecting with the 'real' situation? Children might be asked to explore the illustrations for hints that Eight's adventures might not be fantasy after all.
- A reading of the book could also lead to a discussion about best friends or lost toys.
- When Eight meets the 'pirates', they all go off together and have an adventure. Children could be asked to study the series of pictures in the middle of the book (the ones on the blue background, without words) and tell the story of Eight's adventure with the pirates. They might also give names to the other toys in the story and think about what each toy's story might be.
- Students might be asked to draw a picture of their own favourite toy having an adventure.
- The place where Timmy finds his bucket in the water is the illustrator's painting of a real place in Sydney called Sugarloaf Bay. This is a tidal place where mangroves grow. Setting the story here explains why Eight could have been washed back on the returning tide. Children could be encouraged to find out more about mangroves and tidal systems, and find out the location of Sugarloaf Bay.
- Older students could study the painting style and compare it to other books by Kim Gamble. Do other books that he has illustrated tell stories in the pictures that are not mentioned in the author's text?