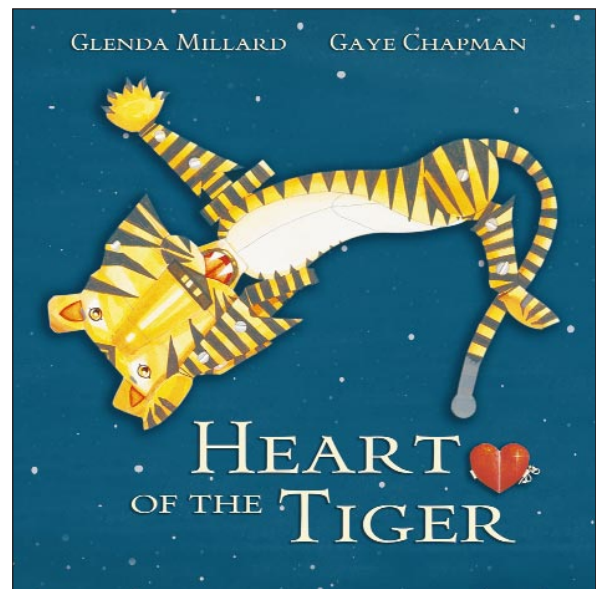


# Heart of the Tiger

Written by Glenda Millard  
Illustrated by Gaye Chapman



## ◀ The Back Story ▶ about the book

Glenda Millard's story *Heart of the Tiger* is a gentle tale of hope and love about a boy and his place in the world. To reflect the universality of her tale, she has given none of her characters names. This makes them stand in some ways for all of humanity – the old man for all elders and the boy for all children. Tiger stands for nature, needing to be treated properly and with respect so it can share its gift with us.

*Heart of the Tiger* is written in the style of a folktale. Like a folktale, it tells us about central truths of life: of caring, giving, of the natural wonders of the earth and of life and death.

Some of the elements of the story also carry symbolic meaning. The animal in the story is a tiger, a creature that is endangered and so needs even more care. The thimble that carries Tiger's water and with which the boy cares for the seeds is made of gold. It signifies the preciousness of the water it holds.

Even though Tiger and the boy live in a harsh world, Glenda Millard has used gentle descriptions and similes. The old man doesn't die but closes his eyes while the boy says goodbye to him. The sun doesn't beat down on the dry land, instead the author says that the boy doesn't know what shade is and he only knows 'about the dancing shadows that people made'. The gentleness of this language befits the message of caring.

The language that the author uses also appeals to our senses. For example, when the boy's dream has come true and the seeds have sprouted, first he sees them line like 'a thousand Tiger-eyes'. Then he touches them and they are 'silky like the old man's hair'. Finally he smells them and they are 'the scent of green, the scent of new beginnings'.

## ◀ with Gaye Chapman

### Why did you choose to illustrate this story?

I was attracted to the story of *Heart of the Tiger* because it is a powerful, universal story about all Boys (and Girls), about all Old Men (and Old Women) and about all Tigers (our biggest, bravest and strongest friends). At the same time, I found *Heart of the Tiger* deeply personal. I feel that it shows how with the passage of Time we can lose those we love (the Old Man), we can lose our dearest friend (Tiger), we can lose what we cling to most (the boy's wish that Tiger will go on forever). But I feel that the story also shows that life is about love and hope. Joy is reached by each of the characters giving up something or someone they love.

### Did you do any special research in preparation for illustrating the book?

When I was preparing to illustrate *Heart of the Tiger*, I tried to imagine it completely. For instance, Tiger had to be wooden but also had to be able to move, so I gave him screws for joints. I also had to think about living in a land with no trees. For one thing, there would be no wood for building. I researched the cultures of peoples who live in treeless environments, such as Afghans and American Indians. Their homes are built of grass and animal skins.

# BEHIND THE BOOK TEACHER'S NOTES

## Where did you get the inspiration for the people and places in the book?

As the characters in *Heart of the Tiger* are universal, I felt they shouldn't come from any one cultural or racial background. All children should be able to relate to them. The boy, for instance, is a mixture of different peoples. He has long, black hair like the American Plains Indians, slightly lifted Asiatic eyes, golden-brown skin and blue eyes like some Europeans. His pointed, elf-like ears make him seem like Pan or a wood nymph, and of nature. They hint at magic.

As this story is like a folktale, I wanted to use elements from traditional cultures around the world, especially those from treeless places. The designs of their rugs, tents and clothes inspired me. You can see the result of this inspiration in the yurt (pages 4–5), its furnishings, the boy's clothes and the old man's tattoos (page 5). None of the patterns I used for these elements are actual copies of traditional designs, but they are inspired by them.

## What processes did you go through when illustrating the book?

I began with brief descriptions of what each picture would contain, such as: daytime, Tiger dancing on left, boy squatting on right, umbrella with more holes in it. Then I counted up how many of each element I would need for the whole book. I painted a background for each page. Then I painted each of the elements separately on paper, cut them out and sorted them into piles for each page. I moved these elements about on each background until they looked beautiful and stuck them down. I found that this method meant I didn't lose interesting options as I worked.

## There are no trees in the world of the book. Did that present any special challenges?

Since there were no trees, I felt there needed to be lots of empty space in my paintings. However, by including the yurt and the boy's belongings in each picture I am still able to suggest that the boy and Tiger have a cosy home. The harshness of the world is shown by the umbrella becoming steadily more tattered.

### About the author: Glenda Millard

When I was little I loved snuggling up in bed with my mum to listen to her read stories. Some of the stories were very scary, but I loved hearing them anyway. When I was in high school I won prizes for my writing. However, I didn't begin to write my own stories until my children were in high school. I have had a novel, *Unplugged*, and a picture book, *Bones Maloney and the Raspberry Spiders*, published. I am already planning to do another book with Gaye Chapman.

### About the illustrator: Gaye Chapman

I grew up in Mendooran, NSW. I remember having a wonderful, free childhood. My grandparents lived

in Sydney and they would send me presents, including beautiful books. One that I still treasure today is a book about fairies with illustrations that I believe are some of the most beautiful I have seen. After I left school I studied art at Wollongong TAFE, then went on to study at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, the University of New England and the Julian Aston School of Art. I recently completed my PhD in Contemporary Art at the University of Western Sydney.

I won my first art prize when I was eight years old and have since been awarded many more. I have received the Sulman, Blake and Waterhouse Natural History art prizes. Many of my illustrations have appeared in the *NSW School Magazine*. I currently have two more picture books in the pipeline.

## Teaching Ideas ✓

### Before Reading ✓

- Look at folktales with students, especially those about animals or from other cultures. Students could bring in their favourite examples from home to prompt discussion. Talk about the lessons that the stories teach about life, the way they use magic and tell us about how other cultures live and have lived.
- Encourage students to do some research about tigers – how do they hunt, how big are they, how do they care for their young and so on. Why are they endangered? What are people doing to protect them? Why do tigers matter? What would our world be like without them?
- Discuss deforestation with students. Ask questions such as: Why do people cut down trees and clear forests? What happens when people clear the land of trees? What is lost when the trees are gone? How can land covered in plants become a desert? How are some people trying to stop deforestation?

### Activity

#### Paper tiger

The tiger on the front cover (and throughout the book) has been 'made' out of pieces joined by screws so that it can move. Have a go at designing your own tiger. Cut out a paper body, head, limbs and a tail, decorate them and join them with paper clips or old-fashioned brass paper-studs. Alternatively, the pieces could be pinned onto a board with drawing pins.

### During reading ✓

- After reading through the book out loud, giving plenty of time for the students to look at the illustrations, hold a read-and-talk session to discuss what happens in sections of the story.
  - Pages 4–5: What does the old man give the boy before he dies? What does he promise the Tiger will give to the boy if he is treated well? Look at the illustrations and describe what the boy, the old man and Tiger look like. Is there anything unusual in their appearance?
  - Pages 6–9: How does the boy care for Tiger? What do the illustrations tell us about the world that the boy lives in?
  - Pages 10–19: What does Tiger tell the boy about the way the world used to be? By contrast, what is the world in the story like now? How does the illustrator hint at the world as it was? Note the shade cast by the umbrella on pages 13 and 15.
  - Pages 20–29: What does the boy do to find out what the 'scent of green' is like? What does he have to give up? The illustrator has included an umbrella, spade, thimble and water flask in the pictures. What does the boy use them for? Do they look the same on each page? How does she show Tiger's heart? What is it and what is inside?
  - Pages 30–32: What is the new world that the boy helps make like? How does it look, feel and smell? How has the illustrator made these pages look different to the rest of the pictures? Can you see a tiger on the last page?

### Activities

#### Design inspiration

Gaye Chapman researched the decorative arts of many cultures searching for inspiration for her illustrations. Try to find some decorative elements in the pictures and talk about what they remind you of. Then use them to inspire abstract designs of your own to use to decorate cards or paper, fitting in with the theme of giving.

## Move it around

Gaye Chapman made her illustrations by painting each of the elements separately then moving them around to decide where they looked best. Have a go at this yourself. Paint a plain, simple background. Then draw/paint each of the elements of a story, say, if it were *Heart of the Tiger*, the spade, the boy, Tiger, the glass bottle and the thimble. Cut out each of these elements. Move them around on the background. When you are happy about how they look, you can stick them down. (This could also be done on a larger scale as a classroom mural, with each child contributing one element.)

## After reading ✓

- Glenda Millard chose to write about a tiger because tigers are endangered and very precious. Part of the reason they are endangered is that the forests they live in have been cleared for farming. Tigers are fierce, just as much of nature can be, but they still need to be cared for.

Ask students whether they think that a tiger is a good animal to use to stand for nature in this story. What other animals could the author have used? Why do you think Tiger is a toy?

- The place where the boy lives has no trees. How does he manage to live without them? What does he do for shade? What is his home like? How does he get water?

Ask the students what a world without plants would be like. What would this mean, for instance, in their school on a hot summer's day?

The gift that Tiger gives to the boy helps the boy make the world green again. Do students think the boy will be happy in his new world?

- *Heart of the Tiger* is about caring and giving. Talk with students about what each of the characters gives to the other. Do gifts always have to be objects like toys or can they be things like kindness, respect or looking after someone?

Discuss with students what their grandparents, parents or friends give to them that can't be wrapped up in gift paper. What do they give in return?

- Encourage students to discover that this story is about endings and new beginnings. What ends and what begins?

## Activities

### What happens now?

Make up a poem or a story about what happens now that the boy is surrounded by green and the rain comes. Does he share his home with real creatures?

### Tree time

Imagine that your school has no trees. Paint or draw a picture of what it would look like. If it doesn't have many trees, paint what it would look like full of them – even in the classrooms!

### Act it out

Break up into small groups and work out two-minute mime plays about someone giving something to you. After you perform your plays for the class, your classmates could try and guess what was being given.

### Suddenly seventy

Write a short story in which you imagine that the boy is now an old man. What does the world look like? What might he hand on to his children? Perhaps you could illustrate your story and include a tiger somewhere in your illustration.

## Literature study

Use the following discussion starters to help students understand more of the ideas in *Heart of the Tiger*.

- What are the themes of this picture book? What messages do you think the writer and illustrator are trying to share with us?
- Try and divide the story into sections to explore the idea that even a short story has a structure. (To help students, suggest that they think of this as trying to break the story into chapters.) Try and give each section a name, such as: The Old Man's Gift; A New Friend; and so on. Looking at structure in this way can help you think about how to plan a story when you write.
- Look at each of the characters. List their attributes. These might be physical and come from the illustrations or they might describe a personality trait, such as being brave or gentle, and come from the text.
- Talk about the world in *Heart of the Tiger*. What words tell us about what the world is like with trees and without them? Have the students find three words or phrases in the story that tell us what it is like. Compile a class list of these words. Beside each of these words on the class list, note whether they appeal to our sense of sight, touch, smell, hearing or sound.
- Look at the pictures. What do they show us about the world of *Heart of the Tiger*? Do they give us information that the words don't necessarily supply?
- Although *Heart of the Tiger* has sad things happen in it, such as the old man and Tiger dying, the story is one of hope and joy. How does the author make it a happy story? Think about the words she uses and how she describes what happens.
- The illustrator also makes *Heart of the Tiger* a bright and optimistic story. How does she do this? Think of the light, bright colours she uses, the elf-like appearance of her characters, the sparkling touches of white.
- Although *Heart of the Tiger* is about one boy, one old man and one tiger, do you think it could tell us something about all people and nature? What makes you think this?
- How is *Heart of the Tiger* like a folktale? How does the illustrator reinforce this?