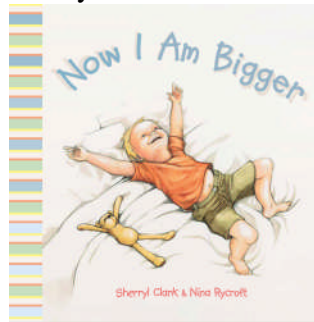


Now I Am Bigger
Sherryl Clarke / Nina Rycroft

TEACHERS' NOTES
By Janet McLean



Title *Now I'm Bigger*
Author Sherryl Clarke
Illustrator Nina Rycroft

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Author **Sherryl Clark** is the author of two award-winning verse novels for children, *Farm Kids* and *Sixth Grade Style Queen (Not!)*. She has written more than forty books for children. Sherryl was born in New Zealand and came to Australia in 1981. She lives in Melbourne, where her time is divided between writing, teaching writing for children at Victoria University TAFE and co-editing Poetrix magazine.

Sherryl Clark says about writing *Now I Am Bigger*:

When you're very little, time doesn't mean anything. What is an hour? A day? Are we there yet? Time is measured in growing, and in accomplishing new things like walking and growing teeth and eating by yourself, and most exciting of all, discovering the power of words and learning to talk. So much of little kids lives is about now - "I can wear real shoes now with laces". I wanted to try and capture their world, where everything, almost every day, is new. It's a very busy, intense and wonderful time!

Find out more about Sherryl Clarke at <http://www.sherrylclark.com/>

Illustrator **Nina Rycroft** graduated from Randwick TAFE with a diploma in graphic design in 1992 and worked as a designer in Sydney and London before moving to Rome for nine months and trying her hand at illustration. After four years of living overseas, homesickness inspired the idea for Nina's first picture book *Little Platypus*. Published in

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2000, and written by Nette Hilton, *Little Platypus* received a CBCA notable book in 2001. In 2003, Nina moved to the Blue Mountains where she now lives with her husband and two children. Nina's books include *Tricky Little Hippo* (Jane Bowring, 2004), *Elephant Dance* (Sue Whiting, 2007), *Boom Bah!* (Phil Cummings 2008), the sumptuous *Ballroom Bonanza* (Stephen Harris, 2009), and *No More Kisses* (Margaret Wild, 2010). Find out more about Nina Rycroft at <http://www.ninarycroft.com/>

SYNOPSIS *Now I am Bigger* is a collection of twenty poems that capture the wonder and excitement of a child growing up, from the first days after birth to the age of three. Each poem, told in the voice of the baby / toddler / child, reflects on the day-to-day experiences, through which she / he learns about the world. Every day brings something new – new teeth, new words, new shoes, new bed – and every little change is a step on the path to becoming BIG.

DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

- *Now I Am Bigger* is a wonderful book for connecting young children to the rhythm and language of poetry.
- Read each poem aloud with the whole group or with small groups of children. Sharing this book with small groups will provide more opportunities for the children to share their own memories and experiences – to tell their own stories about 'growing up'.
- There are many ways to share poetry with children.
 - Read expressively so that the children can *hear* the rhythm and the mood of each poem.
 - The gentleness of '**beginning**': *...then gently rolled in a soft cocoon / it kept me safe / kept me feeling / I was still inside / my mother.*
 - The excitement of learning to talk and using language for different purposes: '**talking**' – *'...and teaches me / to say Dad / and then cat / and car...; ...and please / and then thank you... and yes ... and stop / and don't touch / and put that down'*
 - The humour of '**getting dressed**' *'...I want to dress / myself / I like my pants better / on my head / and my jumper / on my legs /...'*

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- The rhythm and action of '**mirror**' '*...hands on head / arms out wide / touch my nose / tickle my ears...*'
- Dramatise the poems. This gives older children a tangible way to reflect on what it was / is like to be a baby or a toddler, and how much they already know about themselves and their world: For example: '*this is me*', '*walking*', '*shoes*', '*toys*', '*talking*', '*dog*'.
- Use the poem '*mirror*' for a copying game. Before you play the game talk about how it will work. Demonstrate with two children. Divide children into pairs, facing one another. One child will be the baby, and one will be the 'reflection'. Tell the children you will read the poem out aloud, and as you read the children will do each action together. Ask the 'baby' to answer the question: "*who is that baby?*" with words and actions, that the other child will 'reflect'.
- Introduce children to different ways to play with the language of the poems. For example: Use the poem '*this is me*' in a call and response pattern. You say the first lines - the question: '*what are these / chubby and soft / with ten little toes*'. Ask the children to give the answer: '*oh – they're my feet*'. The children can dramatise each verse, pretending to be the baby. You could use a baby doll or, if you are lucky, a real baby.
- Use the poems as a starting point to talk with the children about what babies, and toddlers, and BIG children learn as they are growing up. For example, use the poem '*my dog*' to show how young children learn to classify and categorise things through observation and asking questions. Why is *Dog* not a person like *mummy*, *daddy*, *Grandma* and *Grandpa*? The answers are in the poem.
- Have conversations with the children about growing up. Ask the children to bring photos of themselves when they were growing up. Maybe they have pictures of themselves that reflect what is happening in the poems – in the bath, eating, playing, going out and about, wearing new shoes, having a birthday.
- Maybe the children could bring photos of their parents, grandparents, even great-grandparents when *they* were little. Make a display. Talk about how the young children in the photos in each generation are different.

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- Ask the children to draw or paint pictures of themselves when they were growing up – when they were eating, or sleeping, or going to the supermarket, with their families, with their pets.