

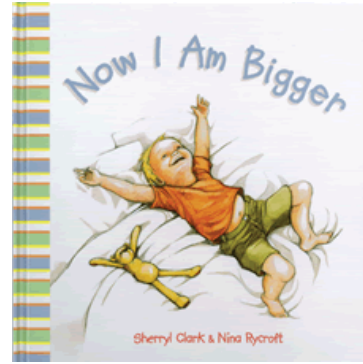
NOW I AM BIGGER – Teacher’s Notes

Author: Sherryl Clark

Illustrator: Nina Rycroft

Sherryl’s bio

I’ve been writing poetry for about 30 years, and have two collections of adult poems published, as well as three verse novels for 9-12 year old readers. I also teach poetry writing, and am co-editor of *Poetrix* magazine, which publishes poetry by women.



I have 40 children’s and YA books published, both in Australia and overseas. I teach at Victoria University TAFE in the Diploma of Professional Writing & Editing. My website is at www.sherrylclark.com and I also have a website devoted to poetry for children at www.poetry4kids.net

Nina’s bio

Nina graduated with a diploma in graphic design in 1992 and worked as a designer in Sydney and London before turning her hand to illustration, her first picture book *Little Platypus*, (Nette Hilton 2000), received a CBCA notable book in 2001. Nina’s other books include ***Boom Bah!*** (Phil Cummings, 2008) and ***Ballroom Bonanza*** - a story inspired by her great grandfather in law, Tommy Jones, band master at the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool from 1947-1978.

2010 marks Nina’s international debut, ABRAMS international edition of ***Ballroom Bonanza*** and Kane Miller’s first American edition of ***Boom Bah!*** Closer to home, Nina has illustrated ***No More Kisses*** (Margaret Wild, 2010) and ***When I Am Bigger*** (Sherryl Clark, 2010).

Nina resides in Auckland with her husband and two children Charlie(9) and Jayme (5). Other books include ***Tricky Little Hippo*** by Jane Bowring and ***Elephant Dance*** by Sue Whiting.

Notes from Sherryl

Why I wrote this book:

I’ve wanted to write a picture book of poems for a long time, as I’ve been inspired by poets such as Janet Wong (*Night Dreaming*), Marilyn Singer and Joyce Sidman, among others. But most poetry for children published in Australia is rhyming, and I wanted to use free verse. I don’t use rhyme very well!

The first poem I wrote was really a poem for adults about a baby being born, inspired by a photo and information that said within the first nine minutes of birth, a baby will start focusing on a person’s eyes. I knew there were more poems to write about babies, but I couldn’t quite see what they might be. Then one day I began writing poems from a baby’s point of view (rather than an adult looking on) and the story began.

Many of the poems came in flashes – it was me remembering what my daughter was like when she was a baby and toddler. I decided to focus on all the things that a very small child might experience as they discovered the world. When I got to the poem about moving from the cot into the first big bed, it seemed a natural ending. I knew this collection/story would be a challenge. Could I convincingly show a baby's world? In my writing classes, I tell my students to get down on floor in order to experience what the world looks like when you are only a metre tall! It's so easy to forget as you get bigger and bigger. I decided to apply the exercise to myself, and it helped, as did looking back at old photos and watching toddlers in all sorts of situations. Instead of rhyme, I focused on rhythm and repetition, and read the poems out loud to myself over and over. It was such a pleasure to watch the illustrations evolve and see their final expression.

Synopsis

Now I Am Bigger tells the story of a child growing from birth to around age three. It ends with the move from cot into first big bed. Each poem depicts a child's early experiences – e.g. eating, talking, teeth, learning to walk, meeting the dog – and then gradually moves out into the world of the supermarket and birthday party. For a growing child, the world is an amazing place and each new thing is momentous, exciting and scary.

Writing Style

The story is told in free verse poems. Instead of using rhyme, the author has focused on rhythm, repetition and sound to create read-aloud verse. The illustrations are gentle and humorous but also highly active and engaging.

Discussion Points

This is a book that can be read to Preps and Grade Ones, with a focus on discussion and story-telling. It can also be used very successfully with Grades 2-4, both for discussion and for the writing of their own poems. Separate ideas and activities for poetry writing are available in **Now I Am Bigger – Write Your Own Poems**.



Here are some ideas for discussion:

- Do you remember being very small? What do you remember? (Sights, sounds, emotions, experiences)
- Do you have a small brother or sister? Does watching them remind you of when you were small? (This is a common response to the book)
- Do you have any photos of yourself when you were a baby or toddler? (Students can be encouraged to bring photos in and share, and the teacher could create a display of these photos with the students)
- Do you have any photos of Mum or Dad when they were little? (These could add to the display as above)

- Do you have any toys that were your favourites when you were small? (Refer to the poem *Toys*)
- Do you have a pet dog or cat? How did you learn to play together? How did you learn to look after your pet? (Refer to the poem *Dog*)
- How many teeth do you have? What happens when you lose your baby teeth? (Refer to the poem *Teeth*)
- What is your favourite word? What word is hard for you to say? How do we learn new words? (Refer to the poem *Talking*)
- Can you dress yourself yet? Can you tie your own shoelaces? Who taught you? Who chooses your clothes? (Refer to the poem *Dressing*)

Now I Am Bigger is available at all good bookstores, and online at Fishpond, Readings and Boomerang Books, among others. If you're having trouble buying a copy, just email me at sherrylc1@optusnet.com.au .

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