

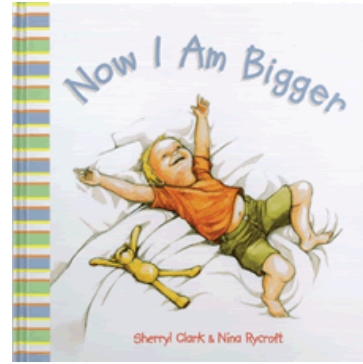
## NOW I AM BIGGER – Teacher’s Notes

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](http://www.sherrylclark.com) and I also have a website devoted to poetry for children at [www.poetry4kids.net](http://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 [sherryle1@optusnet.com.au](mailto:sherryle1@optusnet.com.au).

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