

## Little Bear and the Big Hole Teaching Notes

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Illustrator: Mirjam Siim



### **SYNOPSIS:**

When Little Bear's father dies, a Big Hole appears and won't go away. Most other animals ignore the hole, but one day Squirrel comes and sits with Little Bear. With Squirrel next to him, it is easier somehow, and they talk about the hole together. And day by day, the hole grows smaller.

### **In the Classroom**

## **Before Reading:**

### Discuss what is seen on the front and back cover:

- Introduce the book by looking at the cover:
  - What do we notice about the characters on the cover?
  - How do you think they feel?
  - What do you think their relationship might be?
  - What do you think the black shape is?
  - Why do you think this?
- What do you think this story will be about?
  - Why do children think this?

### Children's feelings when looking at the cover:

- How does the cover make you feel?
  - Why is this?

## **During Reading:**

### Questions to ask children during the story:

#### Understanding of themes:

- Why is Little Bear sad?
- What do you think the hole represents?
- Why do you think Little Bear feels that he is the only person who can see the hole?

#### Support and Friendship:

- How does Squirrel react to Little Bear?
- How does Squirrel react to the hole?
- What does Squirrel do to help Little Bear?
- Why do you think this helped Little Bear?

#### Emotions:

- Why does Little Bear say, "I hate this hole!"?
- What did Squirrel do when she felt sad?
- Why do you think this could help Little Bear?

## **After Reading:**

### Personal Experiences/Reflection:

- How did Little Bear feel at the beginning of the story?
- How did Little Bear feel at the end of the story?
- Why was the tree important in the story?

### Symbolism/Themes:

- Why do you think the hole represents Little Bear's sadness?

- What did the rain, growth, and tree symbolise?
- How did they change the hole?

### Connections and Memories:

- Why does Little Bear continue to feel Papa Bear's love, even though he is not there?
- Why does Little Bear feel stronger at the end of the story?

### Meaning of Actions:

- Why do you think music, art, and writing letters helped Little Bear and Squirrel to overcome their sadness?

### Personal Social and Emotional:

- Ask children what makes them feel sad.
  - Why is this?
- Ask children what makes them feel happy.
  - Why is this?
- Ask children if they have helped someone who was upset?
  - What did you do?
  - How did it make the other person feel?
  - What happened afterwards?
- Ask children what they might do if they see someone who is upset after reading the story.
  - What could you do?
  - Why would you choose to do this?

### **Classroom Activities:**

- Drawing activity: Children to draw pictures of something or someone that makes them happy. Discuss why this makes the child happy.
- Music activity: Using different musical instruments, explore the different sounds they make and the way they make us feel. Discuss why a particular sound creates an emotion.
- Planting activity: Children to plant a small flower from seed and watch as it grows. Discuss the process involved and what is needed to encourage growth.

### **About the Author:**

Jennifer Seal studied musical theatre and opera and sang stories for a living. It took a while for her to realise that what she really wanted to do was write. She lives in Dallas, Texas, USA, where she can be found surrounded by wonderfully ordinary and wildly extraordinary characters, real and imagined. Some of them end up in her books if she can catch them.

### **About the Illustrator:**

Mirjam Siim was born and raised in Tallinn, Estonia. Since earning a degree from Tartu Art College, Estonia, Mirjam has worked as a freelance illustrator and artist. Working on a range of different projects, Mirjam has exhibited work throughout Europe and the US. She enjoys working in watercolour and is often inspired by moments from her own life — conversations had, books read, or memories shared. Mirjam currently lives in Porto, Portugal.