

# One Runaway Rabbit

By David Metzenthen  
Illustrated by Mairead Murphy



July 2019 ISBN 9781760523558  
Hardback picture book  
Recommended for 2-5-year-olds

## Summary

A stylish and satisfying picture book about a curious pet rabbit who accidentally escapes the safety of her backyard, and then must survive in the wilds of suburbia at night.



The book's deceptively simple text is married to stylish and stylised illustrations offering much to see and interpret and enjoy. *One Runaway Rabbit* is suitable for young readers but also offers older readers loads of clever visual jokes.

## From the author and illustrator

'I wrote this book after seeing a runaway black and white rabbit in a carpark in Melbourne. I quickly organised a posse of kids to surround the rabbit, and eventually we herded it home and back into its yard...

'Where I live, though, there are many urban foxes... so I took the rabbit incident and brought in a hungry fox and set the story at night where lots of things take place in the dark city while we sleep.'

— David Metzenthen

'The text for the book is minimal so we worked hard to flesh out the details of the story and characters through the illustrations. Lulu the main character is based on a real Rex rabbit and the challenge was to capture the strong features of this breed but still have enough elasticity in her form and expression to portray the story.

'My son also likes to spot things in books, so I have tried to include many little details to look for in the illustrations.

'I hope to have captured the general aesthetic of Melbourne's middle ring of suburbs, the mixture of mid-century and modern buildings and the goings on in the houses.'

— Mairead Murphy

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## Themes

- pets
- foxes
- hunting and hiding
- suburbia

## Use in the curriculum

### Foundation and Yr 1 English

The large contribution of the pictures to the meaning of this story makes this an excellent text for visual literacy, in particular 'Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts (Australian Curriculum ACELA1786)'. Students can also be introduced to text features such as endpapers, double-page spreads, title page (ACELA1433) (ACELA1447). Comparison with information texts about rabbits helps develop genre awareness (ACELA1453).

*One Runaway Rabbit* is also a simple text for re-telling and enacting or incorporating into play (ACELT1578) (ACELT1580) (ACELT1831). Combined with the author's description (below) of where the story came from, the art of storytelling can be explored (ACELT1575). Students can explore their feelings about the story (ACELT1783) (ACELT1582).

The textual feature of the numbers 'one' and 'two' is important: the first page, 'One bushy garden', sets up the expectation of a counting book, but this is foiled by the second page, 'One curious rabbit'. 'One' continues to feature in the text until the last page, 'Two best friends', provides a textually satisfying ending (ACELT1785) (ACELA1448). In general, the very simple words of the story, coupled with the images, help students who are coming to grips with reading and prediction (ACELY1659) (ACELY1660).

### Foundation and Yr 1 History and Social Studies

The 'bird's eye view' double page spread, showing the rabbit's path as she runs from the fox, requires map-reading skills (ACHASSK014) (ACHASSI007) and the stylised representation of suburbia invites discussion about 'The places people live in and belong to, their familiar features and why they are important to people' (ACHASSK015).

## Discussion questions

- Before opening *One Runaway Rabbit* look at the title and cover design. Discuss what students think the story might be about and the clues in the picture that make them think that. Ask questions such as:
  - What is a runaway and what do you think a runaway rabbit is likely to do?
  - Where do you think this story will be set – a suburb near a city or in the quiet countryside?
  - Will it be set during the day or night?
- After reading the story ask students the following comprehension questions:
  - What is the rabbit's name?
  - Where does Lulu live?
  - Does Lulu runaway because she is unhappy?
  - Who is her friend?
  - Who is her enemy?
  - What does she do to trick the fox?
  - Can you tell how long Lulu was away from home?

- Compare the book's front and back endpapers. What do both show and what do the back endpapers tell us about just how far Lulu travelled?
- Imagine you are the fox. How might you describe what happened that night? What might the title of that story be?
- What do you think happened to the mouse after the fox started to chase Lulu? Come up with a whole new adventure involving the mouse and a cat.
- Turn to the page where the fox is chasing Lulu and their path is marked by blue broken lines. Study the picture carefully and discuss what is different here? How does perspective change the way we see the houses, the flamingo and the garden gnomes? Why are there so many different images of Lulu but only one of the fox?
- Look closely at the image of Lulu watching the sun rise and find three other living things also awake at that hour.
- Does Lulu look happy to have returned home on the last page?

## The author

David Metzenthen is a Melbourne boy. He was an advertising copywriter before turning to fiction, and a builder's labourer to support his first twenty years as a writer for young people. David tries to write stories that will explain and entertain and be worthy of the reader's time. The natural world is where he likes to spend time, and he is a supporter of various environmental foundations. David is married and has two children, a dog, and a couple of parrots. He has travelled overseas but is inspired by this country and hopes always to feel that way.



## The Illustrator

Mairead Murphy has always loved to draw. Coming from a background in Interior Architecture, she brings a keen eye for composition and an appreciation of texture to her work across a variety of illustrated projects, from illustrated artworks to wallpaper to children's clothing. Developing and producing images or characters with their own personality is something that Mairead always finds surprising and exciting - like meeting someone for the first time. Mairead's style uses the elasticity and softness of detailed pencil work to capture personality and movement in her characters, while digital elements bring colour and texture.