

WHEN I CAN FLY

KATIE STEWART

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YEAR LEVEL: K–3

ABOUT THE BOOK

Little Boobook is obsessed with the idea of going to the city. He promises himself that as soon as he learns to fly, he'll set off on his adventure. The city, however, is not what he imagined at all, and he finds himself missing his mum and ready for a new adventure back at home. This is a delightful picture book about taking a chance, working hard to achieve your dreams and the comfort of a loving family.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katie Stewart is an author and illustrator. Born in the north of England, she came to Australia at the age of nine. She started her working life as an archaeologist and ethnohistorian, went on to teaching and then to being a mother. She later worked in a school library, but her lifelong dream was to be what she is now. She is married to a farmer, has three children and lives north of Northam, where her love of animals means she has a lot of pets and takes lots of nature photos. In her spare time, she tries to play the harp or wanders the countryside with a metal detector amusing the neighbours and occasionally finding an interesting piece of history. Her books have been shortlisted for the Speech Pathology Australia Book of the Year (2020 and 2021) and shortlisted for the WA Premier's Book Awards (2022).

THEMES

- Family
- Love
- Home
- Adventure/exploration
- Growing up
- Resilience
- Native fauna

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

K–3 English

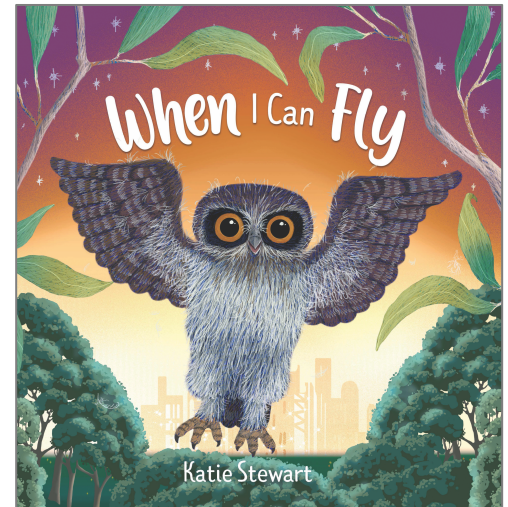
K–3 Science: Biological Sciences

K–3 Visual Art

K–3 Humanities and Social Sciences

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: katiestewartauthorillustrator.com
- Australian Museum – Southern Boobook: australian.museum/learn/animals/birds/southern-boobook-owl



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. Before reading, make three predictions about the story.
2. Identify these parts of the book: front cover, back cover, title, author/illustrator, blurb, and spine.
3. The author has included the epigraph: The best thing about being able to fly is that you can always change direction. Who is this message for? What do you think it means? How does it relate to the story?
4. Retell the story in your own words.
5. Identify the story's beginning, middle and end. What is the main problem/complication, and how was it resolved?
6. What are the main messages of the story? Can you think of other stories with similar themes?
7. Describe Little Boobook at the start of the story and then at the end of the story. How does he change?
8. What are three words you could use to describe Little Boobook's mother?
9. How does Little Boobook's mother show she loves him?
10. Why does Little Boobook want to go to the city?
11. Little Boobook practised flapping his wings until he was strong enough to fly to the city. What does this tell you about Little Boobook's personality?
12. Describe what Little Boobook thought the city would be like. What was it really like?
13. What are some of the things Little Boobook misses when he's in the city?
14. Identify a problem Little Boobook faces in the city and brainstorm solutions.
15. Do you think Little Boobook showed strength or weakness when he decided to return home? Why?
16. Do you think Little Boobook's mother wanted him to leave home? Why didn't she try to stop him?
17. What advice do you think Little Boobook would give to another bird that wanted to visit the city?
18. The stars and moon remind Little Boobook of home. What reminds you of home?
19. Would you prefer to live in the city or country? Explain your choice.
20. The spread on pages 21–22 uses onomatopoeia to show a variety of noises in the city, such as *BEEP*, *SCREECH* and *NEE-NAW-NEE-NAW*. How do these noises make you feel? What onomatopoeia would you use to describe the city during the day?

Creative writing

1. Write a review of *When I Can Fly*, including a summary, your opinion and a recommendation for other readers.
2. Write a sentence using each of these words from the story: waved, vanish, boring, flew, missed, promised.
3. Describe Little Boobook's feelings and thoughts when he first arrives in the city. Use sensory details to create a vivid picture.
4. Imagine you are Little Boobook in the city. Write a postcard to your guardian at home.
5. Write a story about a character visiting a new place. Does your character like the new place?
6. The stars and moon have a special meaning for Little Boobook. Write a poem celebrating the night sky.

Visual art

1. Compare the illustrations of Little Boobook's home to the illustrations of the city. How do the colours, images and style used make you feel?
2. Reimagine your favourite scene from the book using a different illustration style.
3. Can you find an example where the illustration gives extra information that isn't in the text?
4. Print off a colouring-in sheet from Katie Stewart's website: katiestewartauthorillustrator.com/free-colour-ins
5. Create a boobook owl sculpture using clay or recycled materials.

Science

1. What does Little Boobook eat?
2. Boobook owls are nocturnal. What does this mean? What characteristics allow the owls to live a nocturnal lifestyle?
3. Research the boobook owl. Create a multimedia presentation or poster to share your findings.

4. Describe the features of Little Boobook's habitat. Does it have all the things he needs to survive, like food, water and shelter?
5. What dangers can wildlife face in cities? What can be done to protect wildlife in cities?
6. Which native animals can you spot in the illustrations? What introduced animal can you spot?

Humanities and Social Sciences

1. Encourage students to share their own family stories about adventures, travel or moving to new places.
2. Draw a map to show Little Boobook's journey from home to the city and back.
3. Write three questions you would like to ask Little Boobook to find out more about his adventure.
4. Little Boobook feels a sense of belonging when he gets back home after his adventure. What is it about his home that makes him feel that way?