TEACHER NOTES

LEAPING LIZARDS PRESS

SYNOPSIS

A mountain troll — who desperately wants to be liked — gets together with a passing billy goat to help solve his problems, in a delightful story about foibles, friendship and fun!

Key words / themes: Folklore, friendship, empathy, emotions, cleanliness, problem solving, trolls, billy goats.

Key points

- *Bert and Billy* is the second collaboration of Mark Carthew and Shane McG; following on from their award-winning, Speech Pathology Australia Book of Year: *The Thing That Goes Ping!*
- The book's classic rhyme and playful text explores an uplifting messaging about friendship, problem solving and empathy.
- A fun feature of this book is the positive re-imagining of folkloric depictions of trolls, along with a cleverly subtle nod to the traditional tale of the Three Billy Goats Gruff.
- Literary qualities include appealing alliteration, rhythm, rhyme and assonance – perfect for reading out loud.
- Attractive features include eye-catching design with humorous visual narrative and stunning illustration.

ISBN - HB: 9781764597005
Extent: 32 pages
Format: Hardback 254mm x 254mm

Distributed in Australia and New Zealand by Simon & Schuster
https://www.simonandschuster.com.au/authors/Mark-Carthew/271105351

orders@harpercollins.com.au

ILLUSTRATOR STYLE OR MEDIUM

While the illustrations for *Bert and Billy* evolved from initial pencil sketches, the final illustrations were produced digitally using Adobe Photoshop using pencil, pastel, watercolour and graphite brushes. Shane McG has incorporated quirky anthropomorphic features to provide a humorous connection with the main characters of Bert (Troll) and Billy (Billy Goat) in the narrative.

Stylish design and set-out, also includes many artistic elements to enjoy and search for in the each spread.

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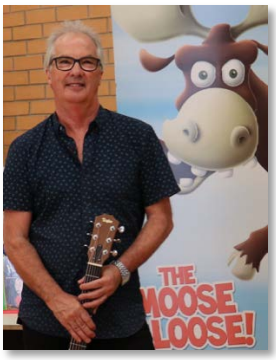
AUTHOR STUDY

Dr Mark Carthew is an award-winning children's author, poet, playwright, musician, primary teacher and May Gibbs Children's Literature Trust Alumni. Mark has previously won Speech Pathology Australia's (SPA) Book of the Year Award for *The Gobbling Tree*, along with SPA shortlistings for *Five Little Owls, The Moose is Loose!, Wicked Wizards & Leaping Lizards, Marvin and Marigold: The Big Sneeze & Marvin and Marigold: A Stormy Night* and *The Great Zoo Hullabaloo!* His anthology *Can You Keep a Secret? Timeless Rhymes to Share & Treasure* was a CBCA Notable Book. Mark's illustrated play script series *VOICEWORKS* sold over a million copies worldwide. His recent title, *The Dingle Dangle Jungle*, ill. by Dave Atze, was shortlisted for the 2020 Educational Publishing Awards Australia — and his picture book *The Thing That Goes Ping!* — also ill. by Shane McG, was awarded Speech Pathology Australia's 2021 Book of the Year. You can find out more about Mark at Leaping Lizards Press www.leapinglizardspress.com.au and his author website www.markcarthew.com.au

Make up your own name poem in a similar rhyming style to Mark's name poem, weaving in the letters of your name and telling something about yourself in the verses.



Mark likes playing his guitars,
And gazing up at night for stars.
He Reads a lot, collects old books,
Surfs King-sized waves and likes to cook.

Can you guess the simple clue,
About some things Mark likes to do?
He loves to write Rhymes, plays and songs,
Walking barefooT… sing-a-longs.
He also likes long
NaturE walks,
Bird Watching and fireside talks!

ILLUSTRATOR STUDY

Shane McGowan currently lives and works in Melbourne Australia after having resided in London for almost twenty years. His work as an award-winning illustrator and designer has resulted in extensive global client base. He also writes and illustrates picture books which are published traditionally and as e-books and he is currently developing apps and a cartoon series based on a number of his books.
His work as an illustrator has been recognised on numerous occasions by Images (UK) and European Illustration, as well as having won a number of Gold, Silver and Bronze medals in the Illustrators Australia Awards in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015. His work has also been recognised by 3x3 and Lürzer's Archive where he was selected to appear in 200 Best Illustrators Worldwide.

For more information on Shane's work, art and illustrations visit https://www.shanemcgworld.com/

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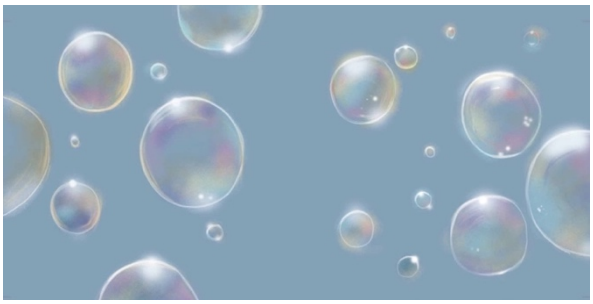
STUDY NOTES

1. **Introduce the book** – read the title and ask children to look closely at the cover illustration. Why do you think Bert and Billy are standing on a bridge? What do you think they might be talking about? Why do you think the author chose those names for the main characters? (Note: the alliteration of B & B sounds, the word play on Billy Goat and traditional names of Trolls in literary and folkloric tales). Ask the children about Bert's and Billy's clothing and appearance. How is their clothing significant for the themes in the story? How old do you think Billy is? Explain why? Do you think that Bert (the troll) looks friendly? Why or why not? Discuss.

2. **Endpapers** - Before and after reading the book, ask the question.

   Look carefully at the **endpapers**. In hardback picture books, endpapers have an important role, as they always show or provide a hint about something to do with the story. Note: Paperback editions, normally don't have full endpapers.

   Why do you think the bubbles are illustrated for these endpapers? Discuss. Come back to this important question after reading the book. Answer: It is to do with the bubbles from Bert's bath experience.



3. **Narrative**

   The start of the story sees Bert sitting under a bridge, looking grumpy & unhappy. Why might this be? Do you think he might be lonely? How does this change as the story progresses? Discuss.

   As you read the opening pages and get into the playfulness of the story, invite the children to look for the 'fine' details of the illustrations in each double page spread eg the kerosene bedside lamp, the dirt and dust on the troll's bed – and the pipe feeding the bath from the river supply, the various elements in the building scene, the little birds and creatures etc. Encourage observations and comments, particularly as the story leads to Bert's bath experience and new characters, events and settings emerge, such as the building of the mountain inn. Why did the first family run away from Bert? How do you think this would have made Bert feel? Does the same family come back later in the story? How do they react to Bert this time?

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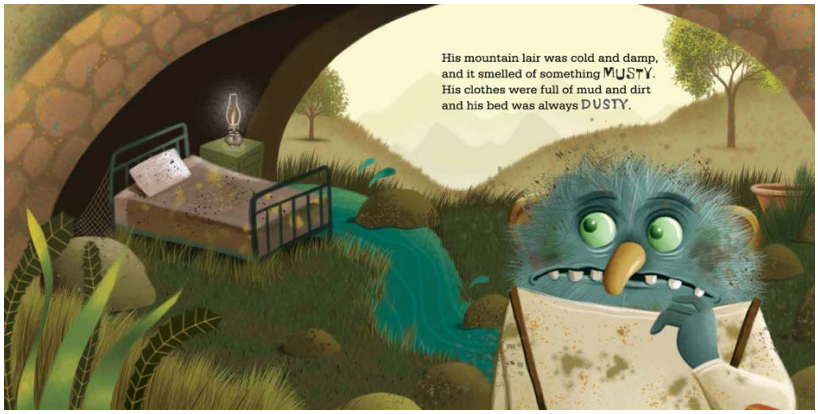
4. Setting – Imaginary & Real Lands

Discuss the **setting**. Where do you think story might be set? Look carefully at the mountains, river and the bridge. How are these features important to the story?



Is it an imaginary or real place? Bert looks a little worried. Why might that be? What makes you think this? Can you think of any other stories set in imaginary places?

5. Fun Fact

Trolls in traditional Nordic and Scandinavian folklore often have four fingers and three or four toes. Q: How many digits does Bert have? Does he have a thumb? Draw your own troll character or assortment of troll characters with these features.

6. Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a word that 'looks like' or names a sound, but also vocalises like that sound.
There are a couple of examples in this text.

GRRRR,

Arghhhhh…

Depending on the age and ability of the children involved, students could be asked to research other books with onomatopoeia.
The Thing That Goes Ping! also by Mark Carthew & Shane McG, is packed full of onomatopoeic animal sounds such as Moo… Quack! Shhhh… Oink! Baa… Hee- HAW! etc.

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Carthew's many books, plays, songs and poems are highly regarded for their poetic and onomatopoeic phrases – this is a strong feature of ***The Gobbling Tree*** and ***Five Little Owls.*** Teachers and caregivers could compile a display or list of familiar or favourite noisy poems eg 'The Ning Nang Nong', by Spike Milligan. https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/poem/on-the-ning-nang-nong/ Children could write their own noisy poem.

7. Design, rhyming words and calligrams

One of this book's distinctive and delightful design features – is the use of colour and visual representation of key rhyming words. Examples include:

Discuss these elements and the ways that they add extra interest to the rhyming phrases. Students can follow-up this discussion by choosing their own words to represent in their own creative, 'visual' way.

For older students, this is a type of **calligram** — a technique that is also used in **concrete poems**. Research, share and discuss.

8. Alliteration

Mark Carthew is well-known for his award-winning use of rhythm, rhyme and alliteration. Discuss how alliteration impacts the flow and enjoyment of reading out loud. eg **raging river – rumbling rocks – gruesome growl – big bulgy eyes – horrid howl bubbling bath – bristling brush – grunted, gasped and gurgled etc.**

A number of the alliterations use the 'b' sound. Why would Mark have done this?

Ask the students to identify some of their favourite alliterative phrases in the story.

9. AFTER READING THE BOOK:

After the bath experience, the narrative led to the collaborative building of a mountain inn and the community acceptance of Bert as the new inn's host.

Ask some open ended questions:

- At the start of the story a sad and grumpy Bert asked Billy how he could make people 'know' he was nice. In what ways do you think the story achieved this?
- Describe the parts of the story that were especially enjoyable or funny? Bert changes colour after his bath. Why was this important to the storyline?
- Why did Billy suggest wearing goggles and the need for a 'bristling brush'?
- Did you notice some of the little details that Shane McG placed in the illustrations? eg the flowers & chairs unpacked in the rental truck, the olives on the reception table, the leaping fish, the pipe leading to the bath (implicitly from the river). Turn back through the pages and ask for observations and comments.
- What do you think the children are doing in the last rockpool spread?
- What were some of your favourite pages in the story? Why did you like them?

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More ACTIVITIES

Diorama and Artwork

Children will enjoy making a diorama or artwork featuring a mountain bridge, river and / or troll cave environment. This could be part of a broader discussion on types of bridges, riverine / creek environments, rock pools and mountain habitats.

Draw your own Troll or an extended troll family! What do you think troll children or families would look like?

Make sure they have four fingers and three or four toes… big noses and hairy legs!

Activity sheets

Add extra features to these Bert and Billy colouring sheets or have fun creating your own artwork to match Bert and Billy's story.

You can find these and many more fun-filled activity sheets and games at Mark Carthew's website https://www.markcarthew.com.au/fun-stuff

Also downloadable from:

Simon & Schuster:
https://www.simonandschuster.com.au/books/Bert-and-Billy/Mark-Carthew/9781764597005

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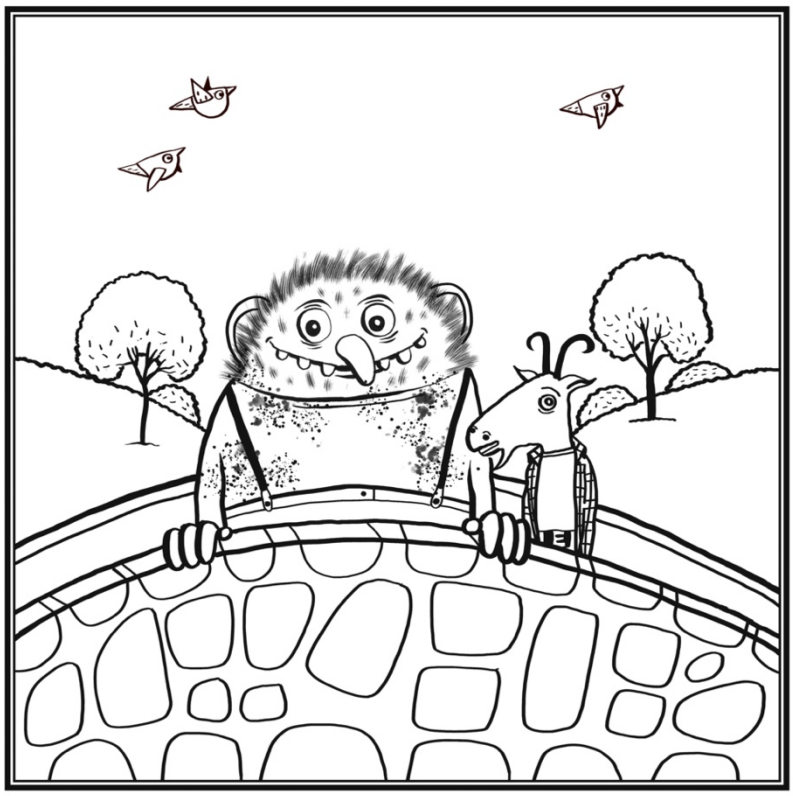

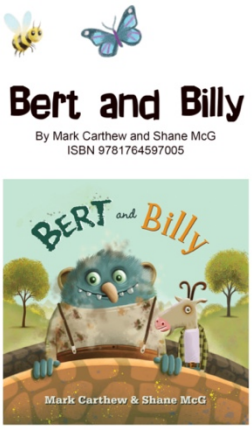

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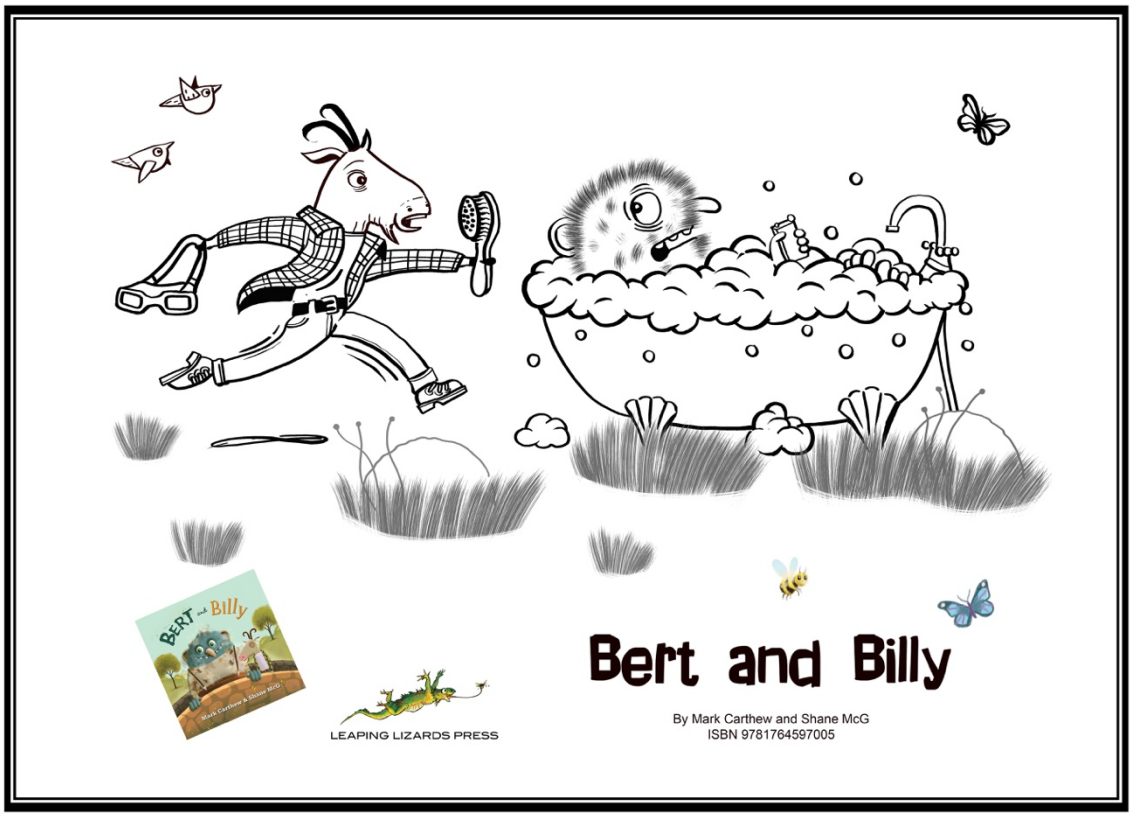

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