

TEACHER NOTES

Night Watch

Phil Cummings / Janine Dawson

Title: *Night Watch*
Author: Phil Cummings
Illustrator: Janine Dawson

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Author:

Phil Cummings was born in Port Broughton, South Australia, and lived on Yorke Peninsula and in the mid-north of the state until he moved to Adelaide in 1976 to begin a teaching career. His first book, *Goodness Gracious!* (illustrated by Craig Smith) was released in 1989. Since then he has published over sixty books for children which range from picture books, such as the *The Tobbly Twins* and the popular Working Title Press title, *Boom Bah!* (adapted to the stage by The Windmill Theatre Company). He has also written novels such as *Angel* and *Danny Allen Was Here*. Phil is an ambassador for the Premier's Reading Challenge in South Australia, and for the National Year of Reading in 2012. He has received a number of honours and awards in Australia and overseas for his work, including the Carclew Fellowship at the Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1998, and numerous Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book honours. His novel *Danny Allen was here* was shortlisted for the prestigious children's literature awards at the Adelaide festival of Arts in 2008. In 2012, this book formed the basis of a suite of songs composed by John Schumann of Redgum fame which was performed by over 20,000 children in over 300 schools.

Illustrator:

Janine Dawson was born and grew up in Manly, Sydney. Janine says she was always a drawer, but never took it seriously. However, after an initial career in theatre she switched to animation after hearing a talk about it at the Sydney College of the Arts. So began a love affair that lasted more than 20 years, during which time she worked in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Taiwan. In 1991, after returning to Australia, Janine began illustrating children's books. Among the many books she has illustrated are the highly successful *Lily Quench* series by Natalie Jane Prior, Carol Ann Martin's *Dulcie & Dud* stories, *Junkyard Dogs* by Margaret Balderson, *Pudding & Chips* by Penny Matthews, and the Working Title Press books, *Bobbie Dazzler* by Margaret Wild and *Alberta* by Tania Cox. More recently she has illustrated the *Philomena Wonderpen* series by Ian Bone and a number of Penguin Nibbles stories by Julie Nickerson. Janine still lives in Manly with her cat Tigger, and her daughter, Rosie, close by.

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SYNOPSIS Giraffe, Elephant, Hippo and Baboon all live by the lake, happily going about their own business, until one day Giraffe spies the shadow of Lion - prowling, creeping, stalking, sneaking. They are worried, and talk about what they should do. Baboon comes up with a plan, where they all have to work together to outsmart Lion.

WRITING **Phil Cummings** wrote *Night Watch* after attending some Neighbourhood Watch meetings. When he set about writing the story he had some complex underlying themes in mind. At the meetings he met a lot of people who had been neighbours for many years but had never met. They came together to make their neighbourhood a safer place to live. In *Night Watch* the animals (like Phil Cummings and his neighbours) *lived very busy lives, and apart from a polite nod of the head (or) wave of the tail... they rarely spoke to each other, until the day they all felt threatened by the Prowling ... creeping ... stalking ... sneaking LION!* Phil Cummings has created a text that is simply told but that encompasses the seriousness of the underlying theme of the story. The text is delightfully rhythmic, full of energy, movement and sound, and is enriched by the engaging use of words and phrases. From the start the text invites readers and listeners to act out the story: through movement - *giraffe stretches lazily*, and *Elephant tosses his trunk to the air*; and through sound – *SPLISH SPLASH! BURP!* and *BOOM BOOM BOMPETY BOOM!* The turning point in the story is when Giraffe *'spied a shadow on the mountain by the lake*. Now Giraffe, Elephant, Hippo, and Baboon have to all work together to outsmart Lion. The last part of the story combines humour (the clever plan) and warmth (the animals meet at the lake at night, and *they knew they had nothing to worry about*).

ILLUSTRATIONS **Janine Dawson** used Windsor and Newton watercolour paints, Dr Martins Black Star matte ink with a dip pen, Gillotte 303 nib, 2B pencil, and a rubber (for all the mistakes) on Fabriano watercolour paper for the illustrations in this book. She went through a lengthy process before she finished the final illustrations for *Night Watch*. She started by doing rough drawings using a blue pencil. She says that the blue pencil allows her to 'think' as she draws: *"...the page is covered with lots of 'thinking' lines"*. Her 'thinking' lines were then drawn over the top in either HB or 2B pencil. In the next stage of the process Janine put the drawing on her light box, and placed a sheet of watercolour paper on top. Then she traced the rough drawing very lightly onto the watercolour paper. After this she used a dip pen and waterproof India Ink to draw up the picture. Using a variation in pressure on the pen helped her to give the line personality, thin and thick areas. Janine says this was *"my favourite part of the whole process,*

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because now I take my time and add the facial expressions and 'character' to the drawing. I love it". When the ink has thoroughly dried, she carefully rubbed out the pencil lines, leaving a lovely expressive ink drawing – ("... *hopefully,*" she says). The final stage was adding colour. Janine usually started with watercolour washes for the background – the land and the sky. Janine has used colours that evoke the African grasslands habitat of the animals – the light brightness of the daytime scenes around the lake, and the night scenes brightly lit by a big, white full moon that is used to emphasise the shadows that are a focal point of the story. The layout alternates between single page vignettes and double page spreads that bleed from the edge of the page. Janine has created a group of appealing characters, using open, fluid lines to portray contentment and pleasure (the animals going about their day-to-day lives, and dancing) and jagged, spiky lines to convey fear (the frightened lion).

DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

- This is an interactive book that can be looked at, and read with babies, toddlers, preschool and school-aged children.
- Before reading the story to a large group of children try sharing it with small groups. Give the children time to look at the pictures, make their own observations, ask questions, reflect on what might be happening in the story. Help the children to create their own 'sense' of the story. Take time to let the children linger over each page, or move on when they are ready.
- Share your own reflections with the children. Talk about the animals. Do the children know the names of the animals? What else do they know about these animals? Draw their attention to the animals' facial expressions and body language, pointing out how the pictures help us to know how they are feeling.
- When you read the story with the children, take time to help them join in by repeating particular phrases and asking them to join in. E.g "Munch CRUNCH! MUNCH crunch!" Bah Dah! BAH DAAAAAH!
- Dramatise the actions E.g. Like giraffe, *stretch lazily to the very treetops*, and like Baboon, *drum a wild rhythm on your chest*.
- Phil Cummings says that he wanted to use shadows in the book because, '*when we see a shadow we might be frightened or wary because we might be unsure of what is making that shadow*'. Find the pages where the animal's shadows central to the meaning of the story.
- Talk about why Lion is so scared of the shadow that the animals make on the side of the mountain.

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- Investigate the art of shadow puppetry and create shadow games using cut out figures and model animals
- Create pictures using Janine Dawson's techniques. Do the drawing first, with crayon or waterproof ink and then add the colour over the top, using watercolours, and various size brushes. Use wider brushes to do the background washes, and finer brushes for more detail, such as grass, leaves, stars, etc.
- With the children, retell the story using model animals. With the children, make props - trees, mountains, lake, sun, and the moon.
- Dramatise the story with some of the children taking the roles of the different animals. Other children can play percussion instruments and join in the chanting and dancing.
- Find out more about the place where the story takes place. What are the particular features of the African landscape that are depicted in the book. For example the flat to mountain, the lake and the vegetation.
- Find out more about Phil Cummings and his books at his website: <http://philcummings.com>
- Find out more about Janine Dawson at her website <http://www.janinedawson.com.au/>