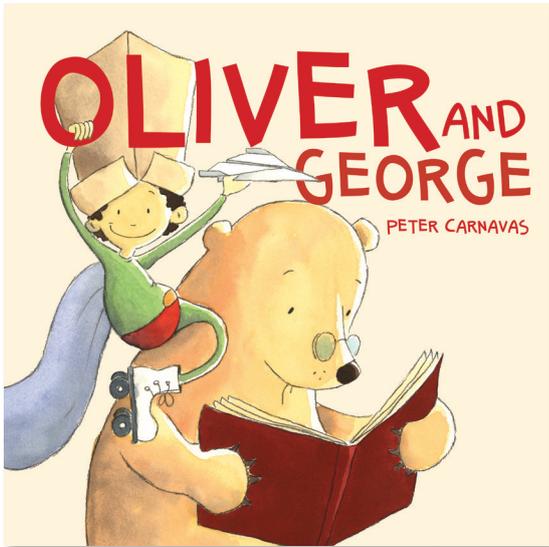


# TEACHERS' NOTES

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## Oliver and George

Written and illustrated by Peter Carnavas

### Synopsis

Oliver, a small boy, is ready to play... but his friend George, a bear, is too busy reading. Oliver then tries everything to distract George from his book. He throws paper planes, breaks his chair, tips porridge over his head... but it seems nothing can distract George or make him angry. That is, until, Oliver snatches the thing that is most important to George – his book. Oliver soon finds out what happens when he bothers his friend one too many times.

### Author/Illustrator style or medium

Peter used watercolour and black pencil for the illustrations. He wanted the pictures to have slightly loose, rough outline with the pencil, reflecting the playful nature of the story. The background of each page is white space, as the story is much like two characters performing a skit on a blank stage. The focus is therefore on nothing but the characters, their actions and the relationship between them. The most important item in the story – George's book – stands out in a deep red tone, against the white background warm brown colours of George the bear.

### Author/Illustrator Motivation

*Oliver and George* began as Peter's attempt to write a story about a non-stereotypical bear. He wanted to create a simple, fun story in which the bear didn't frighten anybody, as the reader or other characters might expect, but rather behaved quite well. With the addition of the boy character, Oliver, there was a chance to give the misbehaving qualities to the human. Such is the interplay between Oliver and George. As George the bear minds his own business, Oliver becomes more impatient and naughtier. In the end, George the bear does behave like the growly animal the reader might expect, as Oliver bothers him one too many times. The



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story was also a chance for Peter to write a fun read-aloud story, with suspenseful page turns, catchphrases and joyous repetition.

### Author/Illustrator Background Information

Peter grew up as the youngest of four kids with two parents that somehow allowed and encouraged him to pursue his interests without him realising. He learnt the violin and guitar and was pretty certain he would one day become one of the world's greatest songwriters, sitting somewhere alongside Bob Dylan, John Lennon and Brian Wilson.

This didn't happen, so it was lucky he could draw little pictures of people.

Peter has always written stories and scribbled pictures. After making little books for family and then teaching for a few years, he began immersing himself in picture books. He immediately fell in love with the work of the great picture book creators: Quentin Blake, Stephen Michael King, Peter H. Reynolds, Freya Blackwood, Libby Gleeson, Shaun Tan, Armin Greder, Bob Graham and more.

Peter's first book, *Jessica's Box*, was published by New Frontier in 2008. His tale of a little girl's attempt to find friendship was shortlisted for the 2008 Queensland Premier's Literary Award, the Children's Book Council of Australia's 2009 Crichton Award for Emerging Illustrators and was listed as a CBCA Notable Book for 2009.

Many books have followed: *Sarah's Heavy Heart*, *The Important Things*, *Last Tree in the City*, *The Great Expedition*, *The Children Who Loved Books*, *The Boy on the Page* and *Jonathan!* (illustrated by Amanda Francey). Peter has also illustrated Alex Field's Mr Darcy series, Pat Flynn's *My Totally Awesome Story* and *My Nanna is a Ninja*, written by Damon Young.

*Oliver and George* is Peter's eighth author/illustrator work.

### Educational Applicability

The key theme in this book is to be careful of what might happen when you bother a bear – even the most polite bear – too many times! In a more serious sense, it can also be interpreted as a parent-child relationship.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

### Before and during reading the book:

1. Introduce the book – read the title and ask students to comment on the cover illustration. *Which one is Oliver? Which one is George? How would you describe the characters?*
2. As you read the opening pages, ask the children if they've ever been told "In a minute".
3. Continue reading and encourage to join in with the repeated lines... "So mad" and "George wasn't mad at all".
4. *What will Oliver do this time? Will anything make George mad?*

### After reading the book:

1. Ask children what they think about the ending. *What happened? How do you think George the bear feels now?*
2. *What do you think Oliver should have done? What would you do to get somebody's attention?*
3. *What do you think would happen next if the story kept going?*



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## ACTIVITIES

### Critical and Creative Thinking:

#### Oliver and George: a play!

*Oliver and George* is a bit like a two-character play on a blank stage. The story could be performed by pairs as a play. The props are simple and easy to prepare: a paper plane, a book, a bowl, a cardboard box, a feather and some dress-up clothes for Oliver.

#### Rewrite the story

Children can rewrite parts of the story, particularly Oliver's attempts to get George's attention. Instead of throwing paper planes, breaking chairs and tipping bowls of porridge, what else could Oliver do to distract George from his book? The bulk of the text could be provided, with missing lines for children to fill in, then match with an illustration of their own.

Oliver \_\_\_\_\_.

George got so mad that he...

didn't do anything.

George wasn't mad at all.

#### Write the sequel

At the end of the story, George is finally ready to play but now Oliver is too engrossed in the book. As a class or individually, you can make a sequel to *Oliver and George*, following the same pattern of text, but this time George is trying to get Oliver's attention. What would George do?

#### Further Research

1. There are many picture books with a bear as one of the characters. Collect some of these books from your library and compare the characters. Are the bears friendly or unfriendly? Are they scary or polite?
2. Have a look at some other Peter Carnavas books. What similarities can you find between them all? Is *Oliver and George* different in any way?

## MARKETING AND SELLING POINTS

- A brilliantly crafted, humorous picture book with a twist
- Peter Carnavas has previously been shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Literary Award and won the Speech Pathology Book of the Year Award. He was also awarded a Notable Book award by the CBCA
- Peter Carnavas has been shortlisted for the Crichton Award



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