

OLD HU-HU

By Kyle Mewburn

Illustrated By Rachel Driscoll

Little Hu-Hu-Tu loved Old Hu-Hu very much. But now all that's left is an empty shell. Where did Old Hu-Hu get to? Little Hu-Hu-Tu's search for answers leads to a surprising discovery. Old Hu-Hu is a moving and beautifully illustrated story about losing someone dear.

TEACHER'S NOTES

KYLE MEWBURN is the author of several popular children's books including *Kiss! Kiss! Yuck! Yuck!*, which won the Joy Cowley award in 2006, as well as Best Picture Book of the Year and the Children's Choice Award at the 2007 NZ Post Book awards. Mewburn is now an internationally successful writer who continues to explore new areas of literature for children.

RACHEL DRISCOLL is the illustrator of the Margaret Beames story *The Mouse That Danced*. Driscoll and her partner **MICHAEL GREENFIELD** worked together on the design of the book to ensure that the typography is just as special as the artwork. The beautiful illustrations designed by Driscoll for *Old Hu-Hu* are created in pencil and paint.

SYNOPSIS

Old Hu-Hu flew to the moon and back (or so they said), then fell down dead. *Old Hu-Hu* is a thoughtful tale of young Hu-Hu-Tu's search for understanding about what happened to his beloved Old Hu-Hu.

Everyone loved Old Hu-Hu but Hu-Hu-Tu misses him most of all. He remembers all of the exciting adventures that Old Hu-Hu had when he was younger and can't accept that the empty shell lying upside down on the ground is really Old Hu-Hu. But then where has Old Hu-Hu gone?

Hu-Hu-Tu endeavours to answer this question by searching for Old Hu-Hu and asking his friends if they have seen him. This makes Hu-Hu-Tu feel even more dejected and confused because all of his friends seem to have different ideas about where Old Hu-Hu is. The Ladybird believes that he is sitting on a cloud with all his old

friends. Butterfly believes that soon Old Hu-Hu will wake up and be born again as an elephant, a snake or a hen. But when Old Hu-Hu doesn't wake up Hu-Hu-Tu believes that he is gone for ever. He is inconsolable because he never got to say goodbye.

As day breaks Hu-Hu-Tu hears Old Hu-Hu's voice. At first he can't figure out where the voice is coming from, but then he realises that it is coming from inside of him. Hu-Hu-Tu reaches an understanding about Old Hu-Hu's death and realises that what would really make Old Hu-Hu happy is if he lives his life to the fullest – just like Old Hu-Hu did.

Old Hu-Hu is a poignant celebration-of-life story that contains beautiful illustrations. A touch of fantasy and reality are combined in the story, which deals with the issue of death in a sensitive and positive manner. *Old Hu-Hu is best suited to readers 4+ years.*

BEFORE READING OLD HU-HU:

Look closely at the front cover. Write down your responses and then discuss them with the class.

- What is a Hu-Hu?
- Where might the story be set?
- What do you think the story might be about?
- What questions come to mind?

Turn the book over and look at the illustration and read the blurb.

- What has happened to Old Hu-Hu?
- Have you ever lost anyone close to you? How did this make you feel? What do you believe happens to people when they die?
- What answers is Little Hu-Hu-Tu looking for? What do you think his 'surprising discovery' might be?
- Describe the illustration on the back cover. Why do you think the illustrator has used muted colours? What sort of mood does the illustration convey?

DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

The story works on many different levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age range. Please select accordingly.

1. Read the story aloud to the class, giving students plenty of time to see what is happening in each picture. Reading it through again, stop and ask students to tell you what they see. Encourage more advanced readers to read to each other.
2. Have students describe Old Hu-Hu. What sorts of things did he like to do when he was younger? Why do you think the illustrator has drawn these pictures in dull colours? How do you know that Old Hu-Hu was well-liked?
3. How do you know that Hu-Hu-Tu has trouble accepting Old Hu-Hu's death? Who does he go to for answers? How does the illustrator convey Hu-Hu-Tu's sense of hopelessness in her illustrations?
4. What surprising discovery does Hu-Hu-Tu make about Old Hu-Hu's death? What lesson do you think he has learned from his experience?
5. The moon is an important symbol in the story. Why is it significant that Hu-Hu-Tu flies to the moon at the end of the story?
6. Design an alternative book cover for Old Hu-Hu. The front cover needs the book's title, and the name of the author and illustrator. Include a relevant illustration about the book. Write the name of the book long ways on the spine. The back cover needs a summary of the story to encourage the reader.
7. Many characters in books need advice on how to deal with a problem. Write a letter to Hu-Hu-Tu. In the letter give him advice on how to deal with Old Hu-Hu's death.
8. Design a poster advertising the book *Old Hu-Hu* that could be displayed in your school library. Include a brief summary about the book and illustrations that show the settings and events in the story.
9. Imagine that you are Hu-Hu-Tu. Write a diary entry for the day that you learn that Old Hu-Hu has died. Remember to include his thoughts and feelings about what is going on.

10. Write a letter to a friend explaining why they should read *Old Hu-Hu*.
11. Talk about why Rachel Driscoll used soft colours to illustrate the story. The students could try painting with cold tea to make soft brown pictures.