



# Hot, Cross Bunny

By Stephanie Thatcher

• Reading • Writing • Thinking Skills • Feelings • Art

## Synopsis

Basil is the sweetest, fluffiest, most adorable bunny you ever saw. As long as he gets his way. When things don't go his way he gets hotter and hotter, and crosser and crosser, until he is a HOT, CROSS BUNNY.

When Grandad takes Basil and his sister, Daisy, to the park, his sister gets a push on the swing before him and Basil becomes a hot, cross bunny. And when his bun drops to the ground, he becomes a hot, cross bunny . . . until he realises that there could be a different way to react when things do not go his way. He decides to try a new approach, and asks for another bun, in a polite way, and Grandad happily obliges. When Daisy sees her brother get another bun handed to him, she becomes a hot, cross, bunny.

Basil then offers Daisy his bun because he can relate to her feelings of frustration. Daisy is very happy to accept the bun and the two bunnies continue their day at the park getting ready to scare sleeping Grandad.

## About the Author and Illustrator

**Stephanie Thatcher** is an author and illustrator residing in Huia, West Auckland. After working in libraries for seven years she completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts at Auckland University of Technology, and commenced working as a graphic designer in Auckland and Dublin. As well as being a mum to her three boys, she has maintained a freelance career in graphic design, motion graphics and illustration work.

Stephanie has had a number of books published by Scholastic New Zealand including *Little Hoiho*, *Putangitangi Walks*, *Kiwi One*, *Kiwi Two* and *The Other Brother*. The te reo Māori version of her book *I'm an Inky Octopus, He Wheke wai Mamangu Au*, was selected as a Te Kura Pounamu finalist in the 2022 New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults.

## Writing and Illustration Style

Stephanie Thatcher has taken the familiar topic of tantrums and created a humorous Easter-themed picture book that will resonate with two-to six-year-olds and their adult readers. Basil Bunny (aka the average preschooler) has positive qualities: he is 'sweet', 'fluffy', 'adorable' and 'delightful'. But if he doesn't get his own way, he explodes with anger and frustration. What makes this story special is that Basil comes to his own realisation that shouting, stomping and pushing don't achieve the desired outcome and he tries a different approach. After being positively reinforced for his good behaviour, he is able to be the bigger bunny and help out his little sister when she is overwhelmed by her own big feelings.

Thatcher's story works so well because she understands children (oops, bunnies) and her text provides a roadmap to managing emotions while never being condescending to either her young or adult audience. Her gentle yet vibrant watercolour illustrations are brimming with feelings and action (look out for the cheeky mouse). The amusing, satisfying conclusion is a reminder that life always holds more lessons to be learned. This hot, cross bun(ny) can be enjoyed at Easter and throughout the year.



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# Shared Learning and Discussion Points

During the shared sessions, encourage students to ask questions to clarify their understanding of characters and events. Have them make predictions and inferences and relate these to their own experiences. Read the book aloud and, if appropriate, have students read alongside or by themselves.

## ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

Look at the cover and read the blurb then turn to the title page.

- What does the title 'Hot, Cross Bunny' remind you of? When do we eat hot cross buns?
- How is the bunny on the front cover feeling? How can you tell?
- Does Basil look like the 'sweetest', 'fluffiest', 'most adorable' bunny you ever saw? Why/why not?
- Have you ever felt like Basil is feeling here? What made you feel that way?
- What does it mean to get your 'own way'?
- What do you think will happen in this story?

## Comprehension

- Why does Basil look different on the first few pages than he did on the cover and title page? Which Basil would you rather be friends with? Why?
- How is Basil feeling while he is flying his kite? How does he feel when the kite crashes? How can you tell?
- How does Basil feel about going to bed early, eating his greens, sharing or not getting the things he wants?
- Is it possible to always get what you want? Why/why not?
- Have you ever felt 'hot and cross'? What made you feel that way? Was it a good or bad feeling?
- What does Basil do when he feels hot and cross the first time? Does he get what he wants?
- What game do Grandad, Basil and Daisy play at the park?
- What did Basil do to Daisy that made her cry? Does he get his own way?
- How does Basil make sure that he's first in line for treats? Is that fair?
- Did Basil drop his bun on purpose or by accident? How can you tell?
- Why was Basil 'a little bit tired of kicking and stamping and shouting all the time'?
- What does Basil do differently this time? Which words tell you what kind of voice Basil used to ask for another bun? What are these 'describing words' called?
- Why is 'IT WORKED!' in capital letters?
- Why does Daisy turn into a 'hot, cross bunny'? How is she feeling?
- Which words tell you what Daisy did when she felt cross? What are these 'doing words' called?
- Why does Basil give Daisy his bun and a cuddle? How did that make Daisy feel? How can you tell?
- Why is Basil described as adorable 'most of the time'?
- What is Basil going to do while Grandad is sleeping? Is that a good idea? Why/why not? What do you think will happen next?
- What does Basil learn how to do? Why hasn't Daisy learned how to do this yet?
- What do you think Basil still needs to learn?



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# Activities

## ACTIVITY 1: LOOKING AT FEELINGS

As a class, talk about times when the children have felt 'hot and cross'. What made them feel this way? What made them feel calm and happy again? Invite the students to show how they would look if they were feeling hot and cross and take a photo of each student. Next, ask the students to show how they look when they are feeling calm and happy and take photos. Print the photos and use as writing prompts. Model writing a sentence to describe how it looks to feel hot and cross e.g. When I feel hot and cross, I scrunch up my face. Model writing a sentence to describe how it looks to feel calm and happy e.g. When I feel calm and happy, I smile.

## ACTIVITY 2: VOCABULARY BUILDING

Brainstorm a list of words that describe feeling happy e.g. cheerful, glad, content, joyful, pleased. Then brainstorm a list of words that describe feeling cross e.g. angry, annoyed, grumpy, frustrated, irritated. How many words can you come up with?

## ACTIVITY 3: THE ANGER RULES

Develop a set of class rules around dealing with anger and make a poster. Rules could include:

1. Don't hurt others.
2. Don't hurt yourself.
3. Don't damage things.

Talk about ways to calm down and include this information on the poster e.g. Deep breathing, taking a break, talking about your feelings. Invite the students to add small self-portraits of themselves looking happy to the poster.

## ACTIVITY 4: JOYFUL NOISE

Enjoy singing along to some happy songs, such as 'If You're Happy and You Know It', 'Happy', 'Walking on Sunshine', 'Don't Worry, Be Happy'.

## ACTIVITY 5: HAPPY BUNNY ART

Use paper plates and/or cardboard to make happy bunny faces or masks and decorate them.

Written by Frances McBeath