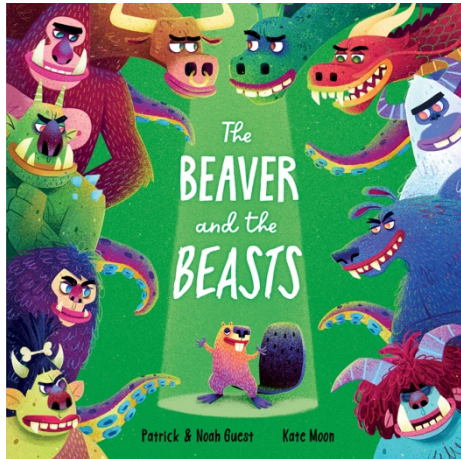


Teacher's Notes



The Beaver and the Beasts

Written by Patrick and Noah Guest

Illustrated by Kate Moon

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

3+ aged readers (grades prep – 2)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - ACELA1437
 - ACELT1575
 - ACELT1581
 - ACELT1582

THEMES

- Fear
- Bravery
- Monsters
- Humour

SYNOPSIS

The Loch Ness Monster calls a top-secret meeting for beasts from all over the world. There's a Yeti from Mount Everest, a Werewolf from London, Dragons from China and more. And then there's one, tiny, uninvited guest – a very cheeky beaver.

The beaver should be frightened in a cave full of monsters, but instead he's rude and cheeky to them. When they growl and snarl at him, the beaver laughs and calls them names. And when they attack him, he tells them that they only live in his imagination, and *poof!* they're gone.

But with the monsters gone, the beaver discovers he's alone in the cave with something truly frightening – a giant bear!

The beaver needs to convince the monsters to come back and help him, and fast.

The Beaver and the Beasts is about facing your fears – real *and* imagined.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Patrick Guest was raised in the Melbourne beachside suburb of Seaford. He works as a Physiotherapist by day and a best-selling children's author by night. Patrick received huge acclaim for his story *The Second Sky*, illustrated by Jonathan Bentley; it was shortlisted for the 2018 CBCA Picture Book of the Year Award. Likewise, Patrick's fourth title, *The Dress-Up Box*, illustrated by Nathaniel Eckstrom, has established itself as a much-loved Australian classic, and was shortlisted for the 2019 CBCA Picture Book of the Year Award. His 2020 lockdown-inspired *Windows* was shortlisted for an ABIA, screened on the ABC, and adopted as a beacon of hope by families and schools around the world.

The Beaver and the Beasts is a father-son collaboration between Patrick and his son, **Noah Guest**. According to his dad, Noah's first word was: 'Story?' He's been collecting stories ever since – from Donaldson to Dahl, Tolkien to the Duffer Brothers – and now he's creating his own stories. Like many of his characters, Noah is a master at rising above adversity. His favourite weapons are wisecracks, a wild imagination and a keen eye for the ridiculous.

Kate Moon is an illustrator, character designer and 3D artist from Melbourne. She specialises in character work, visual development and asset production across a wide range of mediums, from animation to print. Kate has worked on major animated campaigns for clients such as Target, Drumstick, Honda and City of Melbourne, as well as feature film projects including *Spongebob: Sponge Out of Water*, *Ghostbusters 2016* and *Game of Thrones*.

THEMES

The Beaver and the Beasts is a story about facing your fears, that goes in an unexpected direction! The beaver isn't afraid of monsters because they come from fairy tales.

WRITING STYLE

Patrick and Noah Guest use the reader's existing knowledge about monster stories to create a surprising twist. When the monsters are first introduced there are dragons, trolls, a werewolf and a kraken, and then, right in the corner of the page is a beaver. The beaver is introduced as 'cheeky' – is this a word that we would usually use to describe something scary?

When the meeting starts, the Werewolf 'growls' and 'snarls', while the beaver 'sang'. Which of these adjectives is scarier? What other scary adjectives can you find in the story?

But when the monsters attack, the beaver just laughs, and the monsters disappear. Is this what you expect to happen? How else do the writers surprise you or create a 'twist'?

COMPREHENSION

- Which beasts did the Loch Ness Monster invite to his secret meeting?
- Where was the meeting held? What kinds of transport did the beasts use to get there?
- What does the beaver say to the beasts that makes them so angry?



- What happens when the beasts try to attack the beaver?
- Who is the most frightening character in the story and why?
- What does the beaver say about fairy tales? Why aren't the creatures in them scary?
- Why does the beaver become a believer?
- Are you afraid of any of the monsters in the book? Does the story change the way you think about fear? How?

WRITING EXERCISE

Think about a fairy tale you know well and write a short summary of what happens. Now rewrite it with a 'twist' – maybe your princess turns out to be a terrifying ogress, or maybe the villain is really kind and misunderstood. Share your stories in class.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

The illustrations in the story bring monsters to life in colourful, cartoon-style drawings. Look closely at these creatures – what makes something scary or not?

Discuss the way that the illustrator has made the following elements of the pictures scary –

- Expressions
- Body parts (teeth, eyes, arms)
- Accessories (flames, clubs)
- Colour (dark caves, red eyes)

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

1. The beaver doesn't look very scary in the story. Imagine how he would look if he were a monster and draw a picture of him.
2. One of the things that makes this story so much fun to read is that it keeps going in unexpected directions. Come up with five alternative endings for the story – make them as wild as you like!
3. Describe something you're afraid of. Can you turn it into something silly (a drawing or a picture) to try to overcome your fear?

RELATED READING

The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson

Night Animals by Gianna Marino

