

### ***The Hero of Little Street* by Gregory Rogers**

Gregory Rogers again delights readers with his third book in the *Boy, Bear* series. In *The Hero of Little Street*, Boy finds himself on Little Street scrambling to escape a gang of bullies and finds himself in a stately old art gallery. It is the perfect place to hide from the bullies and Boy discovers surprising adventures amongst precious works of art and sculpture. When Boy finds himself within a famous Vermeer painting with his new canine pal, he discovers more exciting escapades than he quite knows what to do with!

*The Hero of Little Street* is a visual telling of Boy's art gallery experience. Although, at first, I was surprised to find a book with no words to convey the story, I quickly discovered that words were completely unnecessary to convey the emotion and adventure contained within these pages. Gregory Rogers has cleverly managed to tell Boy's story in a way that is unique and endearing. I found myself immersed in the emotion of Boy's attempt to evade the bullies and I laughed aloud at all that could possibly happen within a painting. Without words to direct one's thoughts, the reader is able to use their own imagination, enabling a deep connection with Boy and all that he encounters. Children and adults alike will enjoy this book together as they journey with Boy and discover the joy of the imagination. Young readers will enjoy the success of 'reading' a book and discerning for themselves what it is about, without having to have it read to them. Older readers will enjoy exploring the book with younger readers as they roam through the pages together.

**Tracy Williams, Mountain District Christian School, Vic**

Gregory Rogers has written another great book in the wordless picture book format. This book stimulates young imaginations to dream with the clear colourful illustrations and easy to follow format. It is alive with vivid detail and exciting from start to finish.

Other books in the series are *The Boy*, *The Bear*, *the Baron*, *the Bard* and *Midsummer Knight*. Young readers will enjoy finding much-loved characters from the previous Boy Bear books. The scenarios in the story are ones that children can relate to – being chased by bullies, making friends with a mischievous dog, being entranced by the wonders of a museum and somehow magically being transported to another world.

This is a delightful and refreshingly different book for younger readers and I believe older primary school children particularly struggling readers would also enjoy this wordless picture story book format.

**Anne Lewis, Qld**

This wordless book is prefaced by the remarks of the author regarding the Boy in his first book in the Boy Bear series: What would he get up to next?

We find him now in Delft, escaping from a group of marauding children by running into an art gallery and joining the line of art lovers viewing the paintings. And then the Vermeer characters step out from their frames and interact with the Boy! His adventures find him dashing along the cobbled streets of seventeenth century Delft, exploring scary underground cellars and finally being caught in a butterfly net by an angry butcher. All is not lost however: the Boy has learnt to summon the neighbourhood dogs with his wooden flute and his canine friends help him to escape. The Boy farewells the painting figures, encouraging them back into their pictures, but once out in the square again, and back in the twenty-first century, the bullies return and the Boy must use his flute to summon the painting dogs once more. The final scene shows the bullies being chased by numerous dogs in one direction and the Boy running the opposite way – to where, we wonder?? This is a delightfully cute book! As well as being a great book to share with littlies it has loads of potential as a visual stimulus for narrative writing. An attractively presented book, with strong sewn binding, this third book in the Boy Bear series deserves the same high acclaim as the earlier ones received. Recommended for Stages 1, 2 and 3.

**Julie Davies, Sutherland Shire Christian School, NSW**

This is the third in the Boy Bear series and drawn in the same style as the earlier two titles, *The Boy, the Bear, the Baron, the Bard* and *Midsummer Knight*.

In the plaza, a casual soccer game entraps the boy when the ball is kicked to him and he kicks it into the fountain. The chase begins, as the crowd pursues him through the streets and into the art gallery. He, and a dog - who jumps out of a painting - end up in a Vermeer painting, being chased through a different street, in Holland, caught by a dog-catcher, chased by more dogs, then ending up back in the original scenes.

The beautiful and detailed illustrations from a variety of different perspectives, are easy to “read”. The different sized frames lend variety and the simple story line has a completeness in its beginning and ending in the same plaza. This is a book to share with a class, to pore over again and again to take in more detail. It could be used as stimulus for an art class, or for students’ own creative drawing.

**Barbara Wilson, St George Christian School, NSW**

Here is another book in the Boy Bear series. The opening illustrations draw the reader in immediately as everyone knows someone or has been involved in a situation shown in the first few pages. The Boy’s solution to the threat that occurs is an interesting one. Everyone will be able to connect to the illustrations as the Boy moves through the museum. It looks like it could be any museum, in any city of the world.

The artwork in a museum is often passed over by children but the Boy stops and becomes involved with a couple of paintings. This could encourage children to do the same when they visit a museum. If the reader hasn’t already been drawn in at this point of the story, then the presence of the dog will achieve that.

The buildings are detailed and could be tied in to architecture of different countries or used in Mathematics lessons. Both history and geography lessons could also develop from what is seen in the book.

The illustrations are very detailed and show movement which makes the reader feel they are right there.

With the ending the reader comes full circle ending up back in the same spot where the story started. The illustrations have taken the reader on a fantastic journey. Every reader will get a lot from the story because with no text, the imagination of the reader has had an opportunity to fly.

**Roxanne Steenbergen, Claremont Primary School, Tas**

What a brilliant introduction to the world of the great artists! In “Making Picture Books”, Libby Gleeson says that *“A picture book is a story told in words and pictures. Each makes an important contribution to the way the story is told, the meaning created. A picture is not the same as an illustrated story: there the words alone could tell the story and the illustrations simply break up the words or decorate the text...In the best picture books, the illustrations are absolutely necessary. They carry parts of the story or narrative and in some cases the language is dropped and the pictures alone are all that is needed.”*

What she says is totally true of this picture book. Whether you are four years old and your baby sitter is “reading” it with you or whether you are a year 7 student looking at the characteristics of Picture Books, what this book gives you, in a most enjoyable way, is both a real picture book and the story of Boy as he begins a new adventure. The illustrations are finely drawn, the colours soft and “old” bringing to mind other art galleries. The story is vividly told through the pictures – facial expressions dominate the first two pages and the reader feels so sorry for Boy as the older children chase and threaten him, just as he scared off the crows. Boy’s fear as he tries to hide amongst the legs of the adults queuing to enter the gallery is palpable; his minuteness in the gallery itself is so cleverly drawn, as are the episodes as he bounces through the Gallery, meeting the security guard and then wandering alone through such huge rooms.

When the dog joins him, fantasy and reality conjoin and Boy moves inside the paintings, learning about life in Holland during Vermeer's time. Boy and Dog dance and sing and enjoy their adventures. The aerial drawing of the rooftops of Delft is amazingly detailed, as are the other scenes of life from the past.

The support of all the dogs, the return to the real world and the defeat of the bullies is brilliantly handled.

My year 7s examined this book in their picture book unit, but in HSIE the topic was the middle ages – not quite the same period, but the drawings of an old European city really appealed to them.

The cover clearly appeals to its intended audience – children as young as Boy, non-readers to 4 to 6 year olds. But it appealed just as much to year 7 students. The colours, “the funny old man with the odd stick” in the background and the emphasis on Boy's eyes – fearful – with the dog looking over his shoulder too. It was hard to imagine that this was going to be the hero of little Street, so the contrast between the visual and the verbal drew in the year 7s while the younger children wanted to talk about why the boy was running away. So the adventure tone is set right away. The lack of written text meant that the illustrations have to tell the whole story and they certainly do. Gestures, body language and facial expressions – especially the eyes – relate how the main character is feeling throughout the story.

Not only is the story of Boy's adventure outlined but his treatment of the birds, the bullies' treatment of him, and his and the dogs' victory at the end led us into a vigorous discussion about bullying.

That the hero is a boy is also positive.

I loved the colours – the soft browns and oranges and the darker blues – they all seemed to create a view of the past. The vivid images, especially the overhead views, are great.

All in all, I really enjoyed the book, as did the two four year olds who shared it with me and my Year 7 class.

**Robyne Ridge, Kinross Wolaroi School, NSW**

Gregory Rogers' colourful comic illustrations from the third book of the BOY BEAR series, shows why he is an award winning author of picture books.

In this story on an ordinary day a bright little character is chased by some slightly odd bullies until his escape leads him to a magnificent gallery of gilded framed masterpieces.

Here amidst this backdrop a boy and his new friend find a piece of sheet music, the boy helps his friend outwit a villain, by stepping out into a street; back in time with a backdrop of an early Dutch provincial cityscape and Dutch women in bonnets depicting domestic life.

This colourful picture book wherein Rogers' illustrations typify the Vermeer style of art, using pigment paint and transparent colours of blues, yellows and greys and light and shadow effects throughout unifying the story and creating the setting for the characters and plot.

The views from various perspectives give the reader a 'bird's eye' look at the adventure. The full page scenes give a 2D illusion and the large size of the picture book enables the reader to become lost in the events, but at a safe distance.

I enjoyed having my eyes fixed to the page following the sequence of comic style illustrations as the story builds page after page.

Junior activity: Using the words 'run', 'chase' or 'escape', search how many stories include this in the title or plot of a familiar story. Discuss and use search engines. How does the author show the chase at the beginning and middle of the story?

Senior Activity: What illustrating techniques are used to position the reader for this adventure?

Answer: Perspective drawing using size and scale from a particular viewpoint; either a fountain, statue or tall building, the birds eye view.

**Helen Latimer, Lakemba Public School, NSW**