

ABOUT THE BOOK



Little White Rabbit wonders about everything. What would it be like to be green, like the grass? Or tall, like the fir trees? Or to flutter through the air, like butterflies? The world is full of amazing things, and there is a lot to wonder about. But the one thing Little White Rabbit knows for sure is that his mother will always be waiting for him at home.

ABOUT KEVIN HENKES



Photo © 2010 by Michelle Corpora

Kevin Henkes is the creator of many books for children. He has written both picture books and novels, including *Olive's Ocean* (a Newbery Honor Book), *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*, and *Kitten's First Full Moon* (winner of the Caldecott Medal). *Little White Rabbit* is his forty-second book for children. He lives with his family in Madison, Wisconsin.

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THINKING AND DISCUSSING



1. Who Is Little White Rabbit? Discuss what young readers know about Little White Rabbit. What does he do? What does he like? What doesn't he like? Is Little White Rabbit real or pretend? How do they know? Would they like to be friends with Little White Rabbit? Why or why not?

2. A Green Rabbit? Ask children what imagination is. How do they know when Little White Rabbit uses his imagination in the book? Ask them to imagine that they themselves could change in the same ways Little White Rabbit imagines changing. How would their lives be different if they were green? Or as tall as a tree? Or able to fly? If they could change in only one of these ways, which one would they choose and why? Which one wouldn't they choose and why?

3. Runaway Rabbit! Everyone is scared of something. Discuss with children what frightened Little White Rabbit, why he was scared, and what he did about it. Do cats frighten them, too? Lead a conversation about what scares them and what they can do about it.

4. What Else, Little White Rabbit? Reread the book, pausing to discuss each thing that makes Little White Rabbit curious. What else could Little White Rabbit wonder about grass, fir trees, rocks, and butterflies? Encourage children to think in other directions, as well. What else is green? What else is tall? What else does not move? What else flutters? What else do they think Little White Rabbit wonders about when he is at home?

5. Another Word for Rabbit Is . . . Ask children to think about the words they heard in the story. Which words do they remember? Why do they remember those words, in particular? Explain that there can be more than one word for the same thing, and have them think about the word *rabbit*. What is another word for *rabbit*? Also consider other ways to say *hopped*, *flutter*, and *frightened*.

6. A Rabbit in Springtime. Review the book with a silent picture walk (turning the pages and asking children to remember what was happening on each page). Have children share what they noticed with the whole group. What do the illustrations make them think about? How do the pictures make them feel?

7. The Rabbit's Trees. Little White Rabbit lives in a forest of fir trees. Begin a discussion about trees by showing children the spread of Little White Rabbit standing as tall as a tree. What is a fir tree? How are Little White Rabbit's trees similar to or different from the trees around your school? Are trees important? Why or why not?

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MOVING, MAKING, AND PLAYING

1. Be the Rabbit. As you reread the story, ask children to pretend that they are Little White Rabbit. Encourage them to act out everything he imagines and experiences—including being scared and feeling loved at home. Ask them what is difficult about pretending and what they like about it.

2. Move to the Music. Make a T-chart with students that features what Little White Rabbit imagines on one side and the opposite of those ideas on the other side (for example, *still as a rock* versus *moving all around*). Then, put on some music. When the music is on, the children can act out one of the things Little White Rabbit wonders about. When the music turns off, they can act out the opposite. It's tricky to be still as a rock when the music is on and then move all around when it's silent!

3. Go Adventuring. Invite children to come on an outdoor adventure like Little White Rabbit's. Take notes about what they see, hear, smell, and feel, and welcome questions about what they notice. When you return, review the notes as a group and set about finding out more information about their questions.

4. What Do You Wonder? Encourage students to wonder what it would be like to be different in some way. What would it be like to have an engine or gills, or to be able to run up a tree? Provide them with drawing materials to create a picture of what they wonder. Following Kevin Henkes's pattern in *Little White Rabbit*, display children's words separately from the illustrations of what they imagine.

5. Little White Rabbit at School. Ask children to imagine Little White Rabbit doing something familiar in school. Giving them the starter, "Little White Rabbit wondered what it would be like to _____ at school," ask them to create pictures to accompany their ideas. Make a book of the children's work to put in the classroom library.

6. Who Loves You? After leading students in a discussion about who loves them and whom they love, request that families send in a few photographs showing family members and other important people in the children's lives—be sure these are extra photos that can be used in an art project. Have each child create a collage using these pictures. Children can decorate around the photos and add written or dictated captions as a finishing touch.



MOVING, MAKING, AND PLAYING CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE . . .

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7. What I Know about Myself. Just as Little White Rabbit knows who loves him, children know certain things about who they are. As a class, brainstorm a list of things people might know about themselves (who is in their family, favorite color, likes, dislikes, etc.). Students can cut up magazines and draw pictures to make collages representing who they are. Have partners share their collages before displaying them for everyone to see.

8. Picture Spring. Read *Little White Rabbit* on the first day of spring and ask children to pay attention to how Kevin Henkes makes them think about spring. What does he draw? Which colors does he use? Provide colored pencils for children to draw the animals, plants, scenes, and colors of springtime where they live.

9. Map It Out. As a class, map out Little White Rabbit's adventure on a large sheet of butcher paper. Where does he begin? Ask children what happens first, and coach them through the story sequence to create the map. Where is Little White Rabbit at the end? Once the basic map is set, encourage children to add color, decoration, and details to finish the map.

10. Welcome, Rabbit. Invite a rabbit owner to bring in a rabbit. Help students prepare for the visit by creating a list of things they know about rabbits and things they wonder about them. After the visit, find out what surprised children about the animal visitor. What did they notice? What did they learn? Be sure to follow up by sending a class thank you letter.

11. Rabbits at Play. Help children turn the classroom into a forest home where they can pretend to be rabbits. Lead the class in brainstorming how to create the forest, and then provide materials—paper and fabric for creating trees, grass, and rocks; large cardboard boxes for making homes; etc. Allow plenty of time for imaginative rabbit play.

12. The Little White Rabbit Show. Guide the group in presenting the book as a play. List the roles, including the less obvious ones—grass, green creatures, trees, rocks—in addition to Little White Rabbit, the butterflies, the cat, and the rabbit family (with a teacher as the narrator). Would any of the characters have lines? Create costumes, a set, and an audience space. Make posters and tickets, and invite another class to see the show. Popcorn is optional!

Guide created by Emily Linsay, teacher at the Bank Street School for Children, New York City

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and more information about Kevin Henkes and his books.



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