# Teacher's Notes

Good Night, Ivy Bright

Author: Ben Long
Illustrator: Andrew Plant
Publisher: Ford Street Publishing
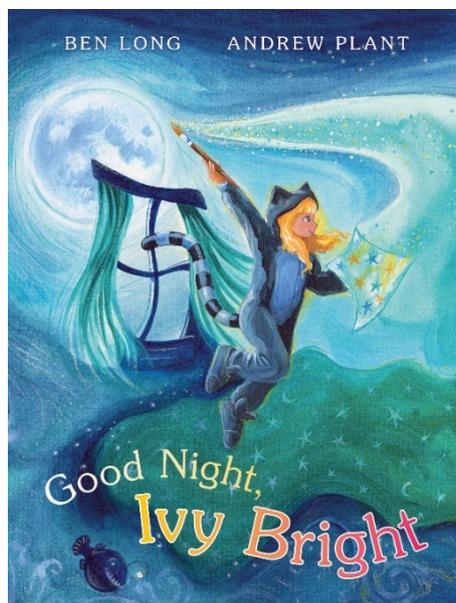
Synopsis:

Ivy couldn't get to sleep; her mind was burning bright.

I'm done with counting sheep, she thought, *I'll paint my dreams tonight.*

Join Ivy as she goes on a wondrous and colourful journey through her imagination.

A celebration of creative play and resilience with a generous splash of colour-mixing thrown in.

From the Author – Ben Long

One day when I was sitting on the train to work (a little bored), I imagined I had a magic paintbrush that could paint anything and everything the way I wanted to see it. Not just for me, but for everyone to enjoy – to brighten everyone's day! I imagined covering grey cement walls in rainbow patterns, brightening the trees with squawking parrots, and lighting up the sky with fireworks, like Gandalf's fireworks in The Fellowship of the Ring.

I didn't have a magic paintbrush, but I did have my 7mm mechanical pencil and my Spirax note book; and so began the crafting of *Good Night, Ivy Bright*.

Ivy has a wild imagination, full of dreams and excitement. Her mind is racing with so many fantastical thoughts that sometimes she finds it hard to get to sleep. So, on this one night, she decides to do something about it. Instead of only dreaming about them, she paints them! (A little bit like how I use my pencil to help *my* dreams escape *my* head.)

When I write my stories, there's usually a verse I write early on that really grabs me, and motivates me to write the rest of the story; for *Ivy Bright* it was this:

> *She found her favourite paintbrush and began to set the scene —*
>
> *she twinkled blue and yellow stars then sailed a sea of green.*

I could see, in my mind's eye, the paint from the blue and yellow stars dripping and mixing together to create the green sea. It was a beautiful image that I just knew was setting the scene for a really magical story ahead.

But, where the story would go next, I had no idea. So I thought about 'the problem'. Every good story needs a problem for the main character to solve. I thought back to my own childhood, when I was trying to get to sleep, and remembered the beach and ocean scene that was printed on my bedroom curtains. There was a repeated pattern of a giant whale with big red lips. I'll never forget that whale, and it's how I draw (very poorly) whales to this day. So that was where I got inspiration for the problem – Ivy would run out of purple paint while painting the whale, and she would go on a journey through her own imagination, and experiment with colours along the way to find more.

What I didn't realise while I was writing this story was the importance of the moose. Everyone needs a moose. We all have times when we're challenged – when we are tired, troubled, or in tears. And it's at those times when we need someone to sit down next to us and be there for us, just like the moose in this story. For some people, the moose might be their mum. For others it might be their dad, sister, brother, friend, or all of the above. Similarly, sometimes we need to be the moose for someone else. It's a good reminder to ask for help when you need it, and to offer help when it's needed.

I hope you and your students enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed creating it!

Questions and Activities for Students

Most questions incorporate ACELY1646 (F), ACELY1656 (1), ACELY1666 (2) when addressed as a group. Curriculum codes are a guide only – refer to the curriculum for more information and ideas.

Curriculum codes	Questions and Activities
Creating literature: ACELT1831 (F) ACELT1832 (1) ACELT1833 (2) Visual Arts: ACAVAM106 (F-2) ACAVAM107 (F-2) ACAVAM108 (F-2)	Some of the characters in this book are anthropomorphic. This means they are animals that behave like people; for example, the whale and the moose speak to Ivy. What are some of your favourite animals that live on land or under the sea? Create your own anthropomorphic character. - What animal is it? - What is its name? - What are some of the things that it likes to do, similar to things that a person would do? For example, does it play the French Horn? Does it like cooking chocolate cakes? Does it greet people in a funny way? (You can make it as crazy as you like.) - Draw a picture of your character.
Responding to literature: ACELT1783 (F) ACELT1582 (1) ACELT1589 (2) Language for interaction: ACELA1429 (F) ACELA1444 (1)	Discuss as a class: - What words could you use to describe how Ivy feels when she is sitting next to the moose? - Why does she feel like that? - How do you know she feels like that? - What does she want? - What words could you use to describe the moose? - Think of a time when you were upset and someone made you feel better. - Who makes you feel better when you are upset? - What do they do that helps you feel better? - When have you helped someone else? How did you help them?
Drama: ACADRM027 (F-2) ACADRM028 (F-2) ACADRM029 (F-2) Language for interaction: ACELA1429 (F) ACELA1444 (1) ACELA1787 (1)	Break into small groups and put on a short play. Choose a main character – this person will need help with something. What do they need help with? Maybe they need to carry a large box, or maybe they need help crossing the road. How do they feel? Frustrated? Angry? What will they say or do so the audience knows how they feel? Everyone else in the group will attempt to help them. They could each take turns to help the main character, or they could work together. Make the story more interesting by having the helpers fail the first few times. For a greater challenge, you could be animals – what will you do so your audience knows which animal you are? For an even greater challenge, you could try it as a mime (without speaking).

Creating texts: ACELY1651 (F) ACELY1661 (1) ACELY1671 (2) Creating literature: ACELT1831 (F) ACELT1832 (1) ACELT1833 (2)	Do you ever think about your own imaginary worlds or places? Think about one now and write about it. Imagine you are describing it to a friend. It is hard to describe something to someone who has never experienced it for themselves. It can help to describe it through our five senses – what we see, smell, taste, hear, and touch/feel. • What can you see there? What do these things look like? • Are there any yummy or strange smells? What do they smell like and where are the smells coming from? • What can you eat there and what do they taste like? • What noises can you hear and where are the noises coming from? • What can you touch and what does it feel like? • What are some of the fun things you can do there?
Phonics and word knowledge: ACELA1439 (F) Examining literature: ACELT1785 (F) ACELT1579 (F) ACELT1585 (1) ACELT1592 (2)	Have you noticed something about the way the story sounds? It makes use of a literary device that has a special name. What is it? • Identify some of the rhymes used in this story. • Can you think of some other words that rhyme with these? • Can you think of some different rhyming words of your own?
Creating texts: ACELY1651 (F) ACELY1661 (1) ACELY1671 (2) Creating literature: ACELT1831 (F) ACELT1832 (1) ACELT1833 (2) Examining literature: ACELT1579 (F) ACELT1585 (1) ACELT1592 (2)	Write your own rhyme about an imaginary place or animal. It doesn't have to be very long – one or two verses is fine.
Creating texts: ACELY1651 (F) ACELY1661 (1) ACELY1671 (2) Creating literature: ACELT1831 (F) ACELT1832 (1) ACELT1833 (2) ACELT1593 (2)	I wonder what the moose does after Ivy leaves it and goes back to the whale. Write a story about what the moose does next. The moose seems like a very helpful and magical character. Maybe someone else will need help with something. What do they need help with? How does the moose help them?
Interpreting, analysing, evaluating: ACELY1648 (F) ACELY1658 (1)	Is this story imaginative (make believe) or informative (real)? How do you know? Which parts are real and which parts are imagined?

	• Are whales and moose real? • Do moose really grow their antlers in spring? • Do berries grow on moose antlers? • Do animals come to life when you paint them? Discuss some examples of what the book might tell us if it were informative only. Hint: what are some facts you know about the creatures in the story?
Creating texts: ACELY1651 (F) ACELY1661 (1) ACELY1671 (2) Biological sciences (Science): ACSSU002 (F) ACSSU017 (1) Communicating (Science): ACSIS012 (F) ACSIS029 (1) ACSIS042 (2)	There are some interesting (real) creatures in this story. What are they, and what are they called? Create your own informative text (e.g., a book or poster) that teaches your class about a real animal you find interesting. Hint: You could draw a creature, label each of its parts, and discuss or write about what each part is used for.
Visual Arts: ACAVAM107 (F-2)	In art, *primary colours* are red, yellow, and blue. You can use these colours (plus black and white) to make all the other colures in the rainbow. In groups, use your own set of primary colours to create the colours green, orange, purple, and brown. What happens when you add white? What about black?
Creating literature: ACELT1580 (F) ACELT1586 (1) ACELT1593 (2) Visual Arts: ACAVAM106 (F-2) ACAVAM107 (F-2) ACAVAM108 (F-2)	[BONUS QUESTION] Can you decorate your classroom with paintings of weird and wonderful creatures? Send a photo to Ford Street if you can! (fordstr@internode.on.net)

From the Illustrator – Andrew Plant

When I first received the text for *Good Night, Ivy Bright*, I loved it straight away. That doesn't always happen – some texts take me a while to get into, mainly because I'm not yet sure how to approach the illustrations. Sometimes, I can see that there's a good story, but it needs some editing to become a great story. *Ivy* needed very little work – it was mostly just a word here and there – was *this* word better than *that* one? Something for the author, Ben, and publisher, Paul, to sort out. Those sorts of things make very little difference to an illustration, and it was the overall rhythm and concept that I loved and inspired the art.
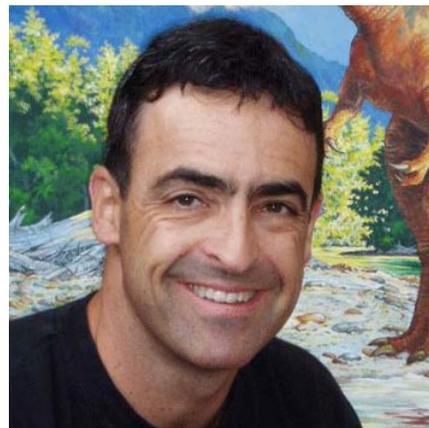
Being a dream, the possibilities were endless. The story begins and ends in Ivy's bedroom. The bedroom illustrations are boxed vignettes – they have borders – even though the paint covers the whole page. It's a bit like we are peeking into her room.

Creating the Artwork:

The paintings in *Good Night, Ivy Bright* are quite different from those I have done in other picture books. This is the first time I have used stamps and stencils at all in any book. They're great fun, with an added touch of nervousness because you can't see what the stamp is going to look like until after you lift it up. Did I mix the paint too dark, or too light? Is it in exactly the right position? Is it too busy now?

I thought that stamps and stencils would work in this story because of the juxtaposition of different elements that you often find in dreams. I have juxtaposed painted elements with whale stamps, flower and leaf stencils, fancy curlicues from both stamps and stencils, hand painted to blend them together. The blotchy paint effect that stamps and stencils can create also gave a slightly vintage look to the pics which I wanted for no particular reason other than I like it. That's the great thing about being an illustrator. Often you do things just because you can.

Artistic References:

There are several references to other artists throughout the story. The most obvious is *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa,* by Katsushika Hokusai, in the picture where Ivy is riding the argonaut, or paper nautilus. The reflection of Ama Dablam in the water, with Ivy on top of the water on the lily pad, and the whale under the water, is a nod to M. C. Escher's *Three Worlds*. Artists Pamela Zagarenski, Shaun Tan and Tracy Verdugo inspired me with their design skills and use of colour. Plus, the probably dozens of others whose work snuck into my subconscious, and re-emerged as what I mistakenly thought of as original ideas!

Questions and Activities for Students

1. **What are on Ivy's bedside table? What are on her desk?**

Once we enter the dream, the artwork opens out to full bleed, double page spreads – we're right in there, not observing from outside like we are in the first picture.

2. **What are the differences between the picture of Ivy's bedroom, and the next pictures? Why do you think the artist has put the first picture in a 'box', but not the next ones? What effect does that have?**

One very important aspect of Ben's story that struck me almost straight away is the type of characters he chose. In dreams, anything can happen, and anything can appear – dragons, fairies, unicorns, floating castles. But there is nothing like that in the illustrations. There are no imaginary creatures. And there is not one man-made thing, except the window of Ivy's room in the first dream picture, which she has floated out of. Why?

Ben's characters are *real* – a whale and a moose, and nothing is mentioned that is man-made. He could have chosen a dragon and unicorn, but he didn't. Ivy's dream, fantastical as it is, is grounded in reality. Every creature in it is real, and it's set entirely in the natural world. You can identify all the various sea creatures. The flowers are all real. Even the mountain that appears a couple of times is real – Ama Dablam, a beautiful peak in the Himalayas not far from Sagarmatha – Mt Everest. It dominated the skyline for a couple of days during a hike I made to the Everest Base Camp some years ago, and I love it.

The red and green bird that flies out of Ivy's brush is a Resplendent Quetzal. When Ivy mixes pink to help find her way back, it just seemed obvious that there had to be flamingo clouds. The enormous, almost round fish with apparently no tail in the first underwater picture is a mola, also known as a sunfish. The tiny fish below the sunfish's eye is a moonfish! (*Mene maculata*). Below him is a swirly Emperor Angelfish, but a young one – the adults look quite different. I just liked all her swirls. A Moorish Idol is also there, which might look familiar to anyone who has seen Finding Nemo! I just picked creatures and places that I liked, and thought were unusual and interesting.

3. **What animals and plants can you identify? Try and discover the identities of as many of the creatures and plants as possible. They are all real. Use books and the internet.**

In a story like this, without a narrative set in one place, there's a danger that it becomes just a set of disconnected pictures. Of course, Ivy and her paintbrush are in each picture, but I felt that something else was needed to provide continuity, regardless of the setting, something that looked like it belonged in each picture.

At first, I thought of using one of the real Ivy's toys to go on the journey with the make-believe one. Ben and I asked her if she would like one of her friends to be in the book. She decided 'no'. Some children like their closest friends to remain private, so none of her toys are featured. The sheep on the bedroom floor is just a reference to 'counting sheep.' So, what to do? There's a lot of water in the pictures, so a fish seemed like a good idea, but something odd enough that it looks like it could float around in the air as well, like a balloon. Enter one of my favourite animals – the anglerfish, a balloon with teeth and a light bulb! He ties us back to Ivy's room, sitting there as a lamp on the bedside table.

4. **One fish appears in every picture. What is it, and where did it first appear?**

There are two other 'continuity characters' that appear. The first is the whale. As Ivy searches for the colour purple, he appears in every background, keeping an eye on her as she travels through the extraordinary landscapes. The other is Ivy's tail.

Ivy's onesie is a Ring-tailed Lemur, familiar to many of us as King Julian from the film Madagascar. I wanted the ringed tail so that, as Ivy finds the colours, they appear on her tail.

Originally, all the colours, including red, blue, yellow, and white, appeared on the tail, so that it ended up as a rainbow.

After seeing an early painting, the real Ivy said that she had imagined it as the colours alternating with the black rings. Fair enough! So I changed it to only the colours that Ivy (in the story) mixed: green, pink, brown, orange and purple. They appear on the tail the page after the colour first appears in the story. I didn't add the other four colours as the tail would have become just too long. Anyway, those colours are already there – in the paint tubes on her desk. And the real Ivy was right – it does look a lot nicer with the black rings included.

5. **What happens to Ivy's onesie tail as she goes through the story? What sort of colours are they? (Not primary colours.)**

When Ivy finally falls asleep (or was she always asleep?) there are several clues in the last picture that suggest what might have really happened. Firstly, the moonlight has moved, so time has passed, but nothing else has moved, except the paintbrush which is now in Ivy's hand.

But several things have changed. Her tail, obviously, is now coloured. So are the flowers in her bedside pot plant. And so has the whale in the picture above her bed, (unsurprisingly, it is now purple).

6. **What has changed between the first picture of Ivy in her bed, and the last one?**

So, what happened? It could all be explained by the fact that Ivy had the colours she needed all along, in the paint tubes on her desk. *She* painted the flowers, the whale, and her onesie tail. There's a neat explanation for the changes. Except for one thing.

The paint tubes haven't moved. They look exactly the same. They haven't been touched.

So what really happened? I have absolutely no idea!

7. **What do you think really happened? Use the clues in the pictures to support your idea. Is there any wrong answer? Does a picture book need to be completely logical? Are dreams logical?**