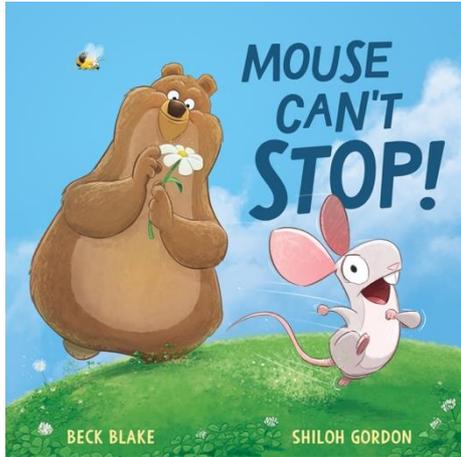


Teacher's Notes



Mouse Can't Stop!

Written by Beck Blake

Illustrated by Shiloh Gordon

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Primary-aged readers (ages 3-6, grades Prep+)

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities:
 - AC9EFLA06
 - AC9EFLA07
 - AC9EFLE02
 - AC9EFLE05

THEMES

- Slowing down
- Opposites/difference
- Gratitude
- The natural world
- Friendship

SYNOPSIS

An energetic and entertaining picture book about enjoying the journey, helping others, and making friends along the way!

Bear and Mouse are about to climb the Amazing Mountain. But Mouse is in such a hurry, he doesn't have time to stop along the way – not for this, not for that, not to play, not to chat!

Will Mouse find what he's looking for on top of the mountain? Or will he need some help from Bear to slow down?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Beck Blake is based in Melbourne. She commenced her writing journey after several years as a commercial lawyer. *Mouse Can't Stop!* is her debut picture book.

Shiloh Gordon has a passion for creating lively, engaging illustrations that are full of character and fun. He graduated with a BA in animation from the Queensland College of Art and has worked as a professional illustrator for over 20 years.

THEMES

This story is about friendship and difference – even though Mouse and Bear are opposites in many ways, they are still the best of friends.

- Ask students to observe some of the differences between Mouse and Bear.

Because Mouse and Bear are so different, their experience of the amazing mountain is also different. In fact, if Mouse wasn't friends with someone like Bear, who likes to go slow, Mouse might never have discovered all the delights of the mountain. On the other hand, without Mouse to speed him up, Bear might never have kept going up the mountain at all.

- Share some of the differences between you and your friends. Discuss what it means to complement one another. How are the differences between Bear and Mouse, or you and your friends, **complementary**?

The story also invites readers to think about being in nature, and to slow down in order to be able to appreciate some of the beauty that surrounds us. When a lot of things in our lives are like the sign, directing us to the end goal, this book reminds us that the joy is in the journey.

- Ask students which of the characters they identify with and why. Discuss speeding up and slowing down and reflect on the importance of each.

WRITING STYLE

Similarities and differences:

In the story, Mouse wants to get to the amazing mountain fast! But a story would be boring if writers used the same words over and over again. A **synonym** is a word that means the same as another word, for example 'speed' and 'zoom'. Ask your students what other synonyms they can find in the book or to come up with their own.

Bear is the **opposite** of Mouse. He wants to stop and see things along the journey. You can see the differences between Bear and Mouse in the writing style – while Mouse's action is described using short sentences, repetition and exclamations to convey a sense of urgency, Bear's journey is described in more detail. Longer, more descriptive sentences invite the reader to slow down and explore the text. Ask students to reflect on their experiences of these contrasting styles. Can they identify the shift in pace? What else do they notice about the differences between the two sections of the text?



COMPREHENSION

- What is the sign that Bear and Mouse see pointing to?
- Why is Mouse in such a hurry?
- What creatures do Bear and Mouse meet on their journey?
- What does Bear experience on his way up the mountain?
- How does Mouse feel when they reach the top of the mountain? Why do you think this is?
- What makes Mouse change their mind?
- What do you think the moral of this story is?

WRITING EXERCISE

Experiment with writing fast and writing slow.

Write a short description of an activity that you enjoy. Use long sentences and lots of descriptive details to slow the reader down and allow them to really feel the experience.

Now write a description of the same activity but speed the writing up. Use shorter sentences, repetition and punctuation to capture the speed of the activity.

Reflect on your descriptions. Which style did you enjoy writing in? In what kinds of scenes might a writer want to slow the reader down? When might they want them to speed up?

ILLUSTRATION STYLE

Like the writing style, the illustrations capture the differences between Mouse and Bear. Mouse is often drawn on a plain white background, and Mouse's frantic energy is captured in the motion of the illustrations. Bear, on the other hand, is pictured in more detailed scenes as he stops to really experience the delights of the mountain. He is often still, reinforcing a sense of slowness in contrast to Mouse's speed, and while Mouse's expression is typically cross, Bear looks happier or more relaxed.

Invite students to consider these differences, and to add their own observations to the list of contrasts. How would the story change if Mouse was placed in more detailed scenes or if Bear was pictured on a plain white background?

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Choose one of the other animals in the story and write a scene from their perspective. How do you think they speak? Do they use long slow sentences or short fast ones? What do you think they want to share about the amazing mountain?
- Imagine that you are Bear and take a walk outside. Stop to look at something interesting. What does it smell like? What do you think it's used for? Why did it catch your eye? Draw a picture of what you've seen, using as much detail as possible.
- Where else could Bear and Mouse go on a journey? Come up with a cover and title for their next adventure. Who do you think they might meet along the way?



- Draw a picture of you and one of your friends that celebrates your differences. Think about how the illustrator of this book has used colour, detail and movement to show the differences between Mouse and Bear. Can you use these techniques in your illustration to show the differences between you and your friend?

RELATED READING

Slow Down World by Tai Snaith

Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley by Aaron Blabey

Meesha Makes Friends by Tom Percival

Slow Down: Bring Calm to a Busy World With 50 Nature Stories by Rachel Williams and Freya Hartas

Elephant and Piggie (series) by Mo Willems

