“Pairing a lilting text and culturally resonant illustrations, this striking work soars.”

—Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review

*Little Bird’s Day*, written by Sally Morgan and illustrated by Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr
Published October 5, 2021 | ISBN 9781736226469 | Ages 3–7
Before Reading

Establish background knowledge.

- What do the title and cover illustrations tell you about the book? Where do you think the story takes place? Who will be in the story? What might happen in the story?

- Both the author, Sally Morgan, and the illustrator Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr, are Aboriginal. What do you know about Aboriginal peoples, histories, customs, and cultures? Does anything about the cover and inside illustrations give you clues about their lives and beliefs?

- What do you know about birds? What do they look like? Where do they live? What are their personalities? What kinds of things do they do each day? What is common among all birds, and what are differences? How do the answers differ if you’re thinking about birds you see outside your window versus birds at the zoo?

During Reading

As you read, think about the elements of the story.

- Setting: Where and when is the story taking place?
- Point of view: Who is telling the story?
- Cause-and-effect relationships: What is happening and why?
- Characters: Who is in the story? How are they related? What are their traits—their characteristics, their motivations, and their feelings?
- Pause occasionally and wonder, What will happen next?
- How does the time of day affect the sequence of events?
- How do the illustrations create mood, emphasize aspects of a character, and show the setting?
- Were you surprised by what happens at the end of the story? What clues did the author put in the story that could have led you to expect this?
- What are the themes or messages of the book? How are they developed?
- What is the author’s purpose for writing this book?
- What new information are you learning as you read?
After Reading

Check for understanding.

- Who is the book’s main character?
- Who are the supporting characters?
- What happens during Little Bird’s day?

Consider point of view.

All stories are told from a point of view. They have a narrator. Some have a first-person point of view—the narrator is known as I. For example, “I read the book.” Some have a third-person point of view—the narrator may be known as they, she, or he or another pronoun like those. For example, “They read the book.” Some stories have more than one narrator.

- How many different voices are telling this story? How can you tell?
- How does the language indicate different narrators?
- How does the look of the words or their placement on the page give you clues about who is speaking?

Consider language.

Anthropomorphism is when you give human characteristics to animals or things. For example, when you see a house, and the windows look like eyes and the door a mouth, and you exclaim, “That house is surprised!”—that is anthropomorphism. When the school bus is chugging up a hill, you may think that it’s huffing and puffing, just like you at the end of a fun recess. What examples of anthropomorphism are in Little Bird’s Day?

Research

The author, Sally Morgan, and the illustrator, Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr, of Little Bird’s Day share a lot about themselves in this book. Learn more about who they are and where they live in this research activity. The information on the last page of the book will help you get started.

1. Be an anthropologist: Sally Morgan and Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr belong to specific groups of people. What are the names of those groups? Where do those groups live? Find these places on a map. What makes each of those groups special in the world? Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are living, changing, and ongoing. Look into what it meant to be a member of those groups fifty years ago, a hundred years ago, and a thousand or more years ago. (Aboriginal peoples can trace their ancestry back 75,000 years!) What ancient customs do Aboriginal peoples keep alive today, and what new ones have they added that still speak to their shared beliefs? Does your family do anything similar to what families in those groups do?
2. **Be an art collector:** The illustrations in *Little Bird's Day* are unique in style, technique, and meaning. What can you learn, from the back page of the book and by looking online, about these aspects?

3. **Be a zoologist:** The eleven types of animals (including Little Bird!) in this book all live in the region in Australia where the illustrator is from. Working alone, in small groups, or as a class, choose an animal from the list in the back of the book and research it. If you choose an animal that lives in many places of the world, for example, the snake, focus your research on the types of snakes that live in the illustrator’s home region. Learn about this animal’s biology and habitat as well as how humans interact with it: Do humans keep this animal as a pet? Is this animal in our myths and fairy tales?

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**Just One Page**

Think about your day. Did you have an interaction with the sun or the wind or the clouds, like Little Bird did? Could you imagine if you had? Write about that interaction in the way the author wrote about Little Bird’s experiences.

Try to write about it in three parts:

- First, the narrator speaks (example from the book: “Here comes Sun, rising and shining.”).
- Next, the element speaks (example: “Time to stretch, Little Bird, time to sing the world alive.”).
- Finally, you speak (example: “I warble with Sun to wake the lazy sleepers.”).

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**Draw a Menagerie**

Little Bird met ten different types of animals during the day. How many different types of animals are crossing your path today? Think about the animals (big and small!) outside the window or along your trip to and from school and your pets at home or at school. Maybe you’ll even imagine some incredible creatures! Draw them or make a collage of images from magazines or what you find online. Could you try to imitate at least part of the artistic style of the illustrator of *Little Bird’s Day*? Use similar colors. See what your picture looks like if you scratch or draw crosshatches on it.
Community Science

Citizen science, also called community science, happens when people study the world around them and send the data they collect to scientists. A citizen scientist is anyone—young or old, who has attended a lot of school or who hasn’t, from a city or a small town—who collects data for research projects and helps to answer real scientific questions. Citizen scientists offer invaluable help because, together, they can collect data over greater distances and longer periods of time than scientists and researchers alone.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology out of Cornell University offers several citizen science projects for those who are passionate about helping scientists learn about and conserve birds and their habitats (https://www.birds.cornell.edu/citizenscience). Here are some of the projects; work on them as a class or solo:

- **Celebrate Urban Birds**: Perfect for people living in urban or rural areas, and for both English and Spanish speakers, this project only asks people to learn about their local birds and then watch them for ten minutes a day, two or three times in one week. After you enter your data, you’re done. Or you can repeat the process! https://celebrateurbanbirds.org/

- **eBird**: Spot a bird? Add it to the global map! With this information, scientists can better understand where and when different birds travel. https://ebird.org

- **NestWatch**: Learn how to find and monitor nearby nests. The data citizen scientists collect for this project is especially helpful for scientists trying to understand climate change and the affects of humans (like growing cities and developing farmland) on breeding birds. https://nestwatch.org/

- **Project FeederWatch**: One, two, three… Count birds at your feeder from November through April. Winter watching provides excellent data for scientists studying the influence of habitat and disease on birds. https://feederwatch.org/

- **Great Backyard Bird Count**: This is similar to other Cornell projects, except everyone participates at the exact same time, usually in February. All you have to do is identify and count the birds you see in one spot over one fifteen-minute period; participants can do this once or repeat this every day of the count, if they want. In 2021, the project broke records. More than 300,000 citizen scientists in 190 countries participated. They identified more than 6,000 birds! https://www.birdcount.org
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