

# The Magpie's Tail

retold by Valery Carrick

illustrated by Jill McDonald



## Book Summary

A magpie loses his tail while arguing over milk and must satisfy the demands of various characters before he can get it back.

## Features of the Book

- The cumulative nature of the story line.
- The major and minor characters in the text.
- The frequent use of direct speech.
- The text in the illustrations.
- The storybook language – “Please, Hen, give me an egg.”
- The contractions – “I’ll” and “she’ll.”
- The use of possessive apostrophes – “magpie’s” and “water carrier’s.”

## Purpose

*The Magpie's Tail* can be used in a guided reading setting to introduce and reinforce the following skills and strategies:

- S** identifying the plot and characters within the story;
- S** identifying the themes of the book;
- S** comparing the opinions of the author with those of the reader;
- S** writing a conclusion.

## Introducing the text

Discuss the idea of barter – “I’ll give you this if you give me that.” The story is woven around this concept. Discuss the cover illustration and identify the possible characters in the story.

- *Where does this story take place? Who do you think is the main character?*

Read the title and the names of the author and illustrator. Explain what “retold” means.

## Reading the text

- S** Identifying the plot and characters within the story.
- S** Identifying the themes of the book.
- S** Comparing the opinions of the author with those of the reader.

Title page – Discuss the illustration.

- *What is in the pail? What do you think the magpie will do?*

Pages 2 and 3

- *What is the old woman doing? What is the magpie thinking about doing? Which words tell you?*

Pages 4 and 5 – Look closely at the illustration.

- *What is different about the magpie? What has happened to the milk?*

Pages 6 and 7

- *What is the old woman waving around in the air?*

Pages 8 and 9

- *Why has the magpie gone to see the cow? What does he want?*

Discuss the words in the illustration. What will the cow want in return?

Pages 10 to 13

- *What is the hen saying to the magpie? Do you think she feels sorry for the magpie? What might she do?*

Pages 14 and 15

- *How has the magpie changed? Did the hen want anything for the egg? Where is the magpie going now? Do you think he will take milk from the old lady again?*

Children now read the book independently.

## Revisiting the text

List the names of all the characters in the story. With the group, work out who were the major characters and who were minor.

Review the use of the possessive apostrophe and look for the examples in this story (“magpie’s” and “water carrier’s”).

## Following Up

**S** Writing a conclusion.

Discuss the main theme of this story. Is the story trying to tell us something? Have the children write about whether they agree/disagree with the author’s message.

Draw and label a flow diagram of the events in the story.

**B** Complete the blackline master opposite.