

Teacher's Notes/ Readers Report

Title: Rhino Neil

Author: Mini Goss

1. Synopsis

All the animals in the zoo are warned to stay away from the huge Rhino Neil. He is a very lonely rhinoceros until one day Tuscany the elephant arrives. Rhino Neil is pleased to have a friend at last.

The two stars of the book are Rhino Neil the rhinoceros and Tuscany the elephant. However along the way many other animals are featured such as a giraffe, antelopes, zebra and an ostrich.

Friendship is one of the key themes in this book

2. Author/Illustrator style or medium

Mini has used both double page spreads, and in the final page a single page spread. The text is arranged around the animals making it interesting for the children.

The text varies in colour (from black to white) depending on the darkness of the background.

Mini has used acrylic paint in her illustrations which are warm and textured.

3. Author/Illustrator Motivation

The idea for Rhino Neil first came to Mini when she was on a bus, bouncing through the fields at Werribee zoo. One of her children noticed that a rhino was standing on his own looking very lonely. That evening she told her children a story about why the rhino might be lonely and this story later developed into Rhino Neil.

Many years earlier Mini had given her half sister a toy rhino for her birthday. His name was Rhino Neil.

4. Author/Illustrator Background Information

Mini Goss was born in Melbourne in 1963. Her mum was a model and her dad an architect and like lots of young people at the time her parents soon got on a ship and sailed away to find excitement in London. Mini lived in London and New York for most of her childhood. Despite going to groovy parties and meeting the odd pop star Mini, an only child, longed for a “normal” life back in Melbourne with grandparent’s cousins to play with and a dog.

When Mini was a teenager she returned to Melbourne got a dog, a cat, a rabbit and some birds. She was only allowed to watch one hour of TV a day so the rest of the time she spent drawing. Her favourite thing to draw was her dog.

As a grown up Mini still likes to draw her dog, cat, rabbits, birds, fish and her three children. Since starting to write and illustrate children’s books about thirteen years ago her pets and children have been the models for many characters in her books. In *Taming Butterflies* Mini used her daughter Hazel for the model of Tilly.

Unfortunately she isn’t allowed to have her own rhinoceros or elephant and so she had to go to the zoo to find models for the characters in *Rhino Neil*.

5. Educational Applicability

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Discussion topics

Before reading the book

1. Ask the students which animals they have you seen at the zoo?
2. Discuss what animals you might see in a safari zoo and the difference between a safari zoo and the zoo the children have visited?
3. What is the largest animal they have seen?
4. Do you think animals get lonely? If you were lonely what might you wish for?
5. Do you enjoy having a friend at school or Pre School?

After Reading the book

1. Which animals did you like? Were some of the animals unkind?

2. What is the difference between the zoo in the book and the zoo's you have visited?
3. Which was the largest animal?
4. Do you think Rhino Neil was lonely at the end of the book?
5. Discuss the benefits of friendship.

Make a poster

Write a list of all the animals discussed in the book. Let each child draw a picture of their favourite animal. You could create your own zoo!

Art, Craft & Design

The children can make horns and feet using paper mache.

Step 1.

Pour some PVA glue into a bowl, then add half as much water. Stir them together to make a really strong mixture.

Step 2.

Roll up some newspaper into the shape of a horn. Coat the horn in the glue mixture and cover it in strips of newspaper. You will probably need two or three layers.

Step 3.

Paint over everything again with the glue mixture and leave to dry overnight. The next morning you can paint your horn.

Tip

If you want to be more creative you can use a balloon for the rhino's head. Simply blow up a balloon, tie a knot in it and get to work with your paper mache.

Further Research

1. Each student could pick an animal and find out more about it. They could talk to the class about the animal and find out where it would usually live. You could discuss why giraffes have a long neck and rhinoceros has a huge horn.
2. Students could discuss what other animals might be found in a safari zoo. Do the animals stay together in groups or do they mix with the other animals.

6. Marketing & Selling Points

- Mini Goss is a well known author and illustrator. In 2000 she won the Crichton award for illustration.
- The book depicts a story of loneliness to friendship which is easy for children to relate to.
- Young children love animals!
- Rhino Neil sends a message about bullying in a low key manner and at an early age.

7. How the book is to be promoted

Review copies to Magpies, Reading time, metropolitan and regional dailies and various online forums.

Radio interviews

Mini Goss makes regular visits to school and is involved in several literary festivals.