

## Teaching Notes: *Scruffle-Nut*

Written by Corinne Fenton

Illustrated by Owen Swan

Published by New Frontier Publishing



### SYNOPSIS

As winter leaves tumble and twirl a wisp of memory wraps itself about me and whispers me back to long ago...

### SIMILAR TITLES

If you liked *The Dam* by David Almond and *King of the Sky* by Nicola Davies, then you'll love *Scruffle-Nut*!

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Corinne Fenton is a writer with a passion for picture books that warm the heart. To date, all her picture books have featured an animal hero. For those who know Corinne, her affinity with animal characters is no random choice. Corinne has rescued so many strays over the years that she now never leaves the house without a pet lead. When Corinne is not wearing her author hat, she has spent time as the Assistant Regional Advisor for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators in Australia and as a judge for the Dorothea Mackellar poetry competition. But it's writing that is her passion. You can meet her latest squirrel-hero in *Scruffle-Nut*.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Owen Swan was born in Sydney and spent his childhood in country New South Wales and the Blue Mountains. Owen has illustrated several picture books, including the CBCA Notable *Anzac Biscuits* by Phil Cummings, the CBCA Shortlisted *Out* by Angela May George and *My Friend Tertius* by Corinne Fenton. Owen has once again teamed up with author Corinne Fenton to bring you *Scruffle-Nut*.

### EDUCATIONAL APPLICABILITY

*Scruffle-Nut* pairs heartfelt text from award-winning author Corinne Fenton with stunning illustrations by bestselling illustrator Owen Swan. The story explores bullying and its consequences while retaining a gentle, hopeful tone.



'Time to go, Olivia,' says Nanny Clementine.  
'Goodbye little squirrel,' I call.

We amble home along the winding paths, under  
stone bridges and across bare brown meadows.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Show the children the front cover of the book. Ask them if they can read the title and what they think the story might be about.
2. Can any of the children make a guess as to where the story might be set?
3. Why do you think Olivia looks away when she sees girls from her class? Do you think she is being bullied?
4. Why do you think Olivia becomes attached to Scruffle-Nut in particular? Why does she favour him over the other squirrels?
5. Can you think of reasons why meeting Scruffle-Nut was so important to Olivia? Why did she remember him so many years later?
6. Do you think that Scruffle-Nut can recognise Olivia?
7. Did you know that squirrels have been known to make friends with other animals?

There are a couple of examples of this:

Wally the grey squirrel fell out of his nest as a baby. He was rescued and rehabilitated by a family and grew very attached to their dog Jax. Wally spends his time sitting on Jax's head, playing with his tail and trying to hide nuts in his fur.



In an even more unusual occurrence, a wild red squirrel was seen playing with a large ginger cat.

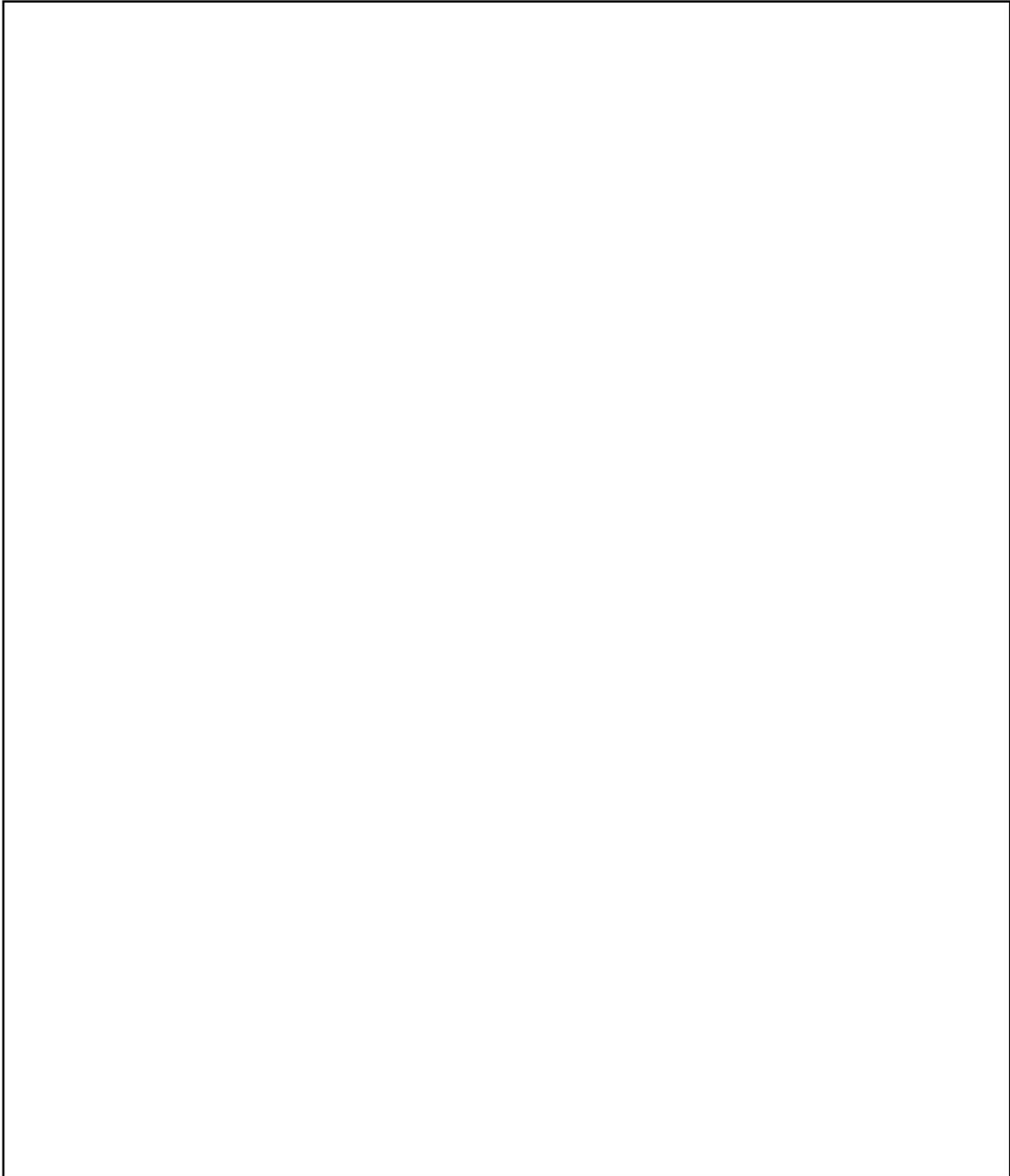


## CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. We see Olivia when she was a little girl, and then again when she is an older lady. Can you imagine what she might have done in the years between then? What job did she have? Where did she travel to?
2. Can you make up a story about how Scruffle-Nut lost his tail, and how he became so wise and brave and strong?

## DRAWING ACTIVITY

Why not have a go at drawing your own version of one of Scruffle-Nut and Olivia's meetings?



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## CRAFT

If you'd like to see more squirrels in your garden, you can create your own squirrel feeder using a pinecone!

### What you will need:

1 large pinecone  
2-4 tablespoons of peanut butter  
Wire or string  
Bird seed  
Newspaper (to lay on the table)

### Instructions:

Tie string around the widest part of the pinecone, leaving behind a decent amount to hang up the pinecone.

Put the peanut butter in a microwavable dish and microwave it for about 20 seconds, or until it is thin and runny. Remember to ask your parents for help when using the microwave!

Using a butter knife (or a thick paintbrush) spread the peanut butter over the pinecone. Leave enough room at the top of the pinecone so you can still pick it up.

Put the birdseed in a bowl and then roll the pinecone in it.

Using the string, tie the pinecone somewhere in your garden for the squirrels.

