

**ERNEST**  
**Written and Illustrated by Catherine Rayner**  
**ISBN 978-0-230-71255-3**

*Use the double page spread at the beginning of the story.*

Working in pairs, encourage children to explore the picture discussing their responses and working together to make meaning of what they see. Ask them to jot down words and phrases, which reflect their responses to looking.

**The aims of this activity are:**

- to increase the interaction with and enjoyment of picture books for children of all ages
- to develop children's confidence and vocabulary to respond to what they see – to observe and describe
- to encourage them to build on their previous experience, imagination and understanding to make sense of visual information – to interpret
- to consider a variety of graphic forms and their interaction with a text in order to convey layers of meaning – to appreciate
- to recognise different styles and techniques used and developed by a variety of illustrators – to analyse
- to begin to recognise and appreciate visual metaphor, irony, puns and jokes etc. – to participate

The following questions have been designed to help children to look more closely at the illustrative work of Catherine Rayner moving from the whole picture to the smallest part and to search for and use all available clues given by the artist to make meaning. Please select and adapt the questions to make them appropriate for your setting.

**TELL ME ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATION...**

How do you read this double page spread?

How do your eyes travel across the page?

What do you notice first?

How does the illustrator help you to imagine the enormity of Ernest?

How does the illustrator convey that Ernest is standing inside a book?

Consider the quality of the paper-what kind of paper is it?

This story is about size. How has Catherine Rayner used contrasts of size and shape? Compare the small rounded, soft shape of Ernest's friend juxtaposed against his large angular hooves and legs.

Look at Ernest what do you know about him from this picture?

If you were able to stroke Ernst's nose, how would it feel?

How has the illustrator created its velvety look?

Ernest is very loosely drawn with just suggestions of his features. How has the illustrator portrayed him to be a gentle giant?

How has the illustrator given emphasis to particular features of his body?

What do you know about his agility and speed from this portrait?

How has Catherine Rayner maintained his wild antelope qualities whilst still making him welcome on a picture book page?

How would you describe this style of illustration?

What do you notice about the application of colour on his coat and antlers and the textures created?

What mediums do you think have been used?

Both creatures have been depicted in similar colours what effect does this have on your understanding about their relationship?

How would you describe the colours used on this page?

Look at how the illustrator has used a sense of scale. Ernest's huge legs and body encapsulate the small creature. How do we know that she is not afraid?

In what ways has the illustrator helped you to see Ernest's determination to enter the book?

Why do you think Ernest wants to get in?

What kind of creature is Ernest's little friend? What clues has the illustrator given you?

How do you think she feels? Does she want Ernest to get inside the book?

What can you tell from her posture and body language?

How does this page make you feel?

What do you think this story is going to be about, how does this page help you to predict the rest of the story?

In what ways do you notice that the words and picture work together to convey meaning?

What age group do you think this book is aimed at?

What do you notice about the layout of the text, its size and prominence amongst the illustrations?

Which words are you made to notice first?

In what ways do the words and pictures work together?

What is the effect of their size and the angles at which they lurch on to the page?

## **WRITE IT DOWN**

Harvest children's responses and record their descriptions and comments on a flip chart. Are there any aspects of the picture that they find particularly interesting or puzzling? How do these pictures interact and work with the rest of the book?