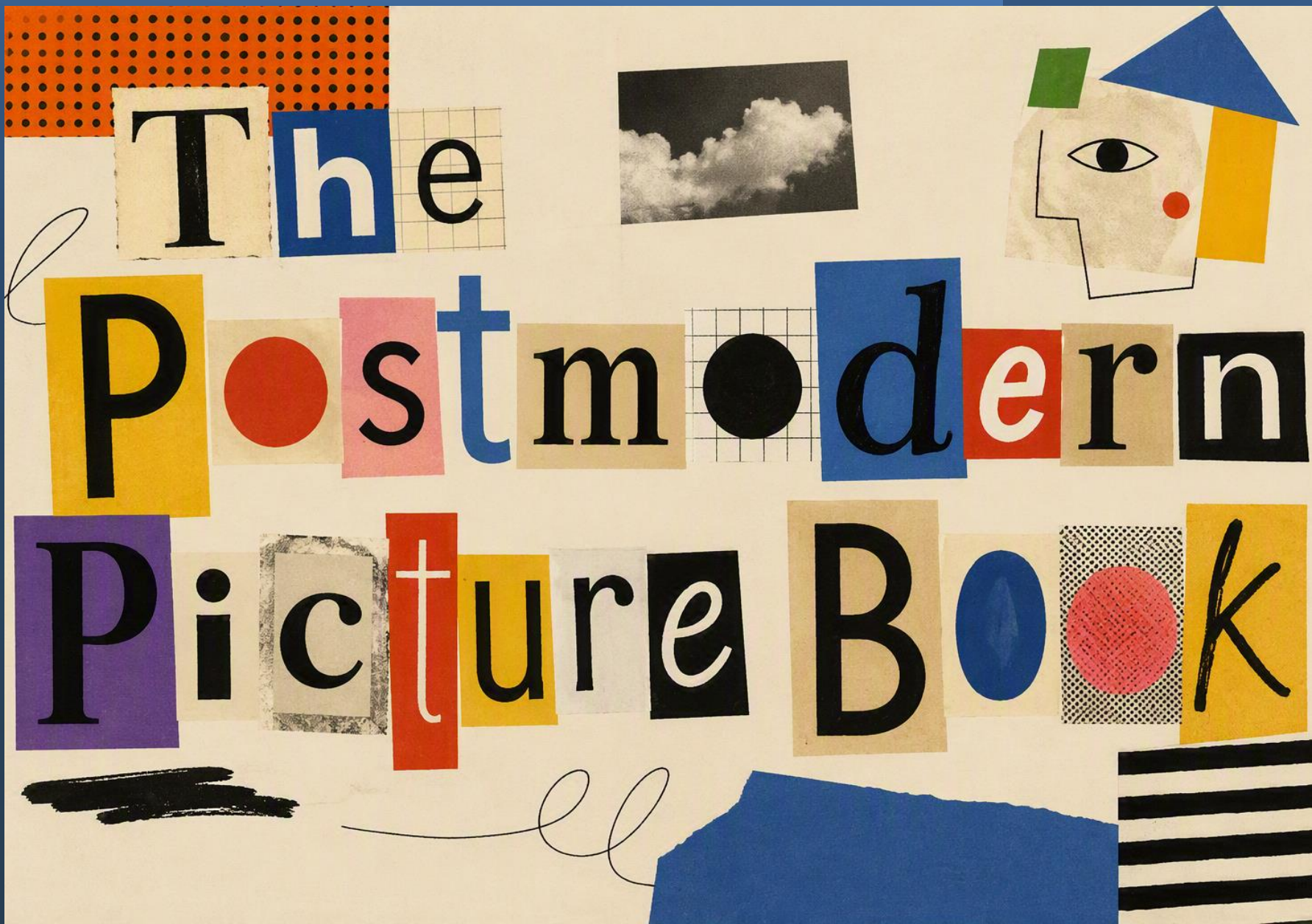




What is a Postmodern Picture Book?

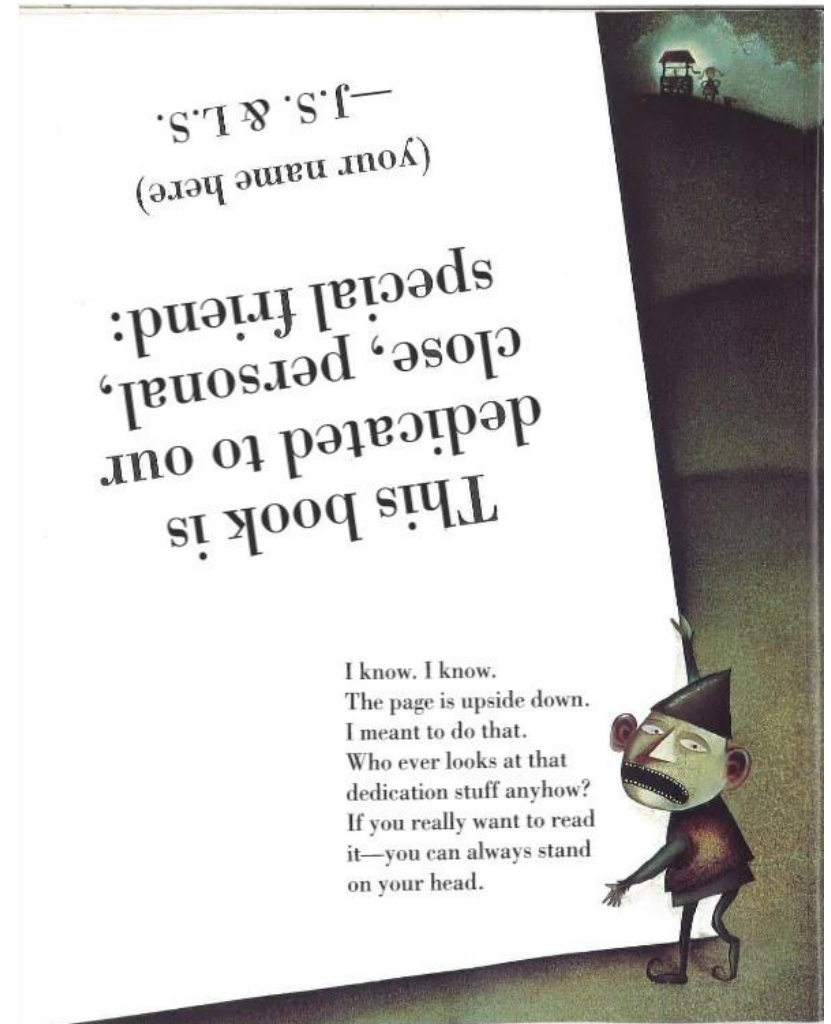
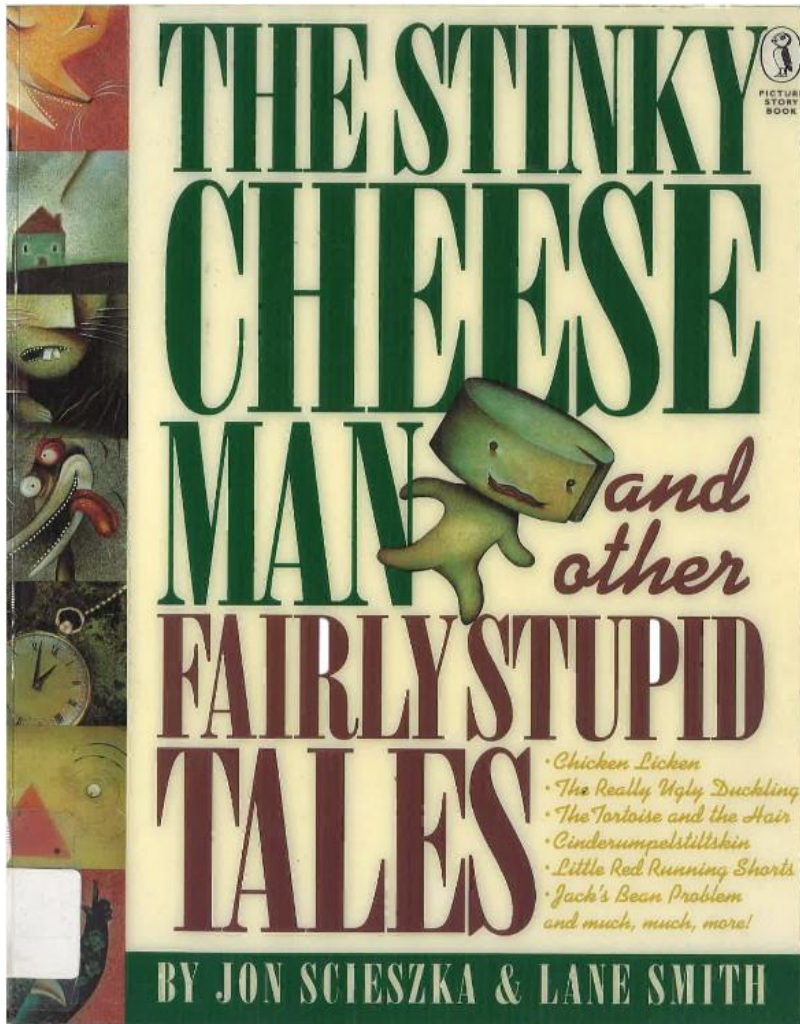
A postmodern picture book is one that breaks traditional rules. It knows that it is a book (metafiction), talks directly to the reader, and plays with how the words and pictures work together.

When most people think of picture books, they imagine simple stories where pictures support the words. However, from the 1980s onwards, a number of writers and illustrators began to challenge traditional assumptions about storytelling. These books questioned authority, disrupted narrative conventions, played with language and image, and actively involved readers in constructing meaning.

Key

Features





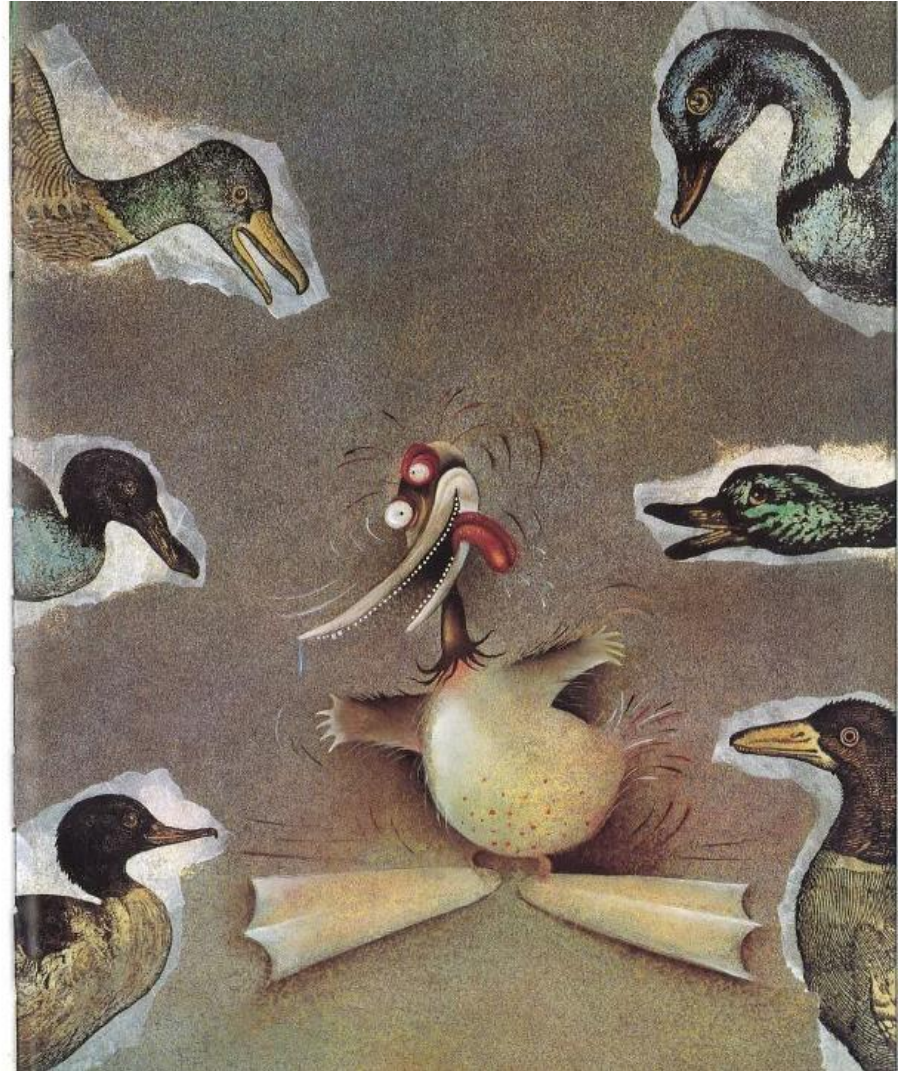
Wild Designs: The text, fonts and pictures may change sizes, clash or ask you to turn the book sideways or upside down.

Hidden References and Jokes: They often poke fun at, or mix together, classic tales and other stories that you already know.

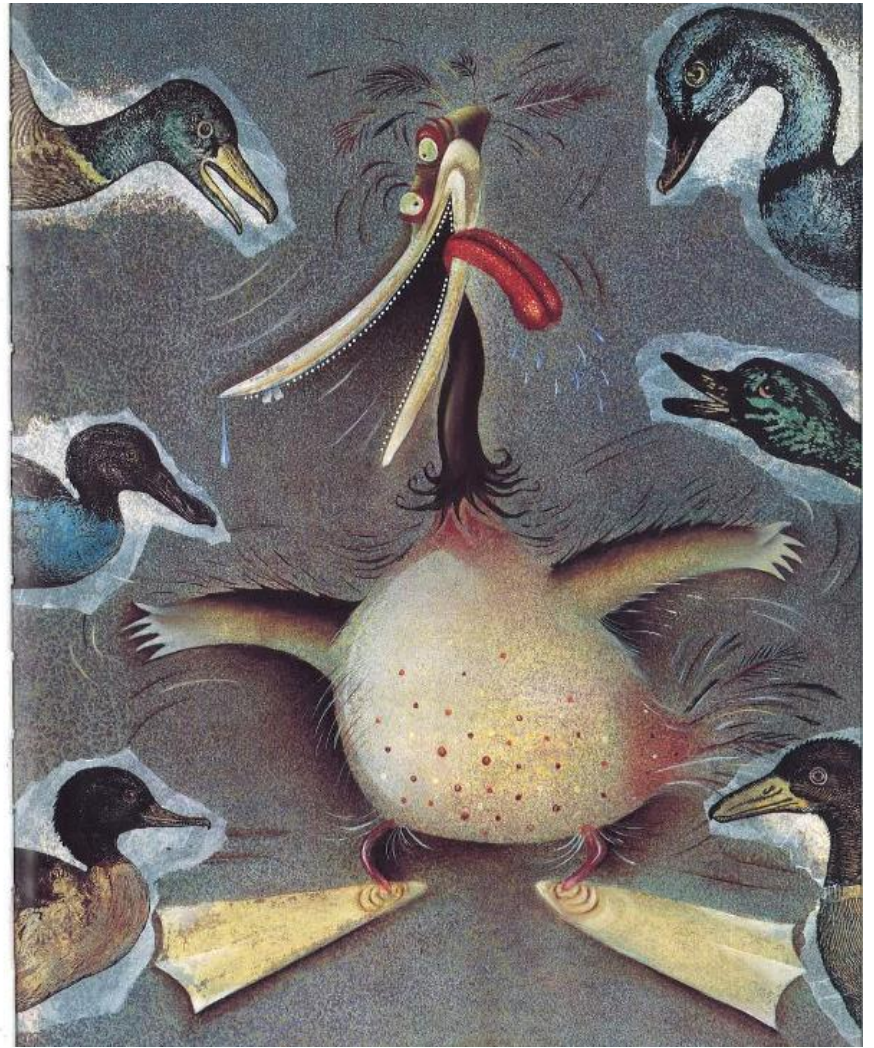
THE REALLY UGLY DUCKLING

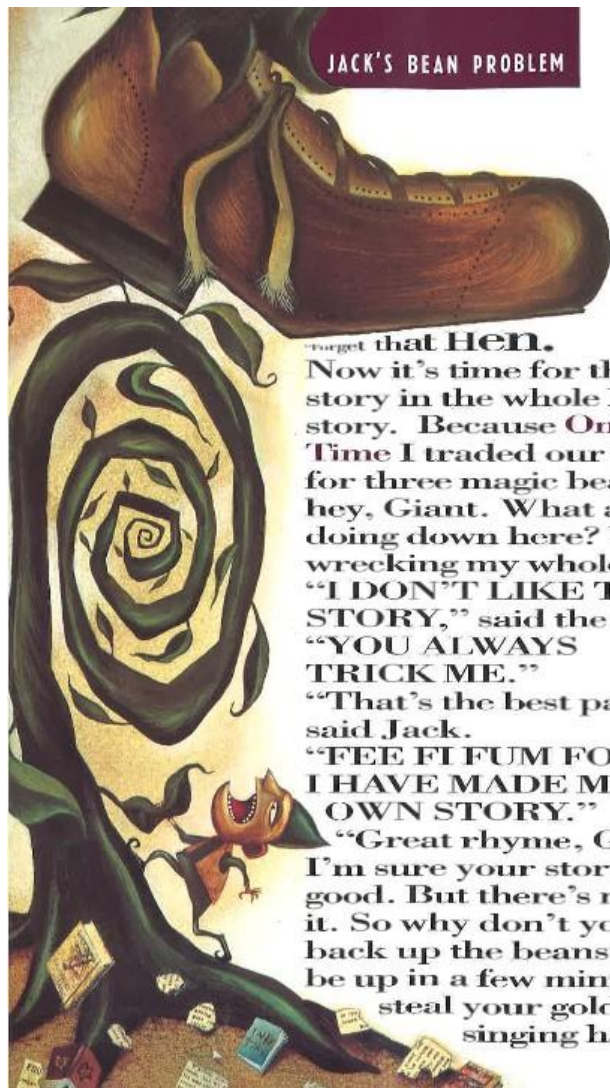
Once upon a time there was a mother duck and a father duck who had seven baby ducklings. Six of them were regular-looking ducklings. The seventh was a really ugly duckling.

Everyone used to say, “What a nice-looking bunch of ducklings—all except that one. Boy, he’s really ugly.” The really ugly duckling heard these people, but he didn’t care. He knew that one day he would probably grow up to be a swan and be bigger and look better than anything in the pond.



Well, as it
turned out, he
was just a really
ugly duckling.
And he grew
up to be just a
really ugly duck.
The End.





JACK'S BEAN PROBLEM

forget that Hen.

Now it's time for the best story in the whole book—my story. Because Once Upon a Time I traded our last cow for three magic beans and... hey, Giant. What are you doing down here? You're wrecking my whole story."

"I DON'T LIKE THAT STORY," said the Giant.

"YOU ALWAYS TRICK ME."

"That's the best part," said Jack.

"FEE FIFUM FORY. I HAVE MADE MY OWN STORY."

"Great rhyme, Giant. And I'm sure your story is just as good. But there's no room for it. So why don't you climb back up the beanstalk. I'll be up in a few minutes to steal your gold and your singing harp."

"I'LL GRIND YOUR BONES TO MAKE MY BREAD."

"I knew you'd understand. And there's another little thing that's been bugging me. Could you please stop talking in uppercase letters? It really messes up the page."

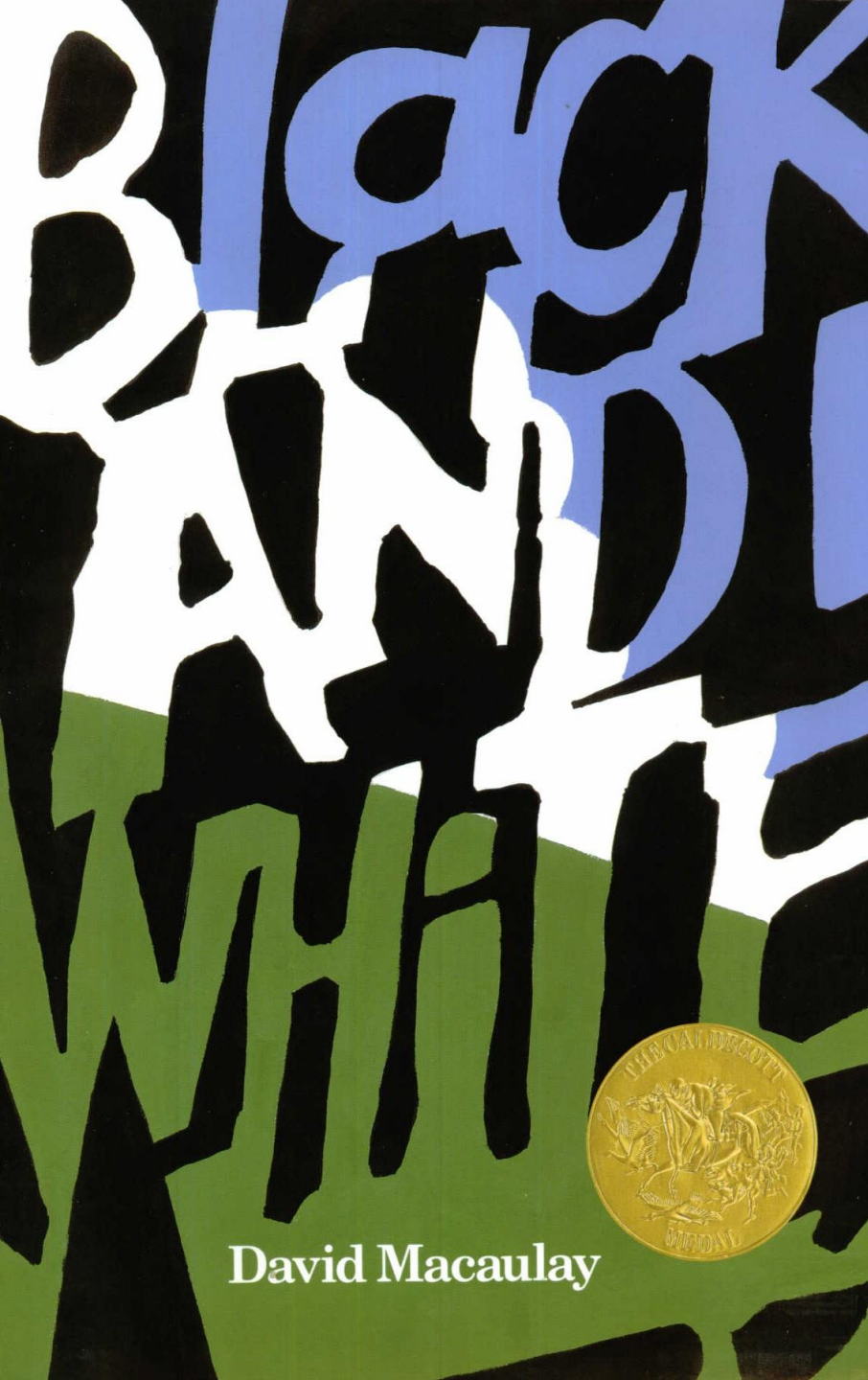
"I WILL READ MY STORY NOW," said the Giant. And he did.



Self-awareness: The book knows it is a book. Characters might talk to you, criticize the plot, or walk off the edge of the paper.

Mixed-up Rules: The story does not flow in a traditional straight line. It might jump around or have multiple stories happening at the once.

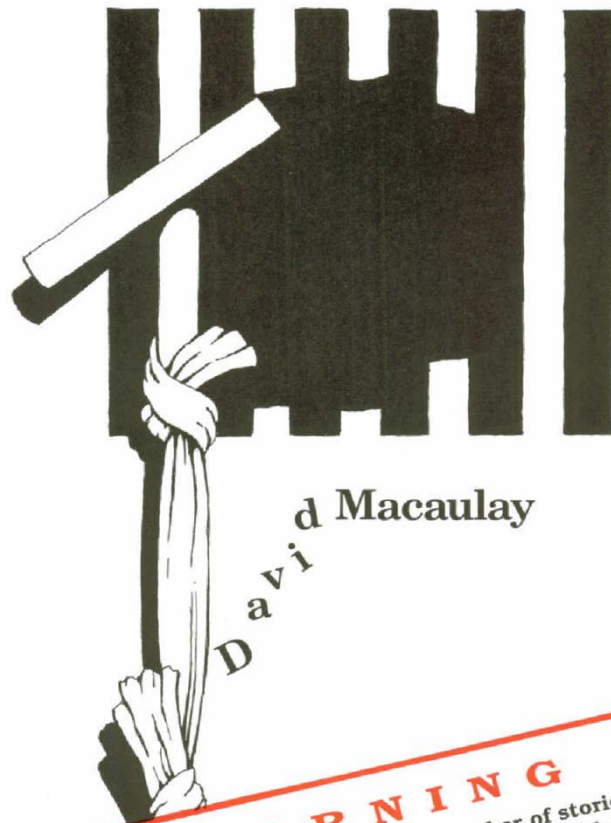
In *Black and White*, David Macaulay presents four stories simultaneously, each in a different quadrant of the page, and gradually encourages readers to notice that the stories overlap and may actually be connected. The book is widely regarded as a postmodern picture book in which readers must construct meaning for themselves.



David Macaulay



Black and White

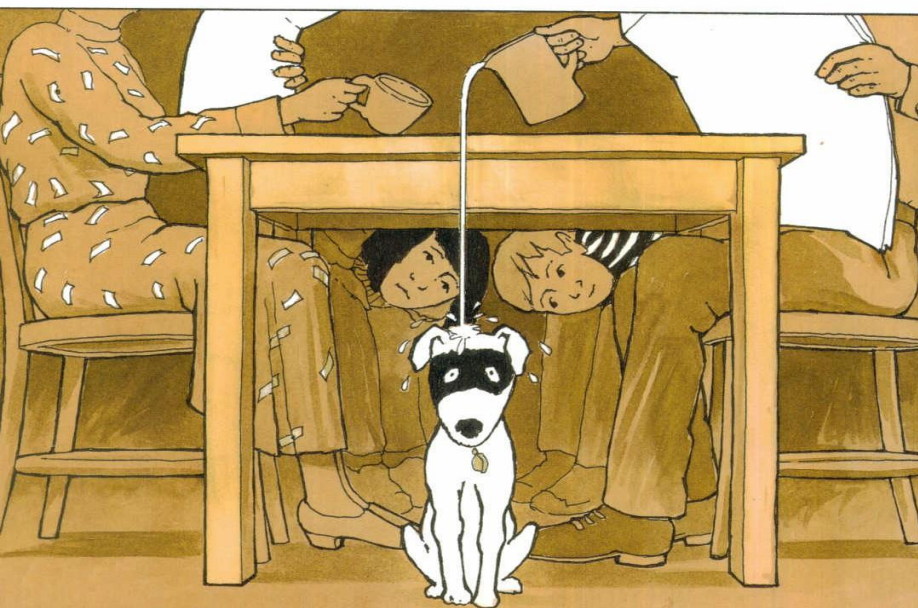


David Macaulay

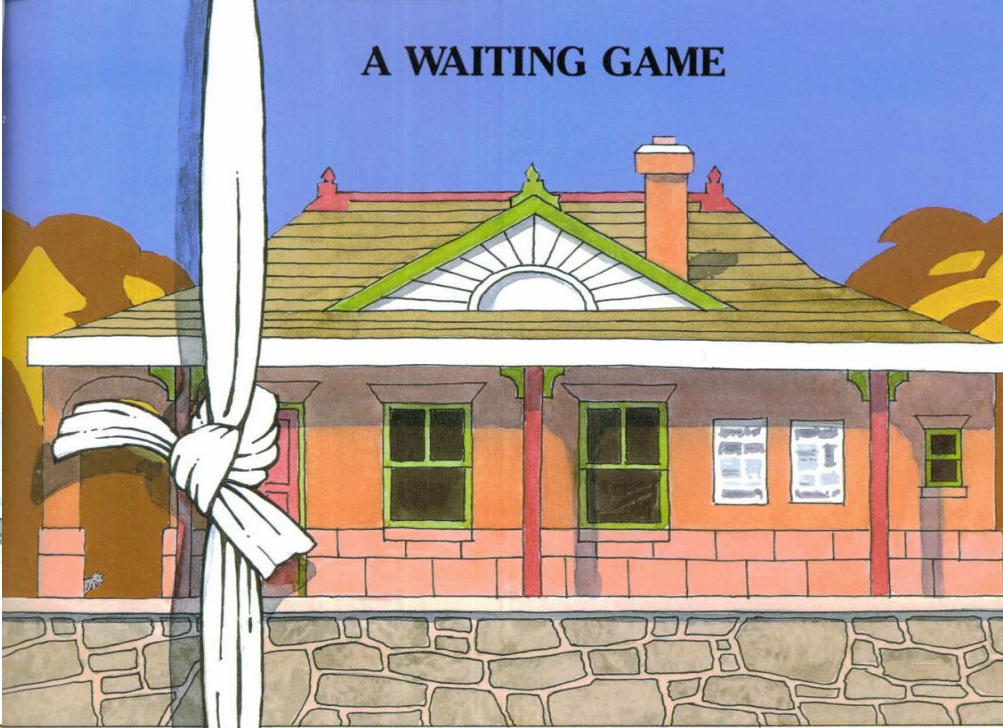
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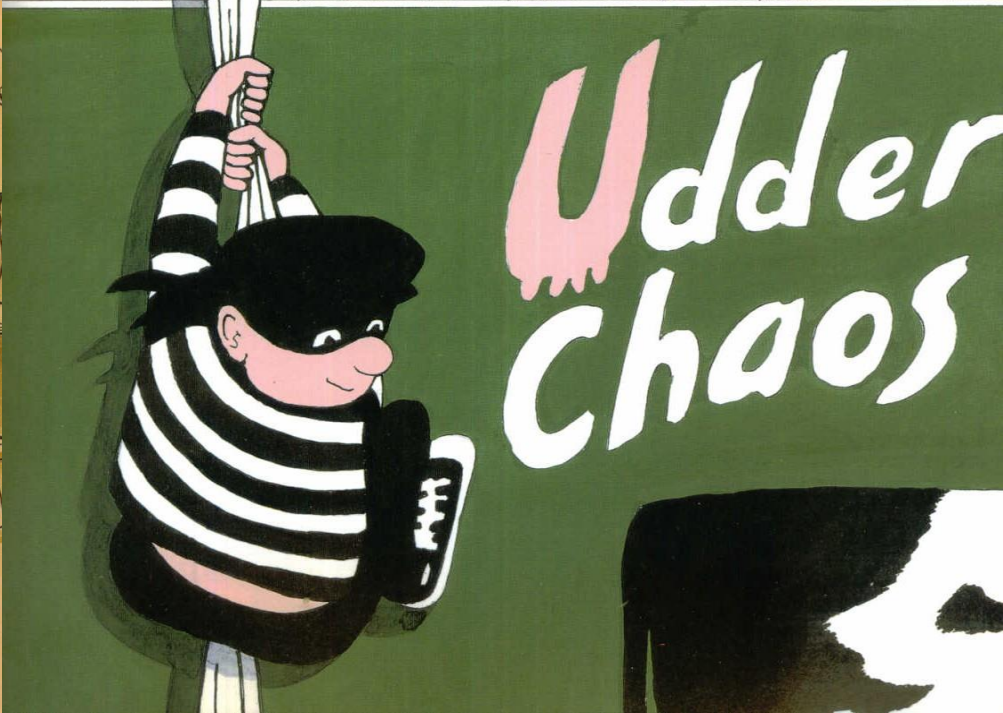
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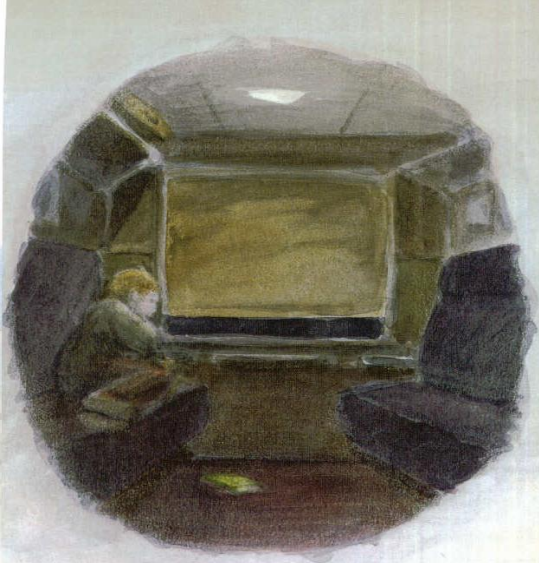
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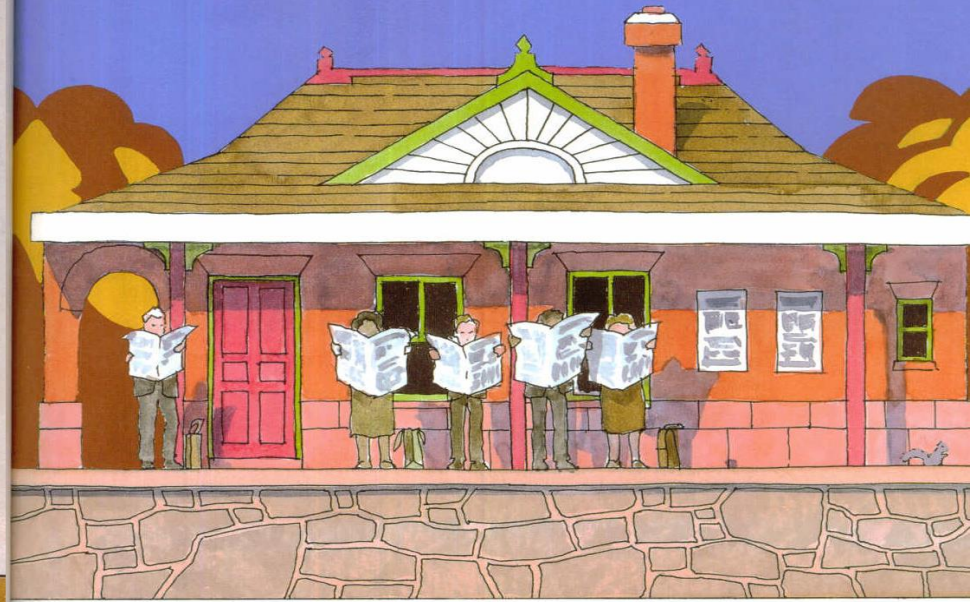
A WAITING GAME



Udder
Chaos



It is the boy's first trip alone. He can hardly wait to see his parents again. Even on the fast train, the journey will take all night. He sleeps curled up at one end of the seat.

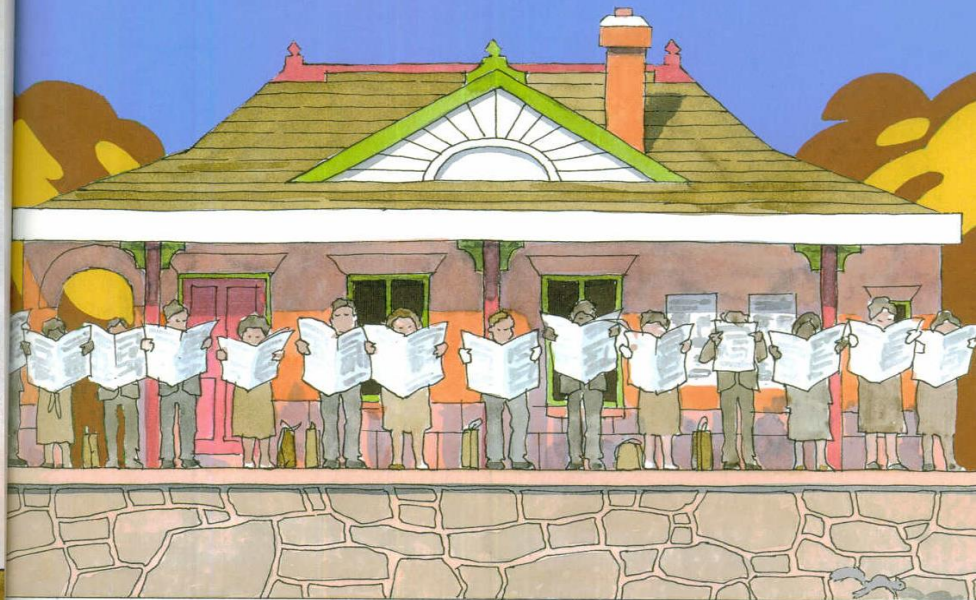


One thing about parents is that you're supposed to be able to count on them, even when they don't understand you.

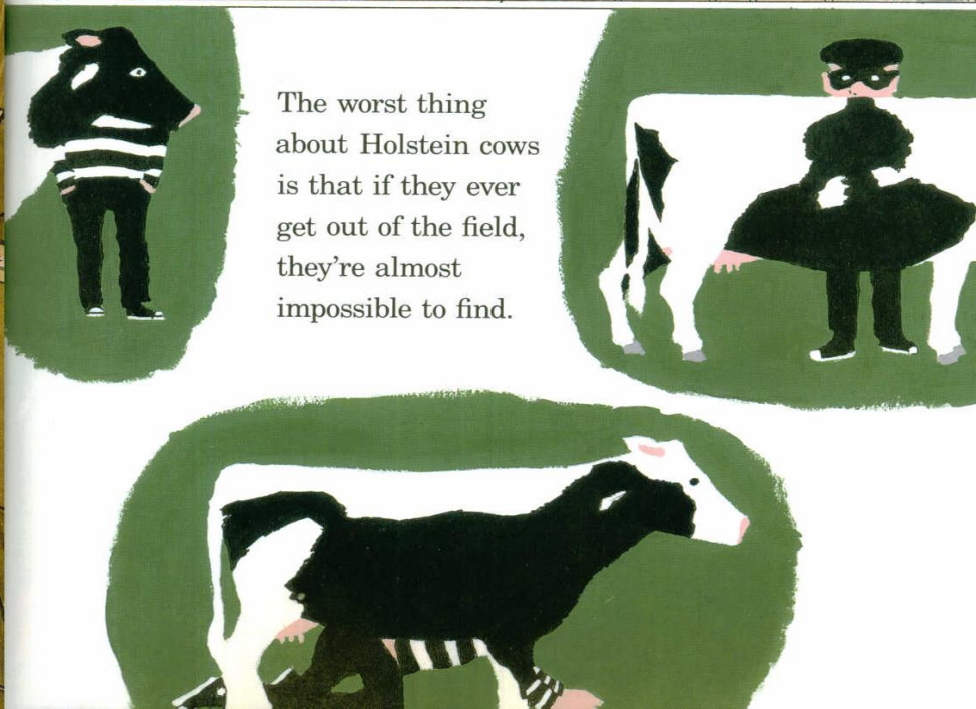




Sometime in the early morning hours, the train comes to rest. All is quiet. Suddenly, the door of the compartment slides open. The conductor leans in, announces that something is blocking the tracks, and disappears. A few minutes later, an old woman enters the compartment and sits down opposite the boy. She says nothing.



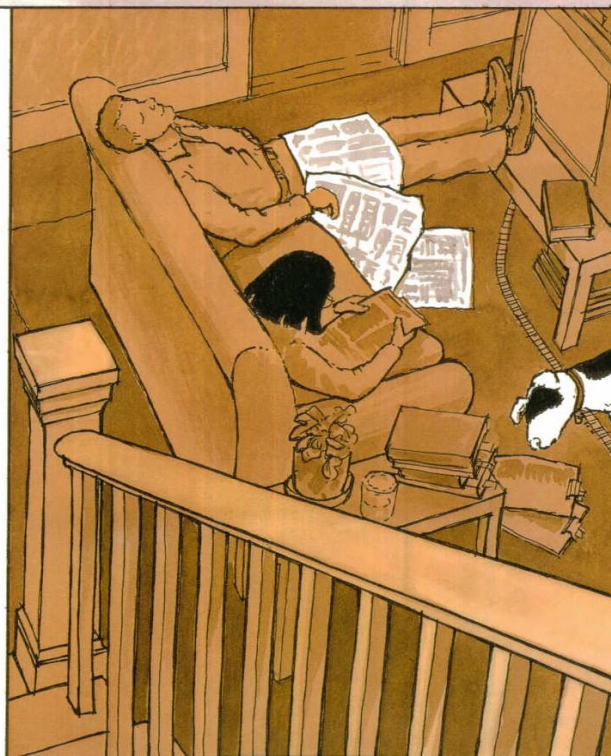
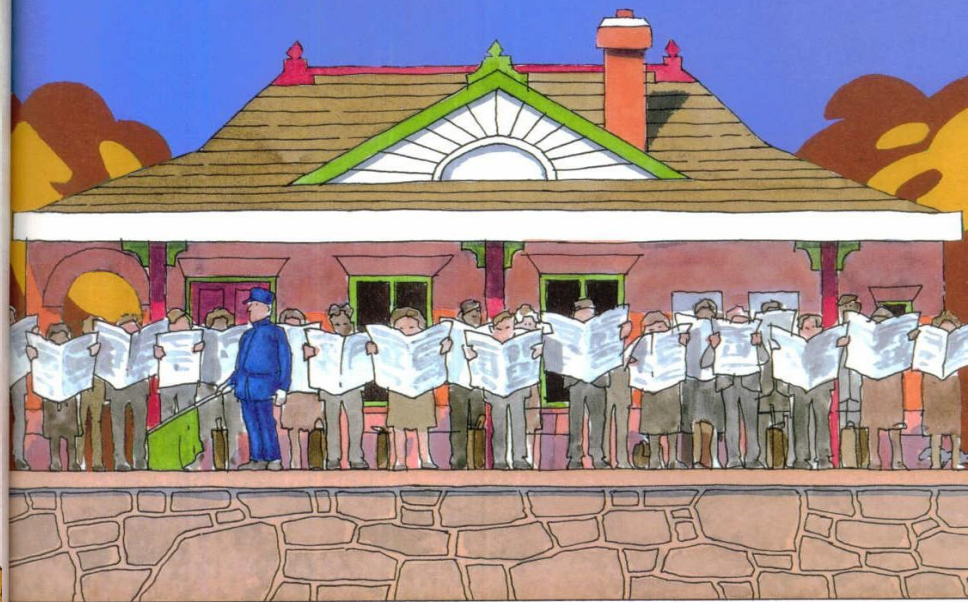
Every morning at seven o'clock they leave for their offices in the city.



The worst thing about Holstein cows is that if they ever get out of the field, they're almost impossible to find.

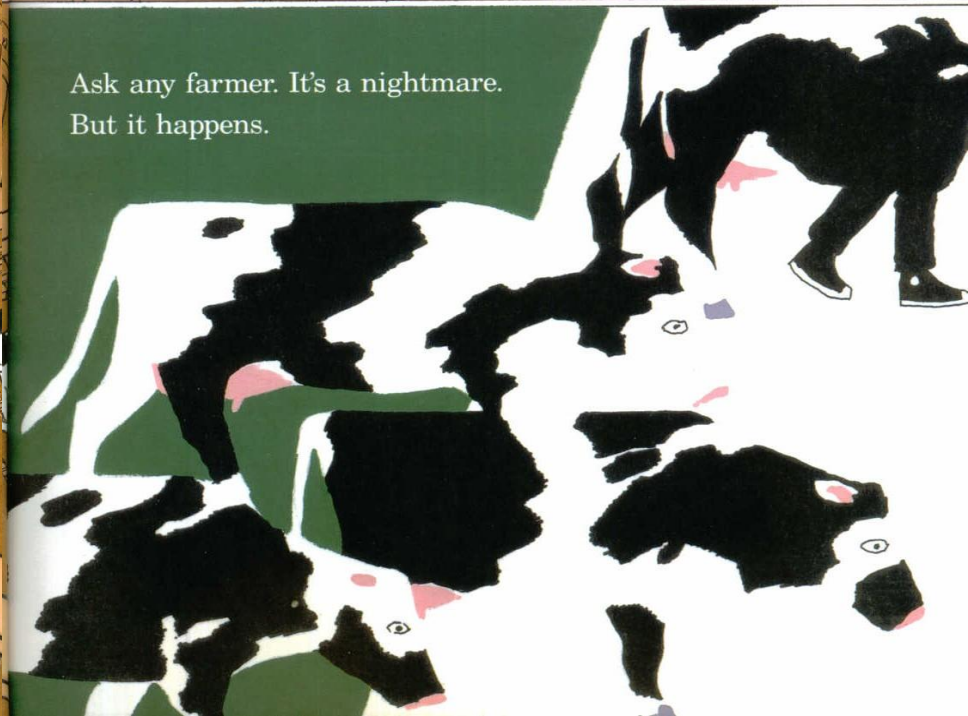


Leaning out the window, the boy can just make out what looks like a row of boulders in front of the train. He wonders if it's an avalanche. But where from? Even in the poor light, there is no sign of a mountain or even a hill.



And every evening at seven o'clock they come home, sort through the mail, ask about homework, and send us to bed.

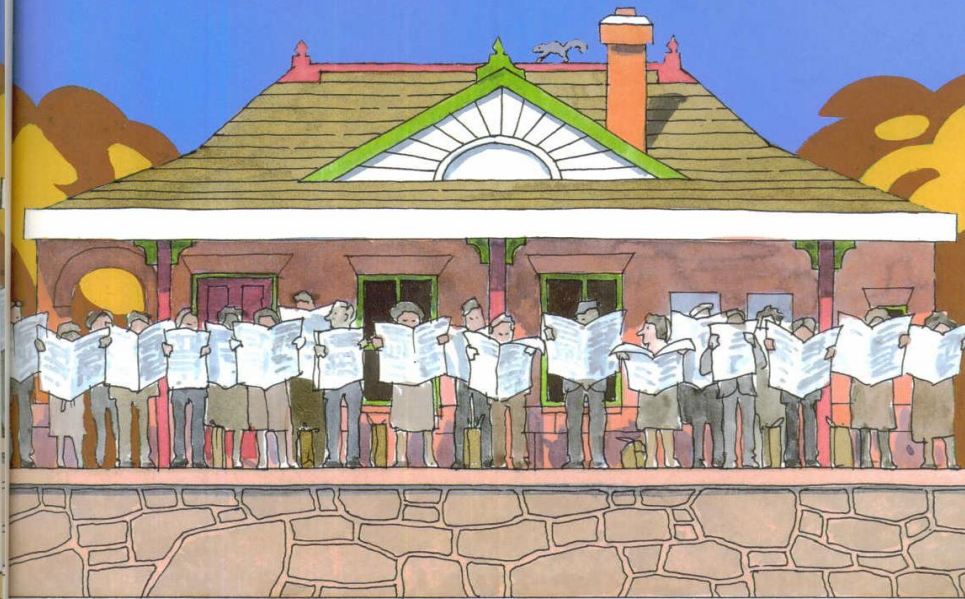
Ask any farmer. It's a nightmare. But it happens.





He sees the driver jump down from the engine and approach the boulders. The man is shouting and waving his fists. The boy grins. He's helped his parents in the garden often enough to know that you can't move rocks just by shouting at them.

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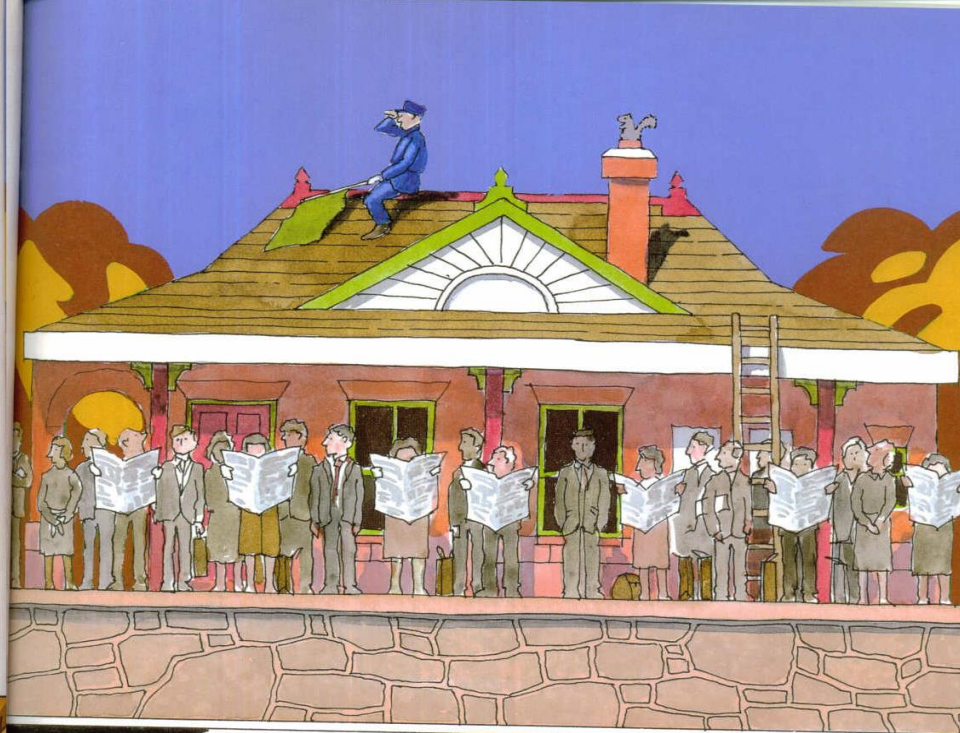
But from the moment they came through the door that night, my brother and I knew something was wrong.

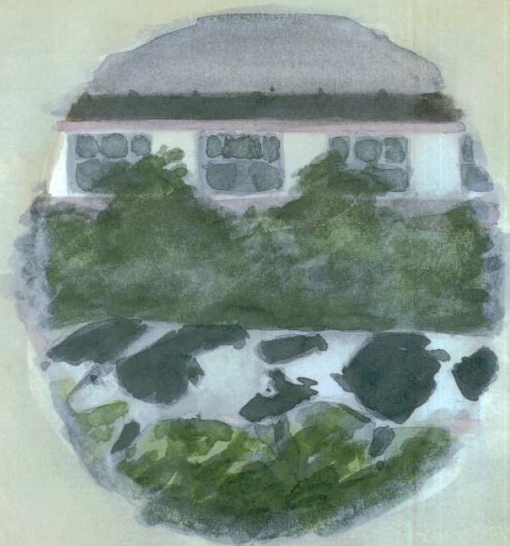




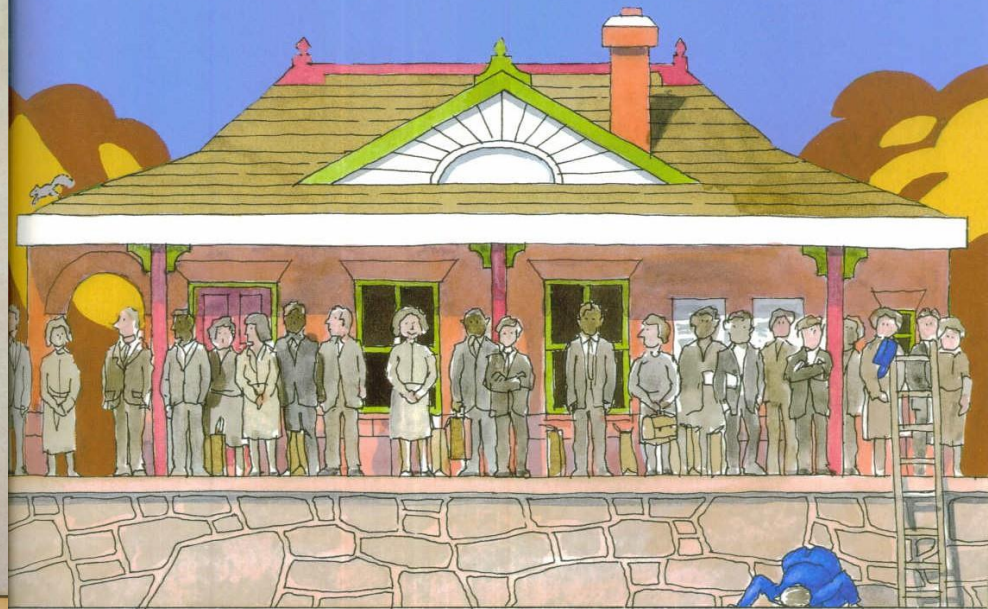
Amusement quickly turns to amazement. He rubs his eyes again and again but still can't believe what he sees. The boulders are moving.

That was the night they came home wearing newspapers. I couldn't believe it. They came in laughing, ignored the mail, and started marching around the living room singing, "She'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes." I mean, you expect parents to be weird, but this was scary.





Slowly, they float off the tracks, down the embankment, and into the bushes that border the railway line.



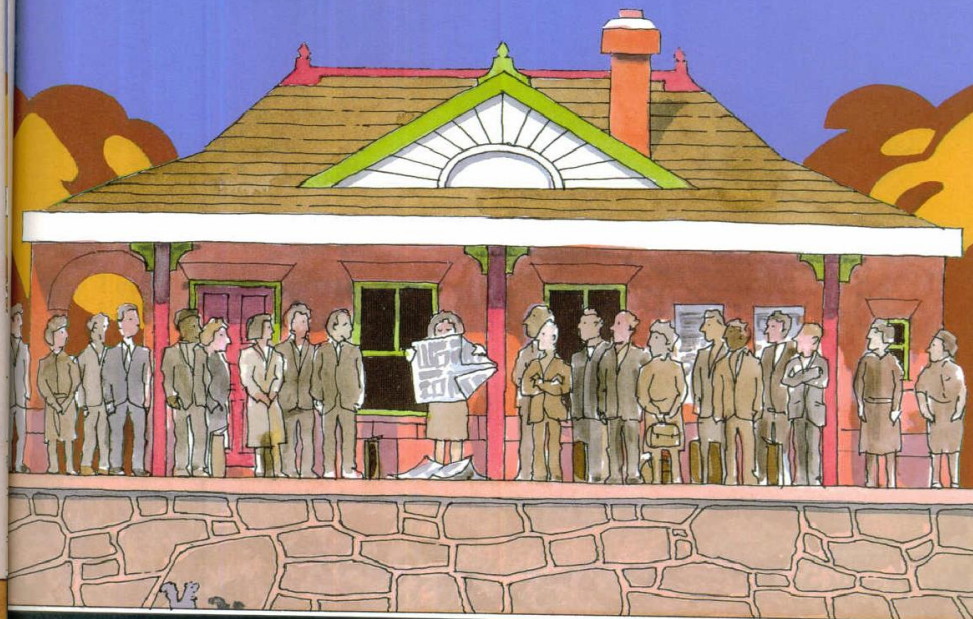
The next thing I knew, Dad had lugged in a pile of old newspapers from the garage. He and Mom were looking us up and down and whispering.





When the last one is gone, the driver clammers back into the cab and the train lurches forward. Lighter-than-air boulders tumble around the boy's mind until the steady rhythmic clicking of the rails sends him back to sleep. Screeching brakes. Hissing steam. Singing. Singing?! Reluctantly, he opens his eyes. The old lady has vanished.

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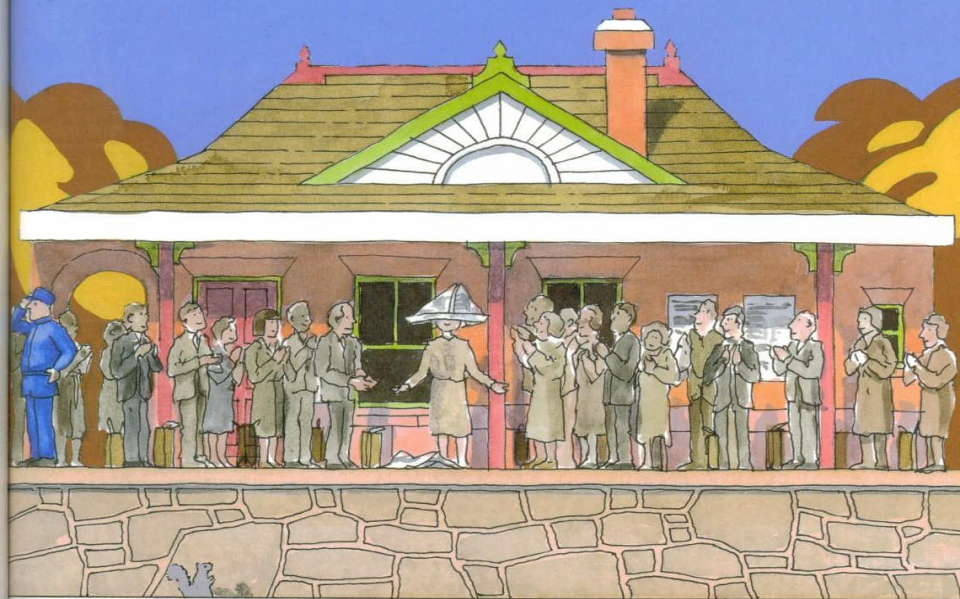
I asked if they wanted to check my homework. Mom just tore the Leisure section into strips and asked if I wanted to be a turkey!



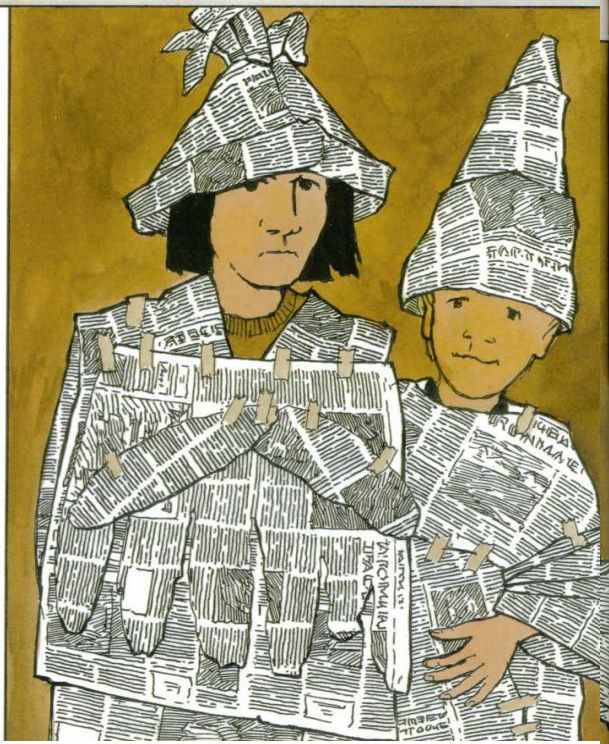
And they're no easier to find at night...



With his sleeve, he clears some mist from inside the window. Where he expects a platform, he sees only smoke or steam or cloud. He stares and wonders. Is that really cloud out there?



I looked at my brother. We played along—for the moment. But pretty soon both of us looked like rejects from some origami zoo. I was thinking, "Who are these people?"

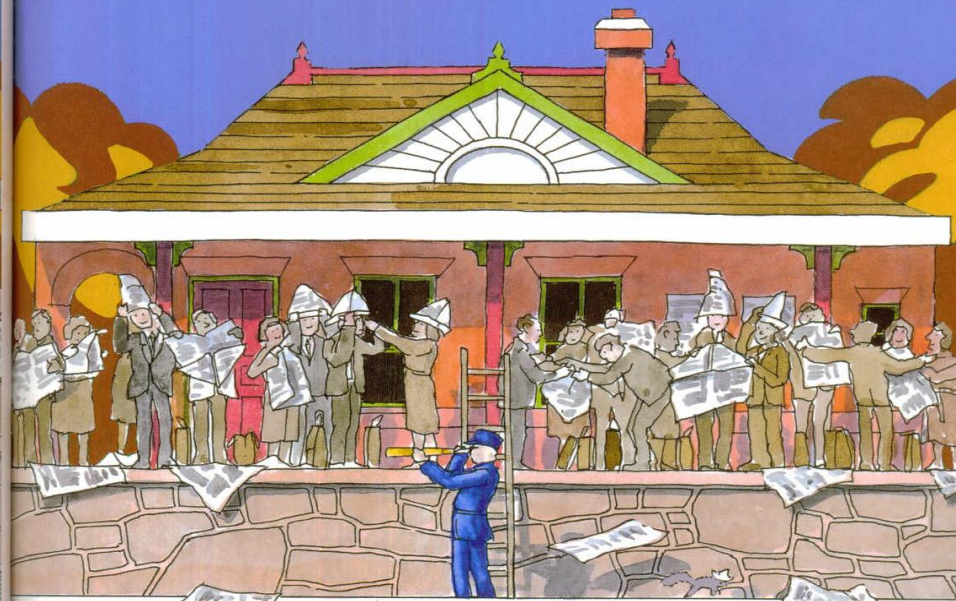


even with a light.





And something else is
drifting by. Snow?
The boy is thrilled.
He opens the window.
The singing gets louder.



Then they started
marching again and,
by the fourth trip
around the living
room, my brother
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He opens the window.
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He sticks out his hand to

catch

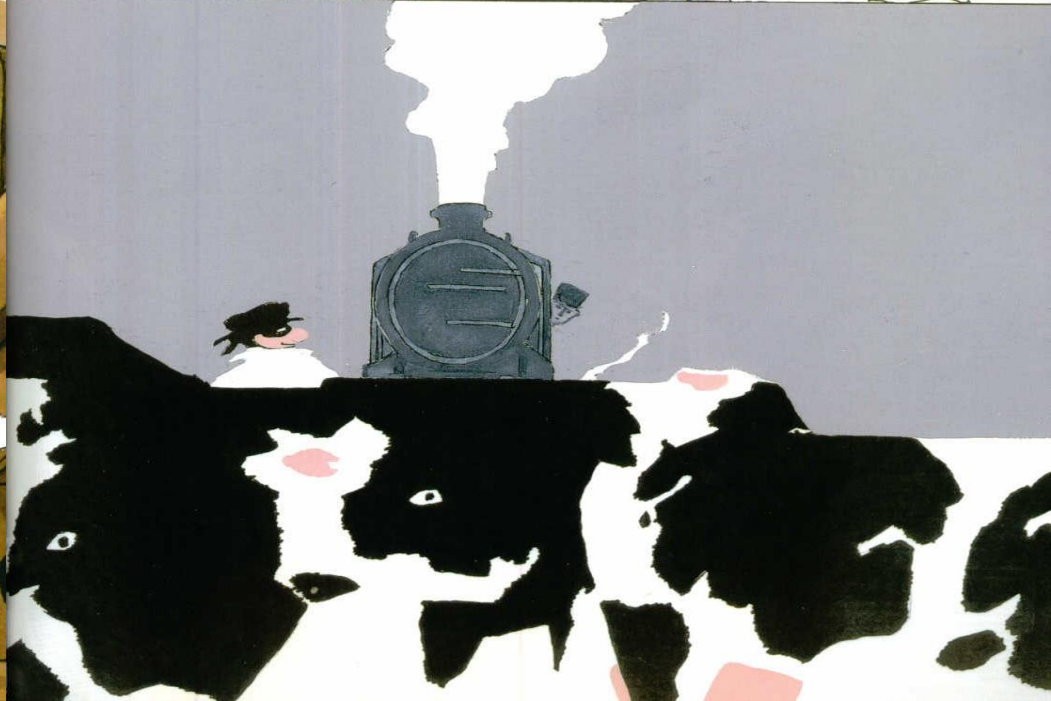
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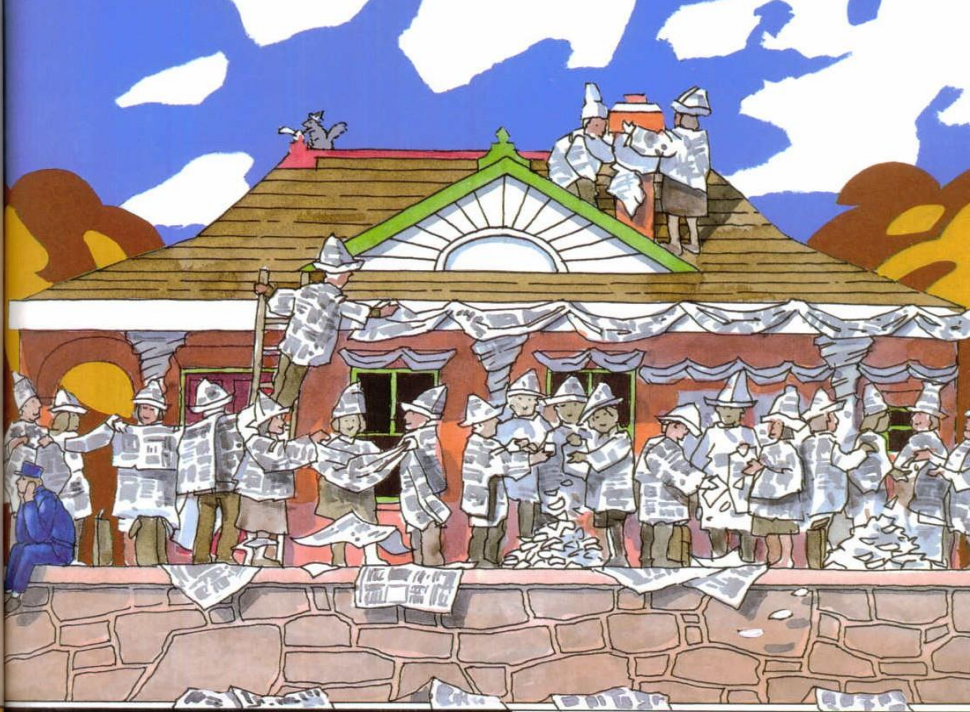
I knew I was the only one who could save them now! I grabbed the mail and stuffed it into my father's hand. He stopped. I held my breath. He shuffled through it. I crossed my fingers. He shuffled again and then ripped it into a million pieces and I was standing in the middle of a blizzard.



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He's about to melt them on his tongue when he notices that each flake is decorated with words and numbers. It isn't snow. It's newspaper!



I was about to give up when my brother suddenly shouted, "Let's go out for dinner." "Good idea," said Mom. "I know just the place." I panicked. I mean, I was still dressed like a turkey! In the house was bad enough—but outside?!

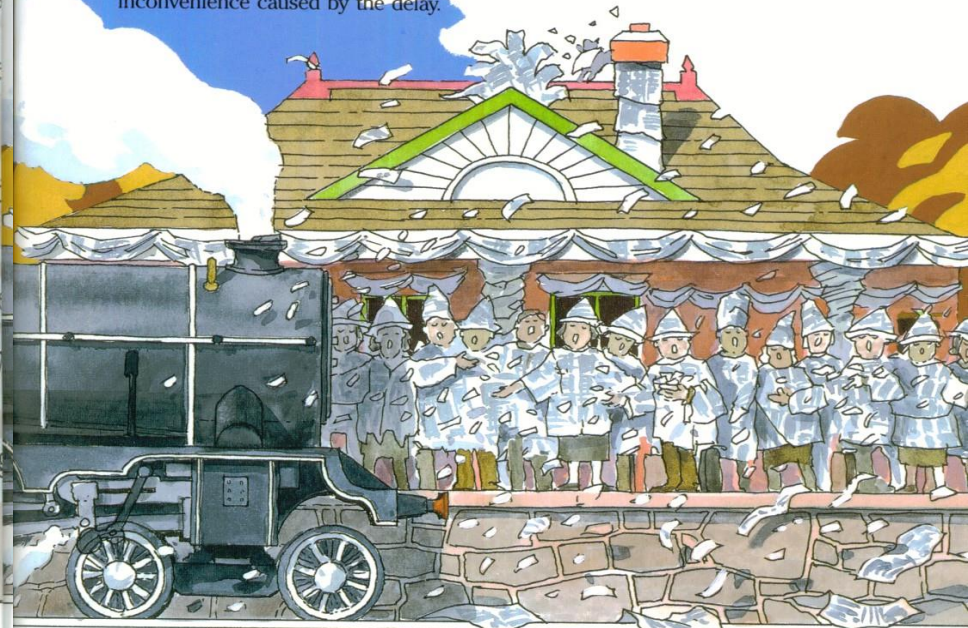


Then he sees them standing
beside the train. Strange creatures
tossing air and torn paper into the
He must have missed
them at first because
their clothes are as gray
as the swirling
cloud.

I tried one last thing.
"But it's a school
night! What about
my homework?" (I
was really desperate!)
"Just give me a
second to brush my
hair," said Mom.
Then Dad looked at
me with this grin
and said, "Maybe we
should leave our
costumes at home."
I couldn't believe it.
Sanity! My brother,
of course, insisted on
wearing his stupid
hat.



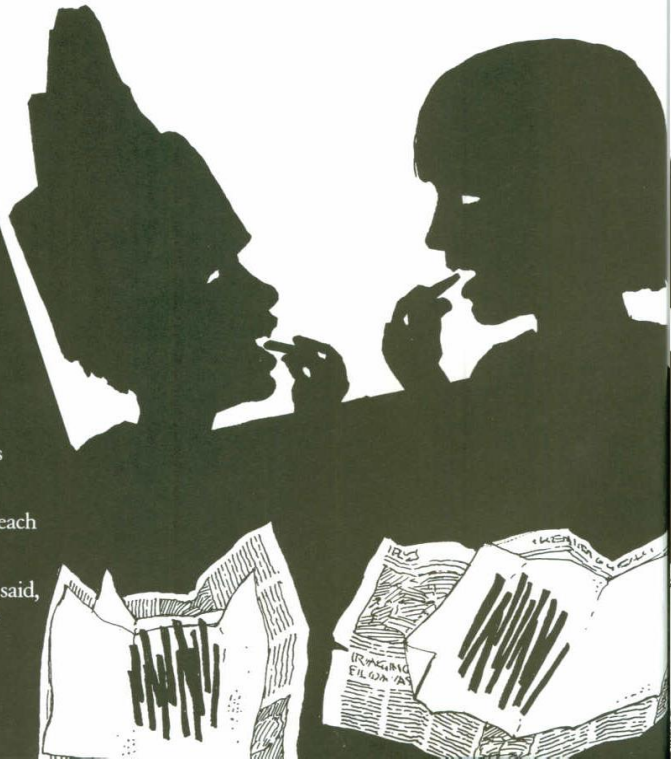
Your attention please. Passengers awaiting the eight-thirteen to the city are advised that that train is now arriving on platform one. Southern Rail regrets any inconvenience caused by the delay.



A piercing whistle
suddenly interrupts
the celebration.

With a jolt, the train begins to move.
Quickly, the boy draws his hand inside,
letting the flakes slip away.
He yawns and settles once more
into the warmth of his seat.

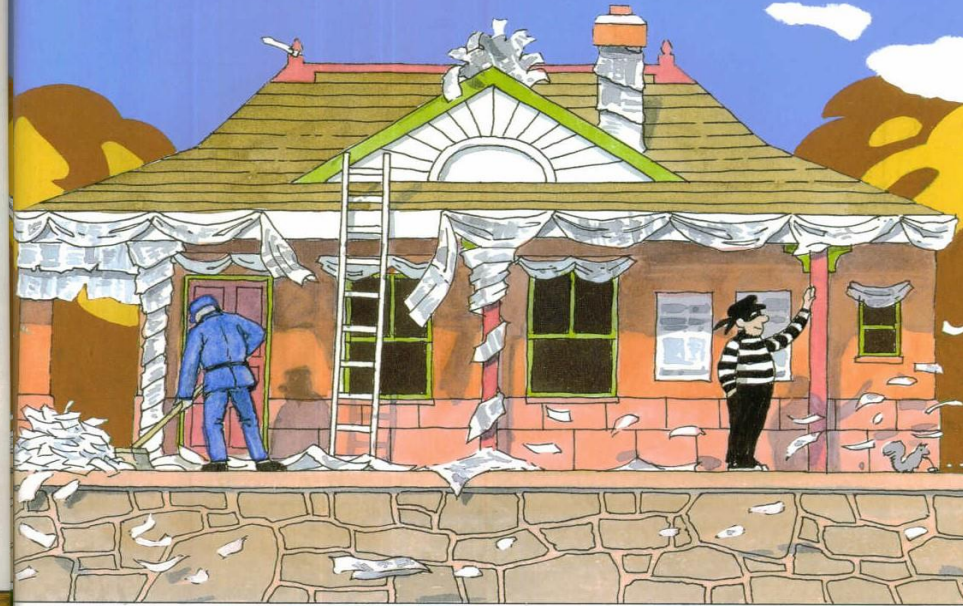
In the car
they started
singing again.
But it was pretty
dark out, so I
figured nobody
could see us. We
pulled up to the fish
and chips shop. Mom
went in. Soon she was
back, laughing and
holding our dinners—each
wrapped, as usual, in
newspaper. "See," she said,
"everybody's doing it!"



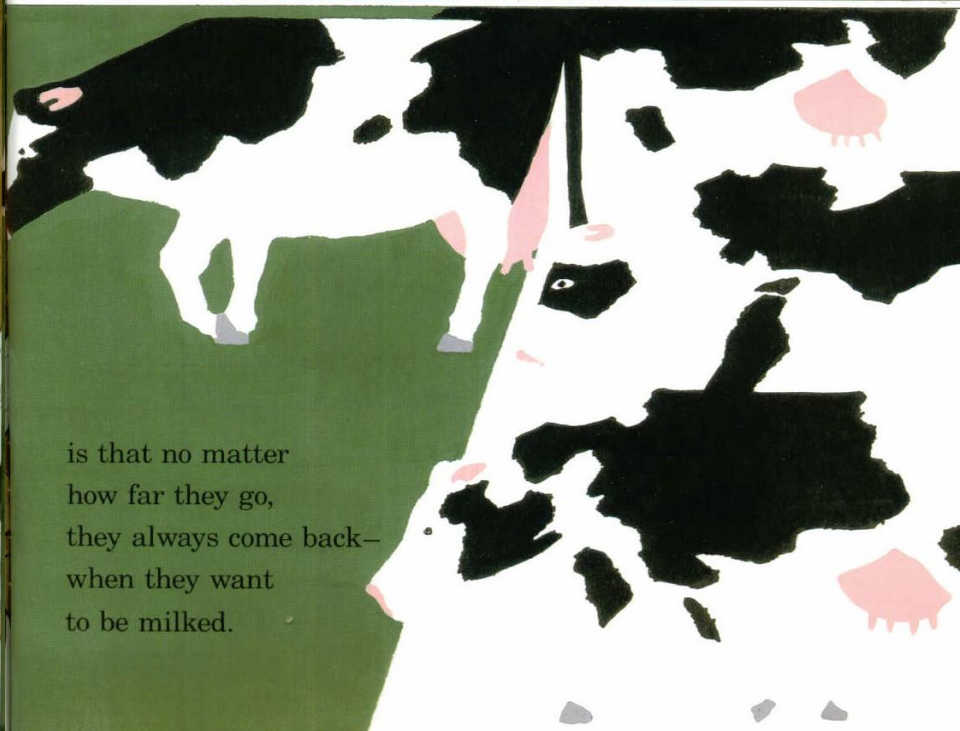
But the best thing
about Holstein cows...



When the boy awakens, the train is drawing alongside a platform beneath an enormous glass roof. He puts his nose up against the window. No cloud. No snow. No singing. Instead, two figures approaching the train. There's something familiar about them. The boy steps onto the platform and they move quickly toward him. "Hello, my angel," his mother says. "What a journey you must have had."

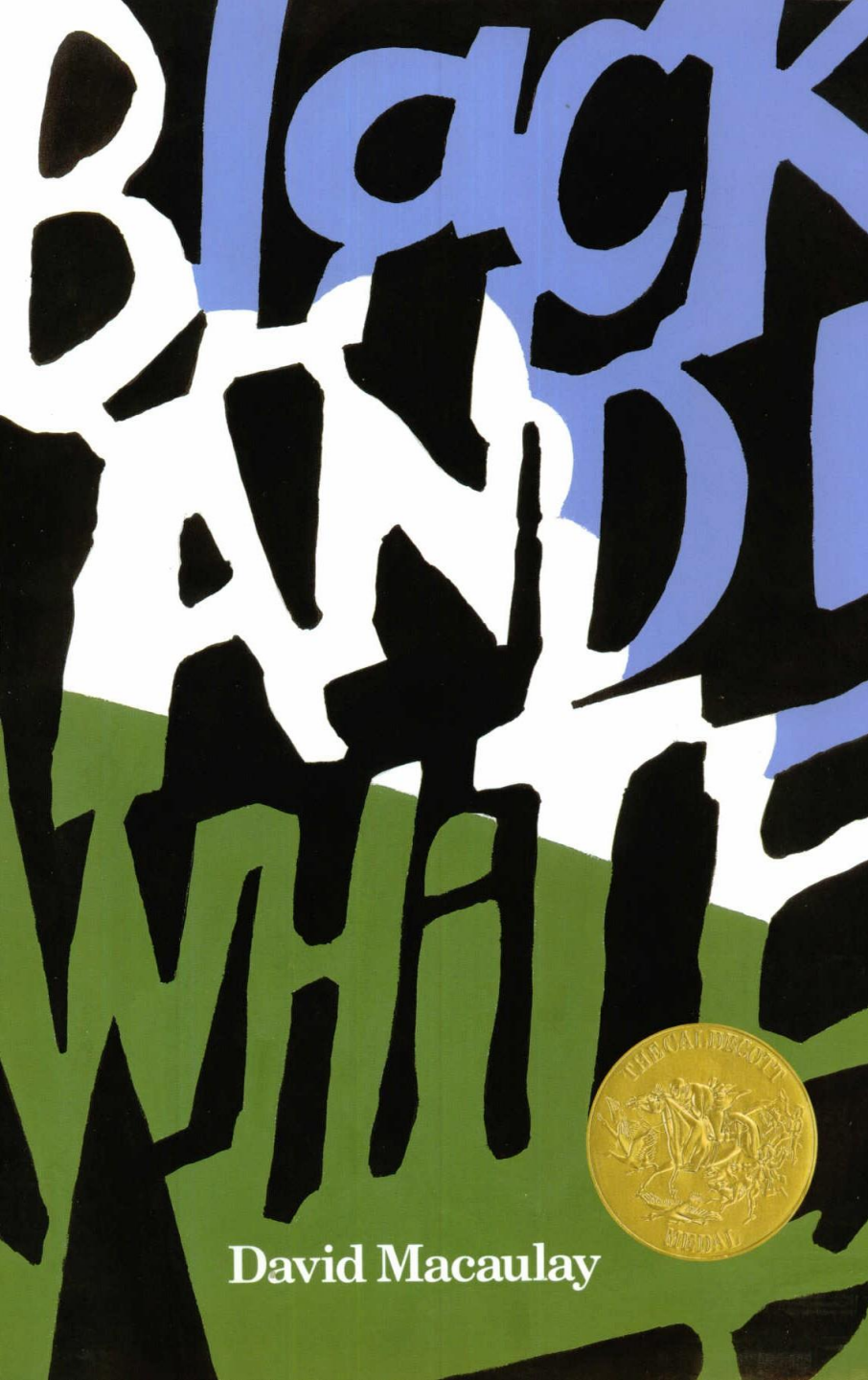


I've got to admit, it was kind of fun in the end—even cleaning up all the papers around the house. But just as I was heading for bed I heard, "Hey, kiddo. What about that homework?" You've got to watch those parents. It's exhausting.



is that no matter how far they go, they always come back—when they want to be milked.

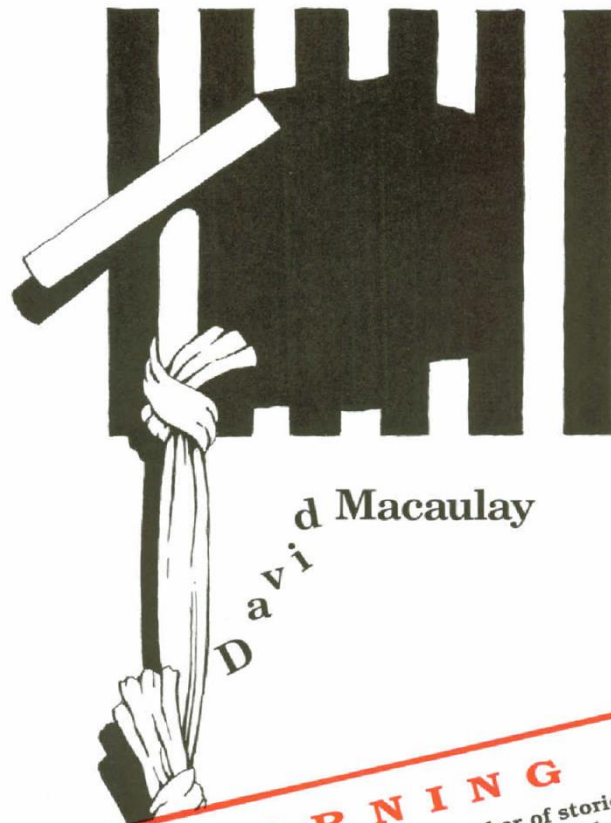
Now let's go back to the beginning and play detective to try and make sense of what we have just read.



David Macaulay



Black and White

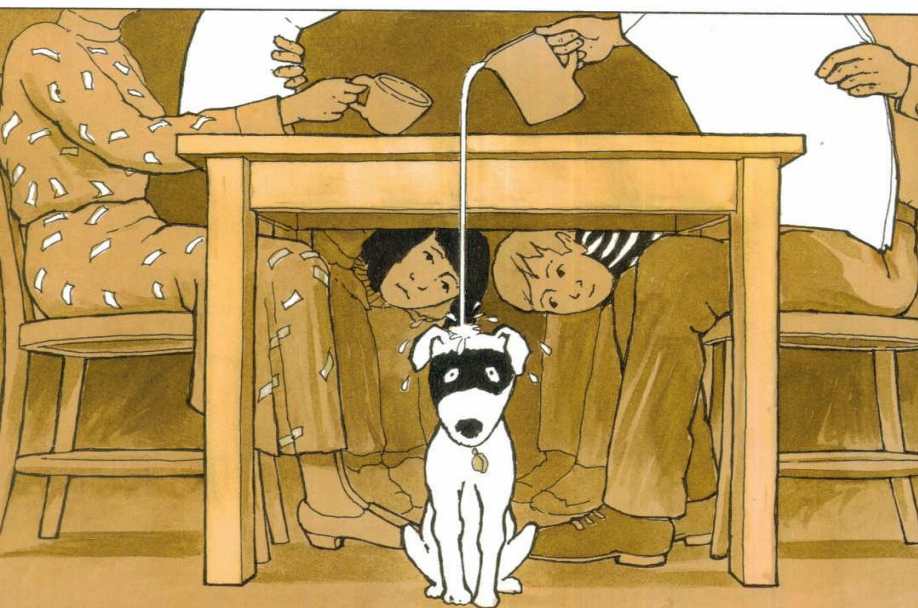


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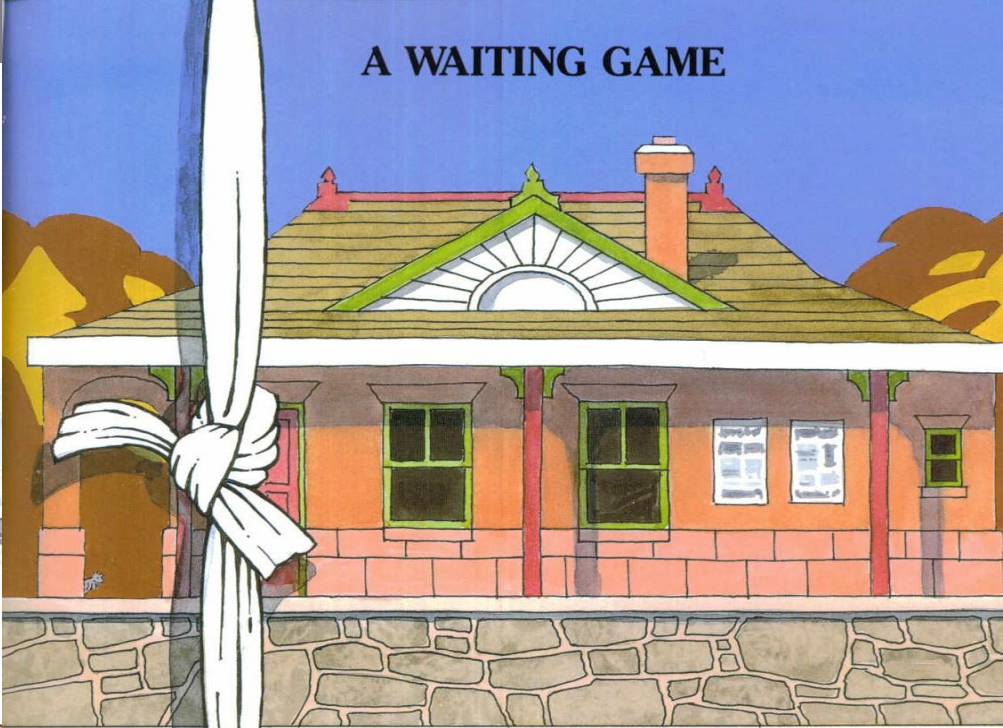
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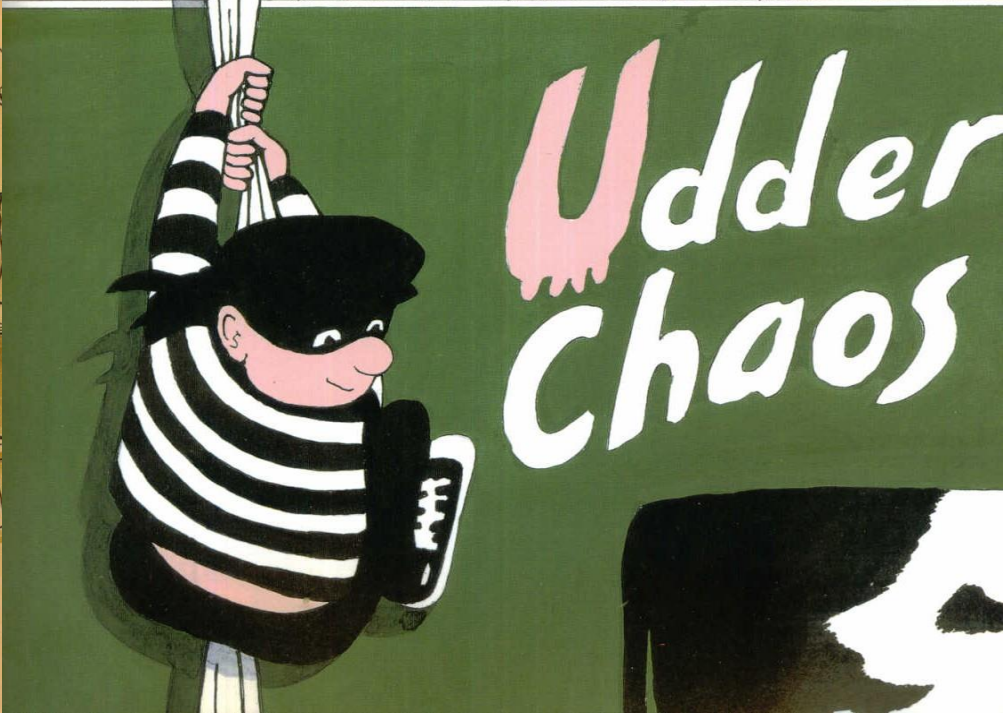
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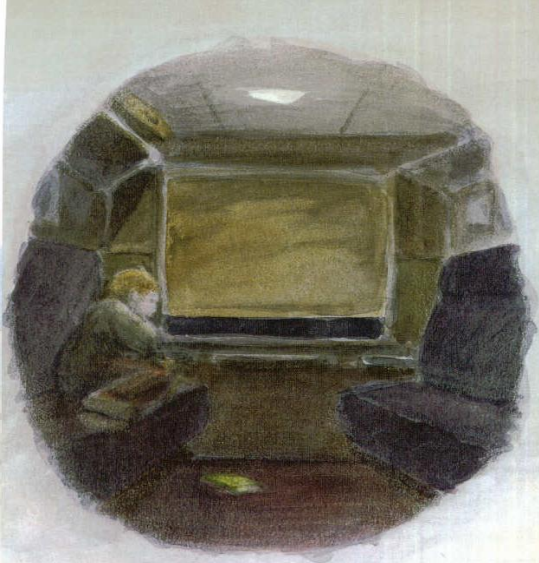
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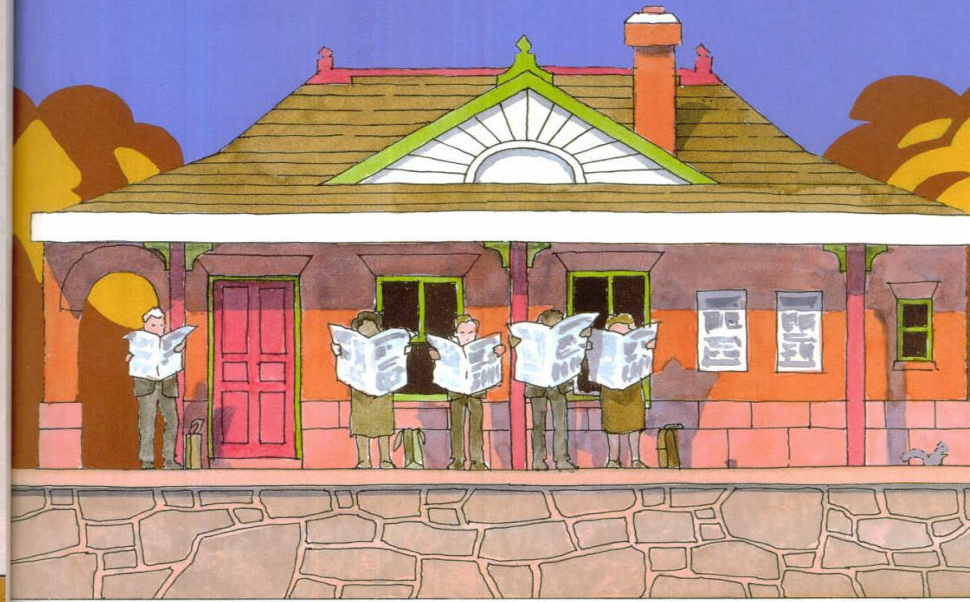
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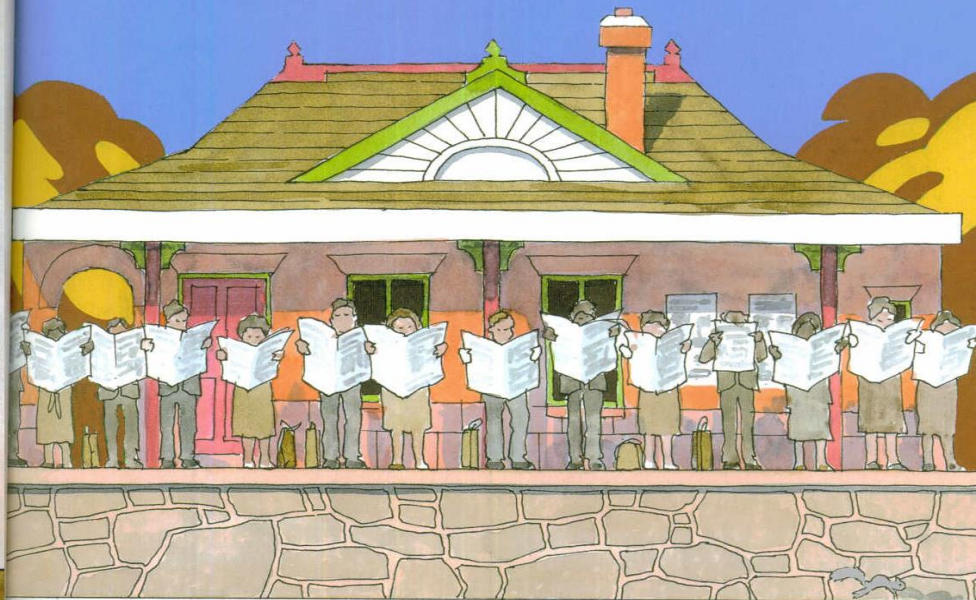


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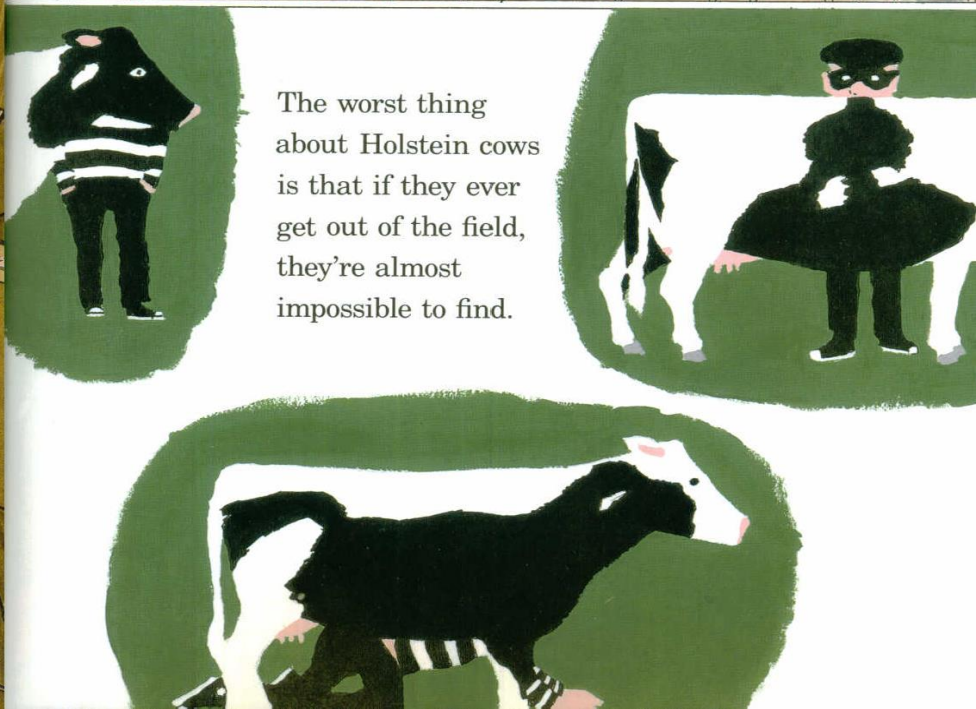




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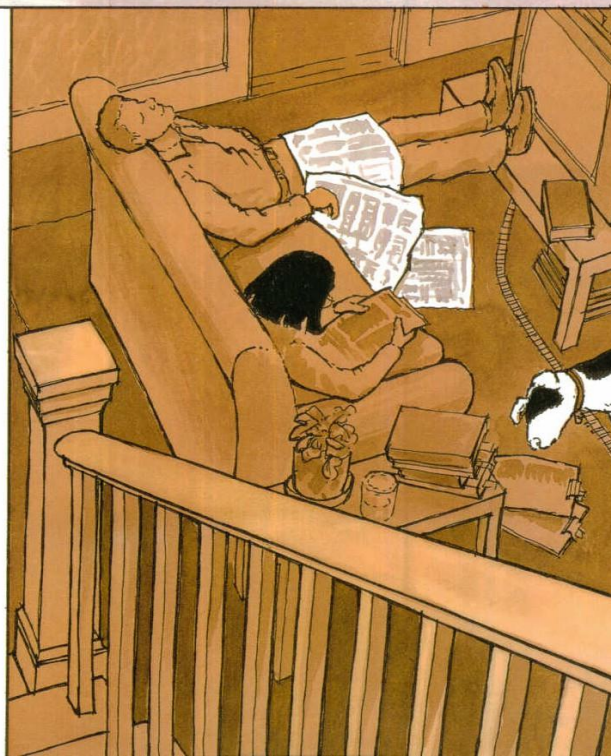
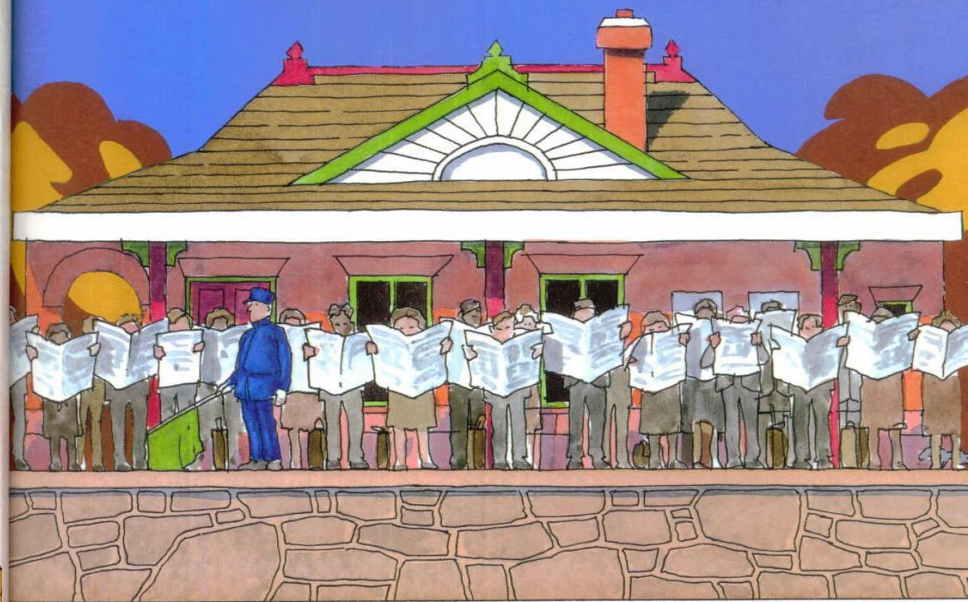


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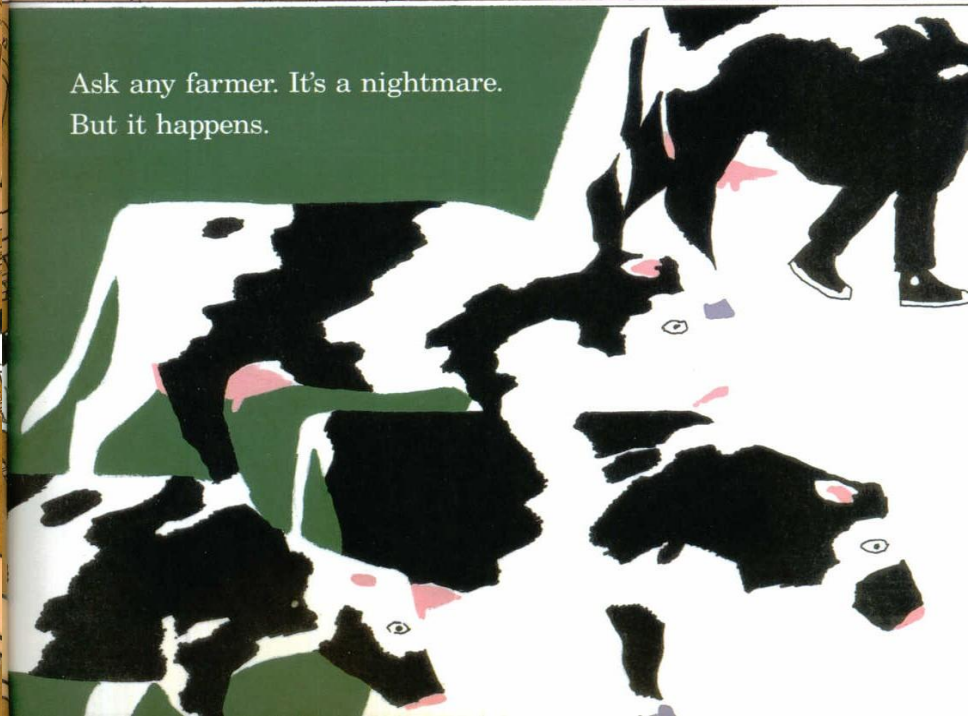


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And every evening
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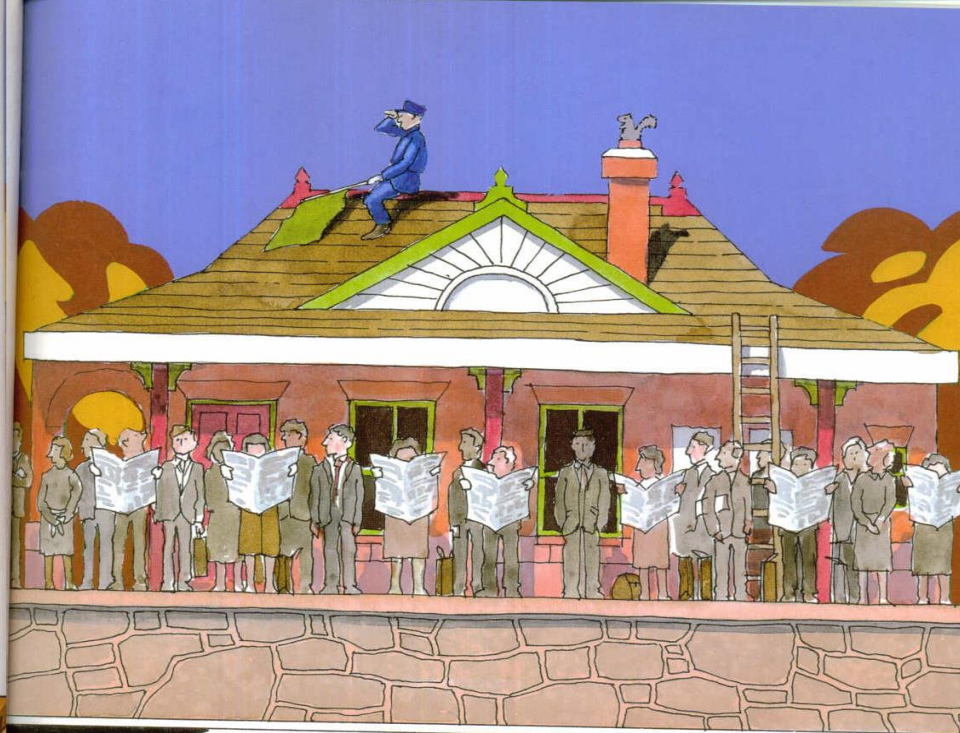
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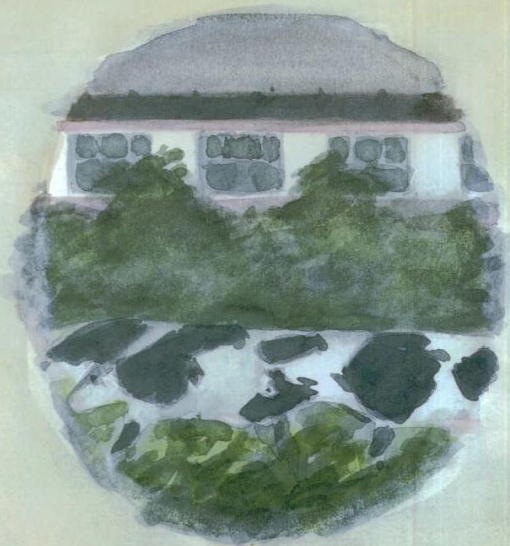




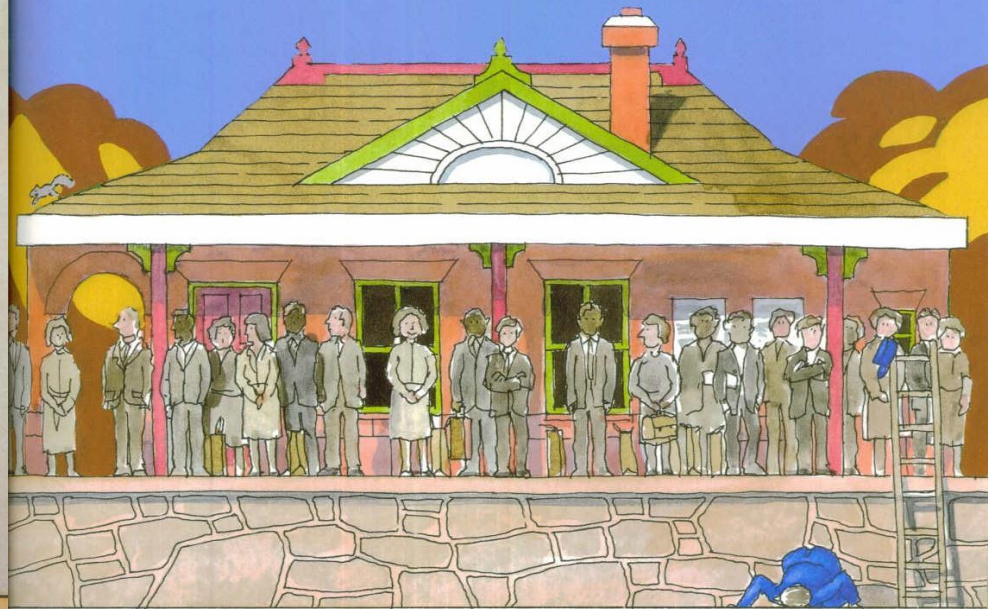
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Slowly, they float off the tracks, down the embankment, and into the bushes that border the railway line.



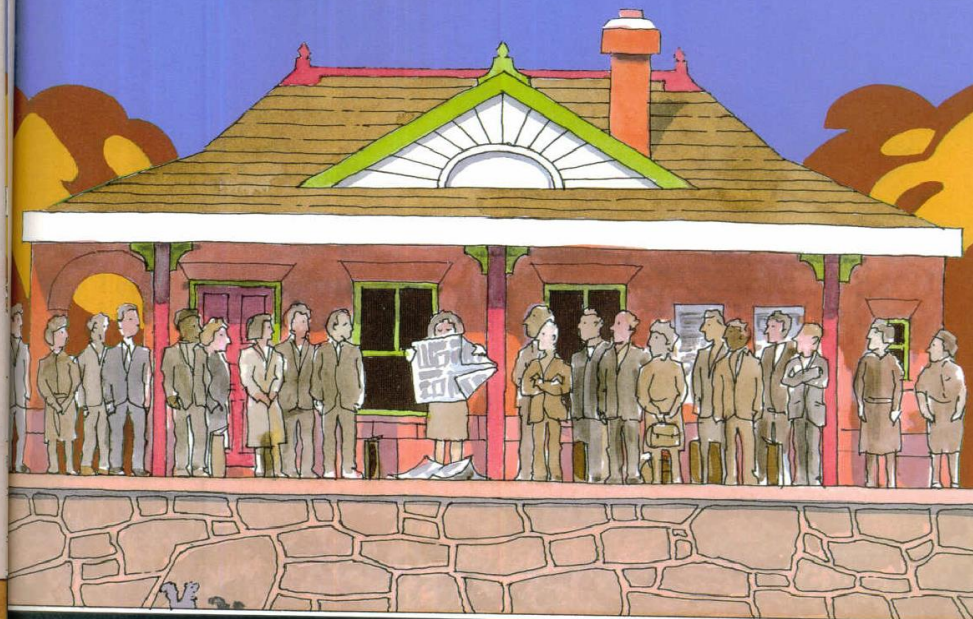
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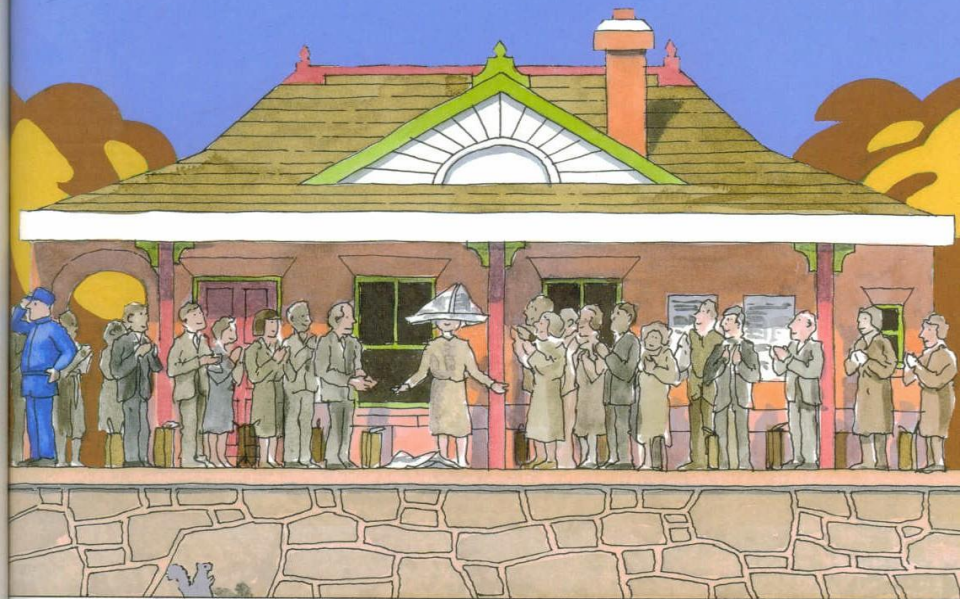
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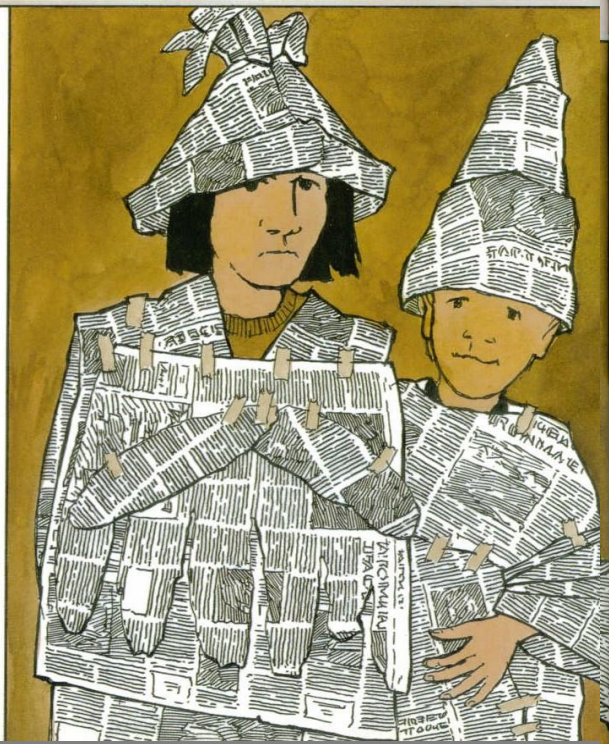
And they're no easier to find at night...



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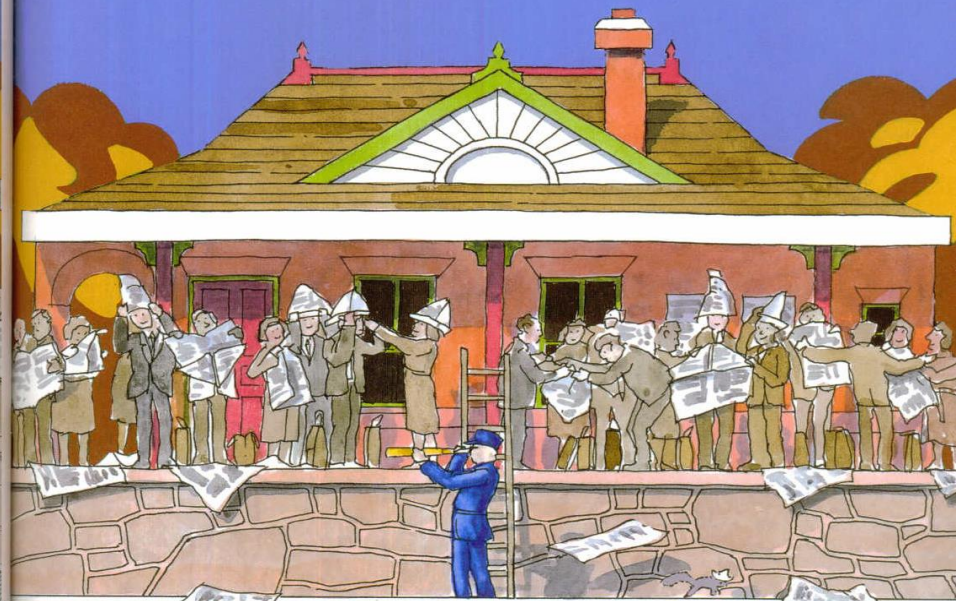


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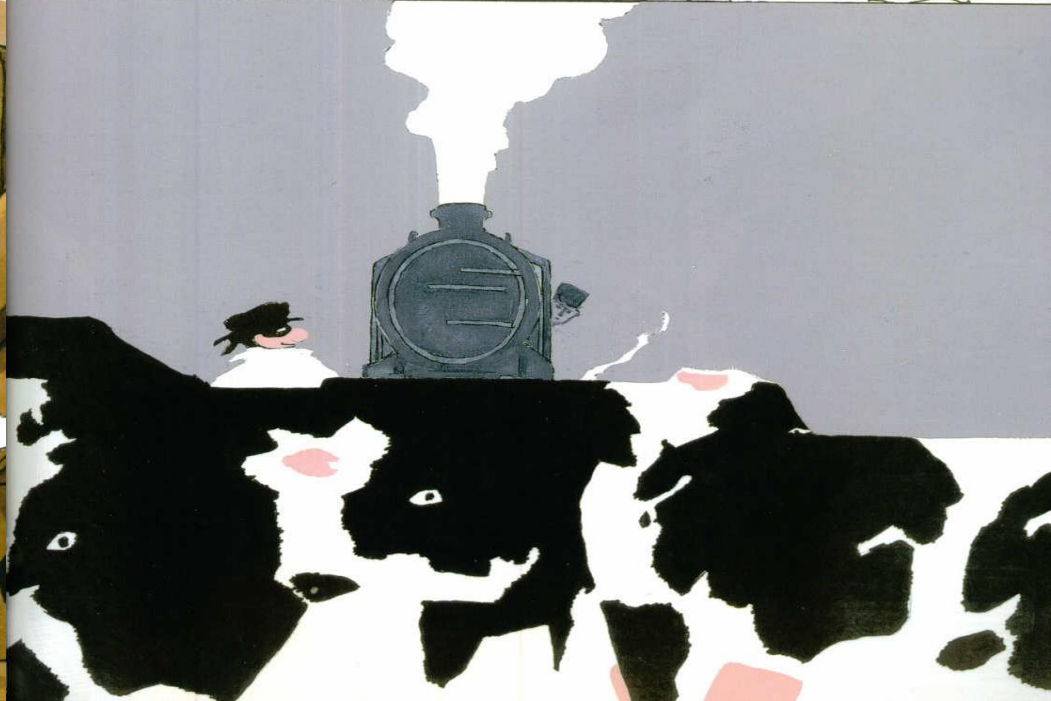
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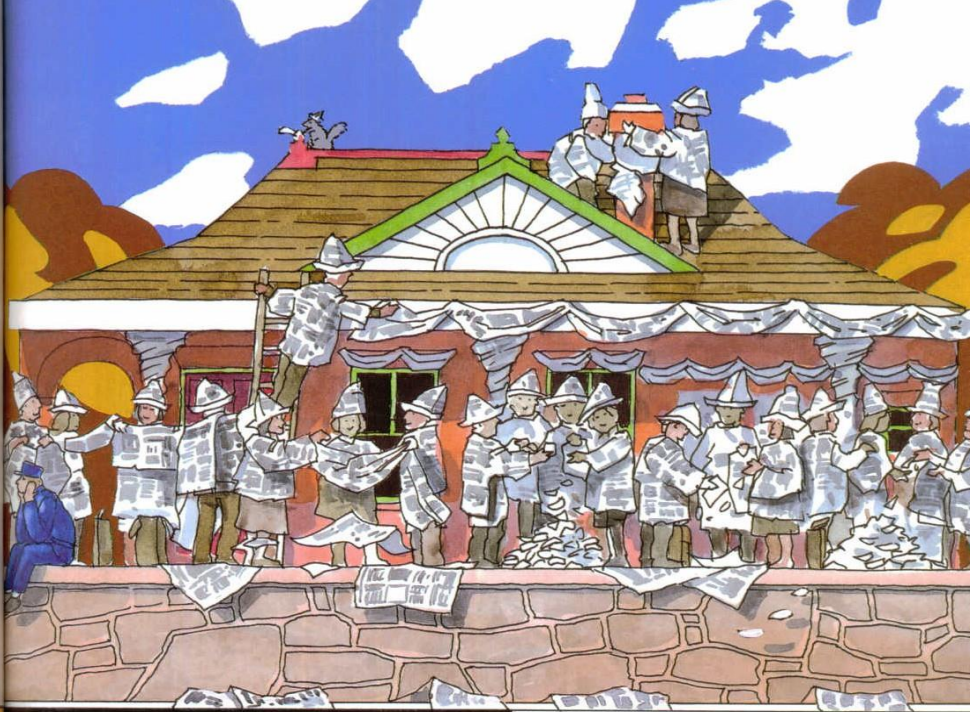
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Your attention please. Passengers still awaiting the arrival of the eight-thirteen to the city are advised that Southern Rail has no idea where the train is and regrets any inconvenience.



He's about to melt them on his tongue when he notices that each flake is decorated with words and numbers. It isn't snow. It's newspaper!



I was about to give up when my brother suddenly shouted, "Let's go out for dinner." "Good idea," said Mom. "I know just the place." I panicked. I mean, I was still dressed like a turkey! In the house was bad enough—but outside?!

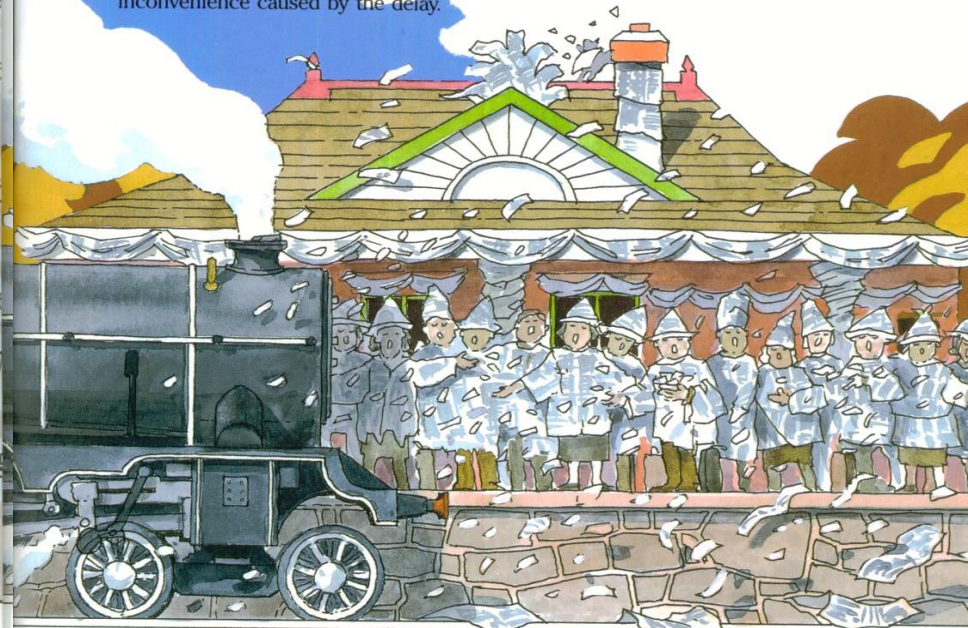


Then he sees them standing
beside the train. Strange creatures
tossing air and torn paper into the
He must have missed
them at first because
their clothes are as gray
as the swirling
cloud.

I tried one last thing.
"But it's a school
night! What about
my homework?" (I
was really desperate!)
"Just give me a
second to brush my
hair," said Mom.
Then Dad looked at
me with this grin
and said, "Maybe we
should leave our
costumes at home."
I couldn't believe it.
Sanity! My brother,
of course, insisted on
wearing his stupid
hat.



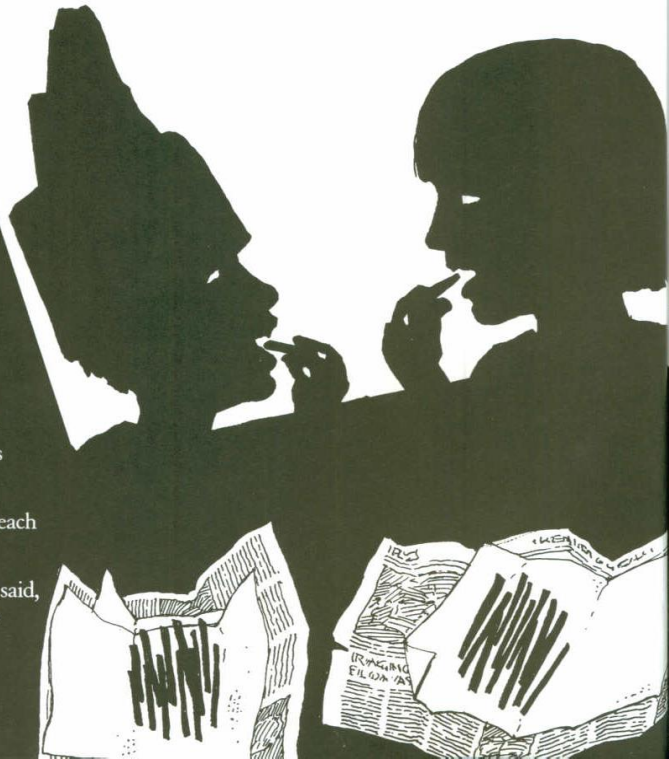
Your attention please. Passengers awaiting the eight-thirteen to the city are advised that that train is now arriving on platform one. Southern Rail regrets any inconvenience caused by the delay.



A piercing whistle
suddenly interrupts
the celebration.

With a jolt, the train begins to move.
Quickly, the boy draws his hand inside,
letting the flakes slip away.
He yawns and settles once more
into the warmth of his seat.

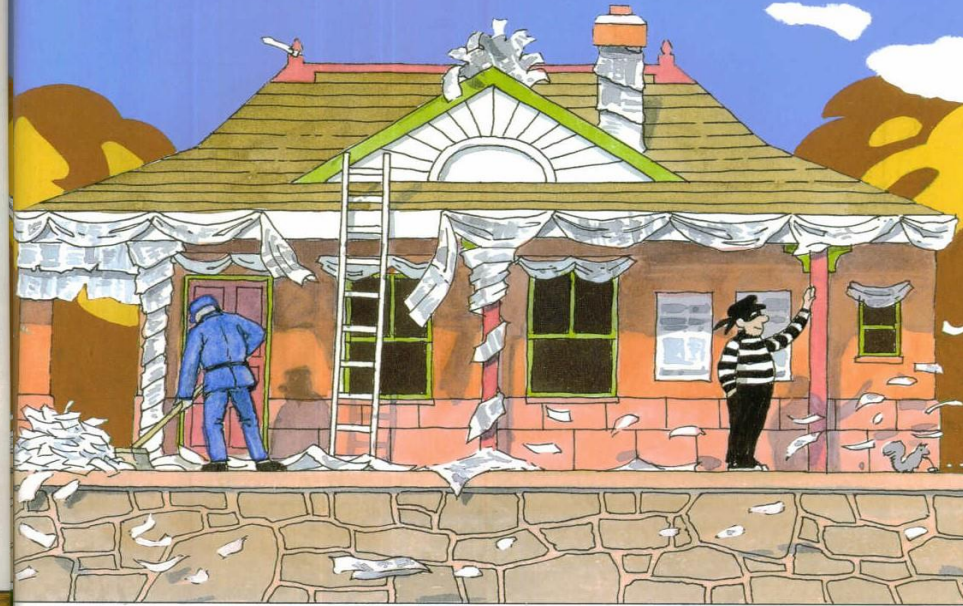
In the car
they started
singing again.
But it was pretty
dark out, so I
figured nobody
could see us. We
pulled up to the fish
and chips shop. Mom
went in. Soon she was
back, laughing and
holding our dinners—each
wrapped, as usual, in
newspaper. "See," she said,
"everybody's doing it!"



But the best thing
about Holstein cows...



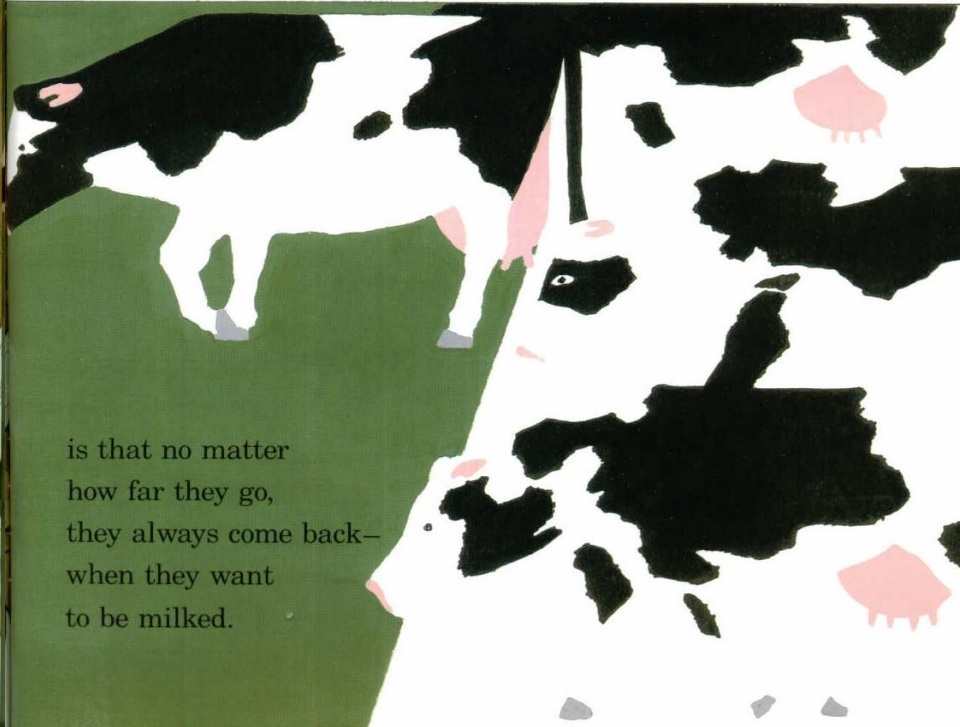
When the boy awakens, the train is drawing alongside a platform beneath an enormous glass roof. He puts his nose up against the window. No cloud. No snow. No singing. Instead, two figures approaching the train. There's something familiar about them. The boy steps onto the platform and they move quickly toward him. "Hello, my angel," his mother says. "What a journey you must have had."



I've got to admit, it was kind of fun in the end—even cleaning up all the papers around the house. But just as I was heading for bed I heard, "Hey, kiddo. What about that homework?" You've got to watch those parents. It's exhausting.



is that no matter how far they go, they always come back—when they want to be milked.



The relationship between pictures and text in *Black and White* is fundamentally postmodern and metafictional. The text presents four apparently separate narratives, while the illustrations undermine those boundaries and encourage readers to discover hidden relationships. Rather than revealing a single meaning, Macaulay uses the tension between words and pictures to explore perception, interpretation, and the idea that reality is never as simple as "black and white."

Infact, perhaps the most important interpretation is contained in the title itself. The book repeatedly demonstrates that:

- **simple explanations are inadequate**
 - **stories have multiple meanings**
 - **reality depends on perspective**
 - **certainty is difficult**

The title becomes ironic because the book is actually about ambiguity.

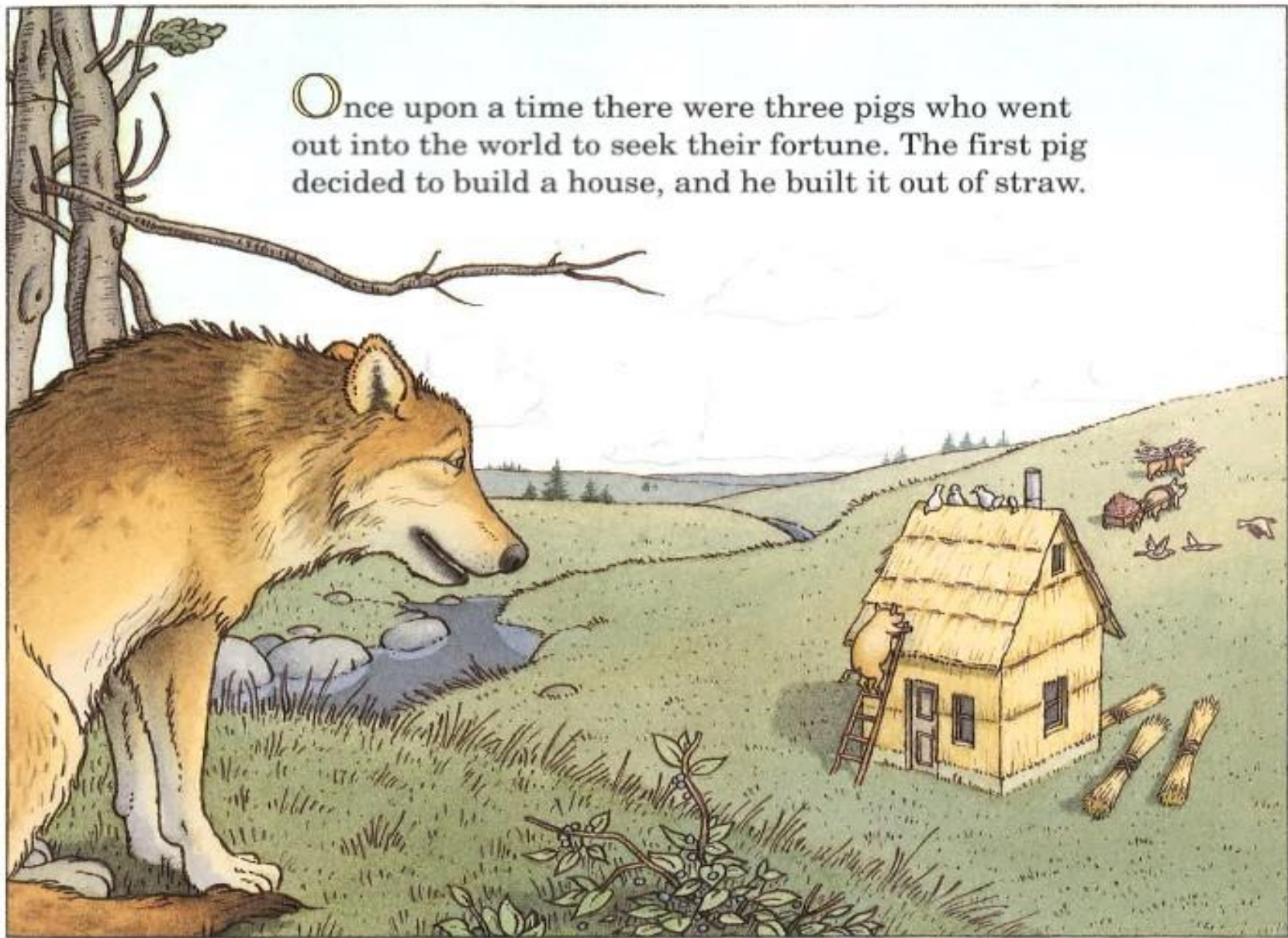
In postmodern picture books, authors and illustrators are playing with multiple story lines, narrators, and perspectives to create books that are exciting because of their unpredictability.

THE THREE PIGS



DAVID WIESNER

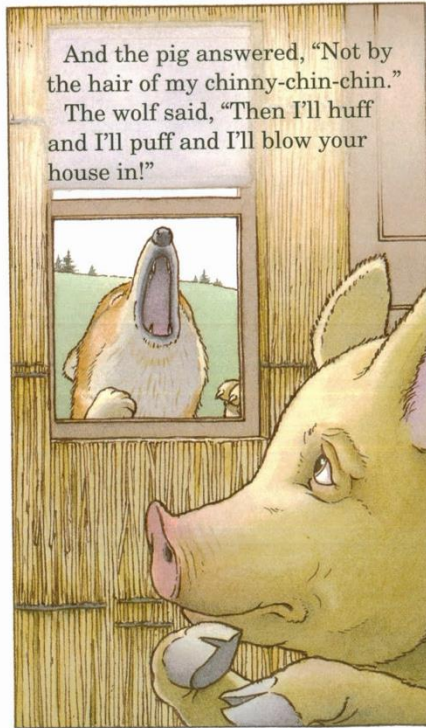
Once upon a time there were three pigs who went out into the world to seek their fortune. The first pig decided to build a house, and he built it out of straw.



Along came a wolf, who knocked at the door and said, "Little pig, little pig, let me come in."



And the pig answered, "Not by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin."
The wolf said, "Then I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house in!"



So the wolf huffed, and he puffed, and he blew the house in . . .



. . . and ate the pig up.



Now, the second pig built his house out of sticks.
Along came the wolf, who knocked at the door and
said, "Little pig, little pig, let me come in."



And the pig answered, "Not by
the hair of my chinny-chin-chin."
The wolf said, "Then I'll huff
and I'll puff and I'll blow your
house in!"



So the wolf huffed, and he puffed,
and he blew the house in . . .
and ate the pig up.



The third pig built his house out of bricks.

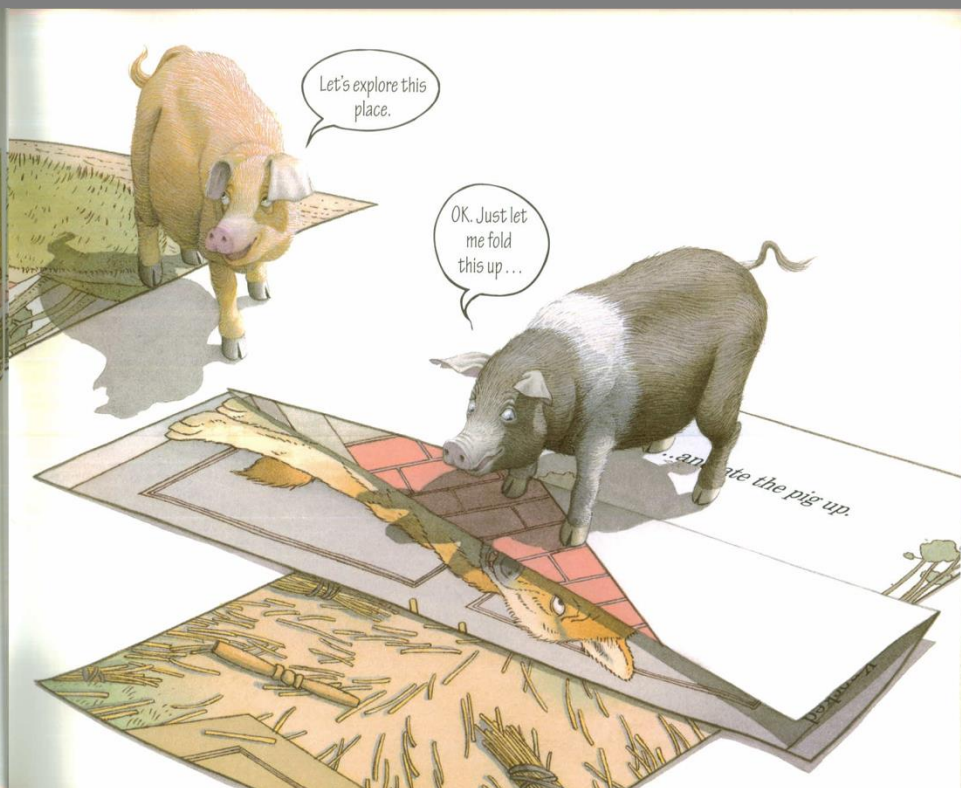
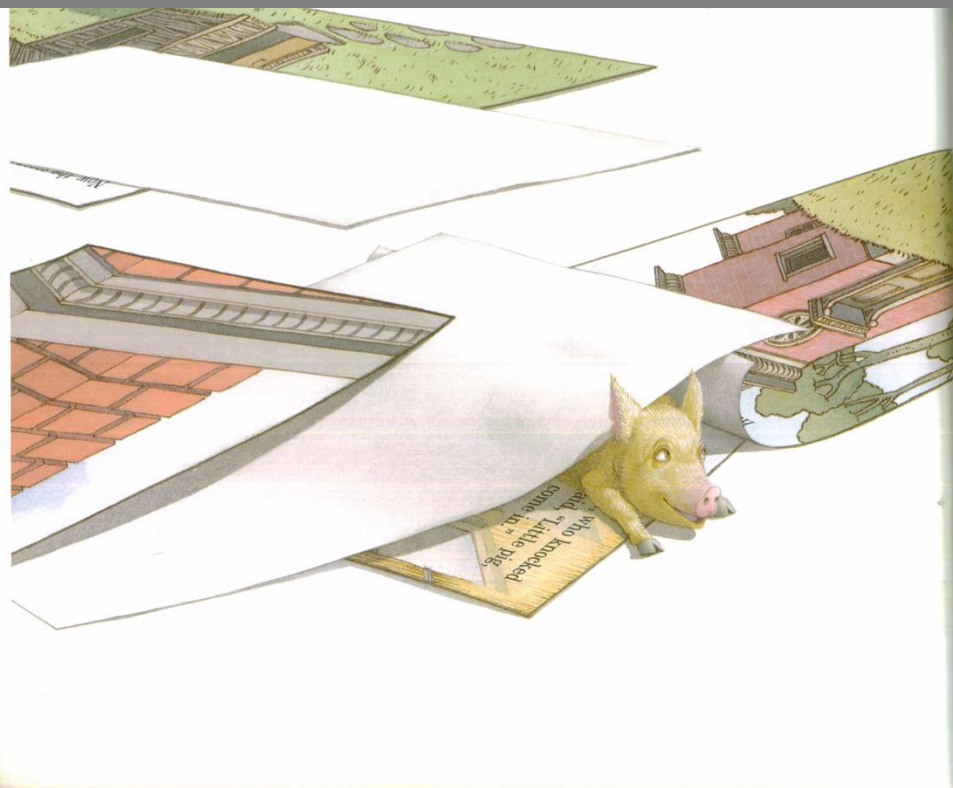
Along came a wolf
at the door and said, "Let
me come in."

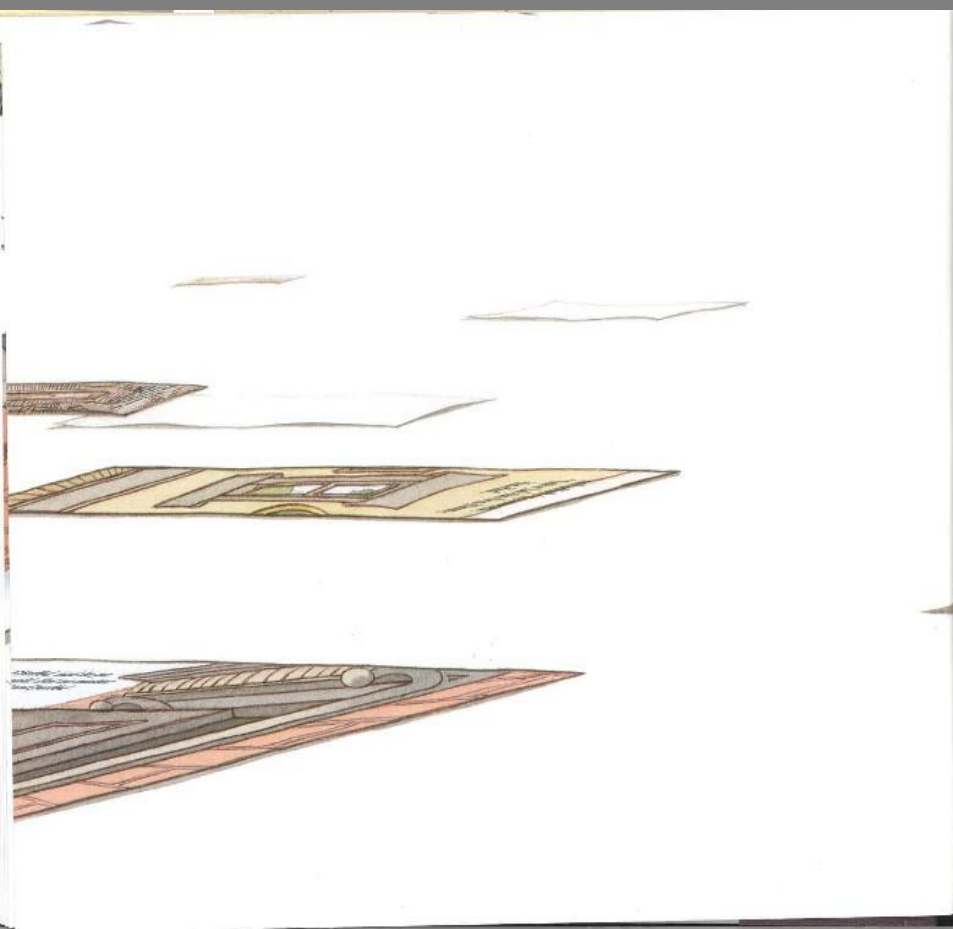
We got away
from that wolf
... for good.

Wow! Why didn't
you two get
eaten up?

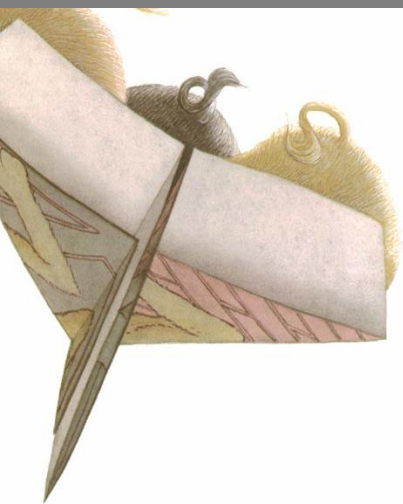


Now we have
room to move.
Watch this—
oops!

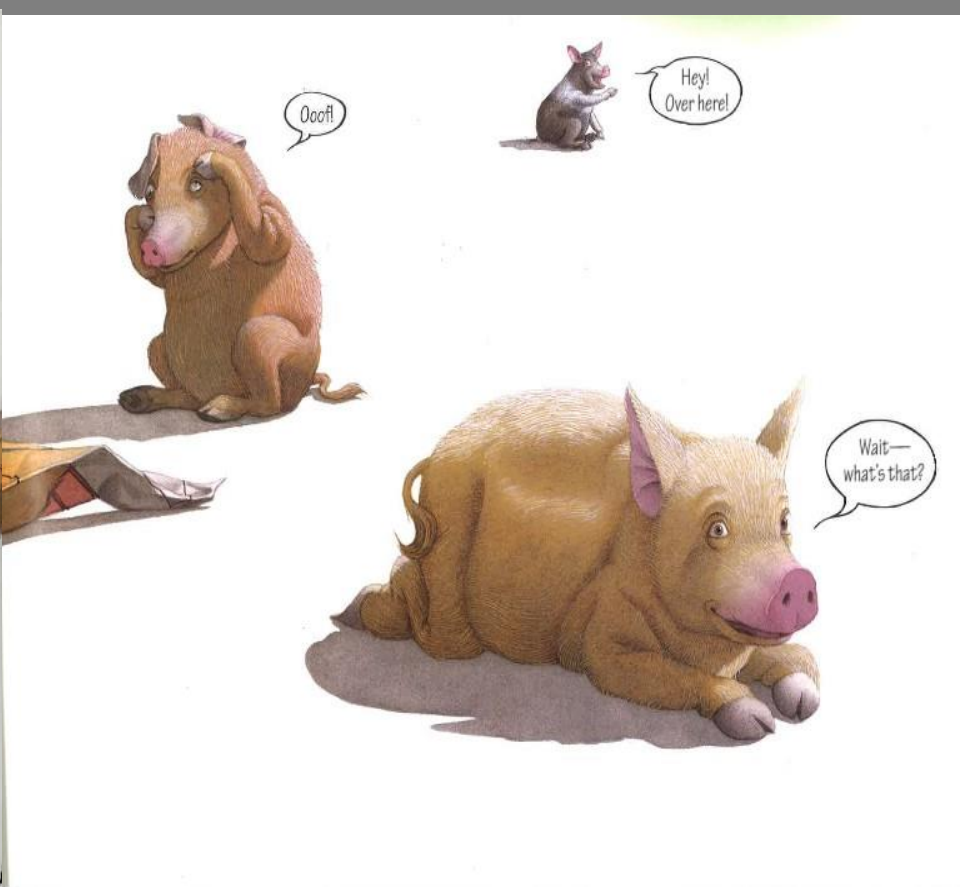


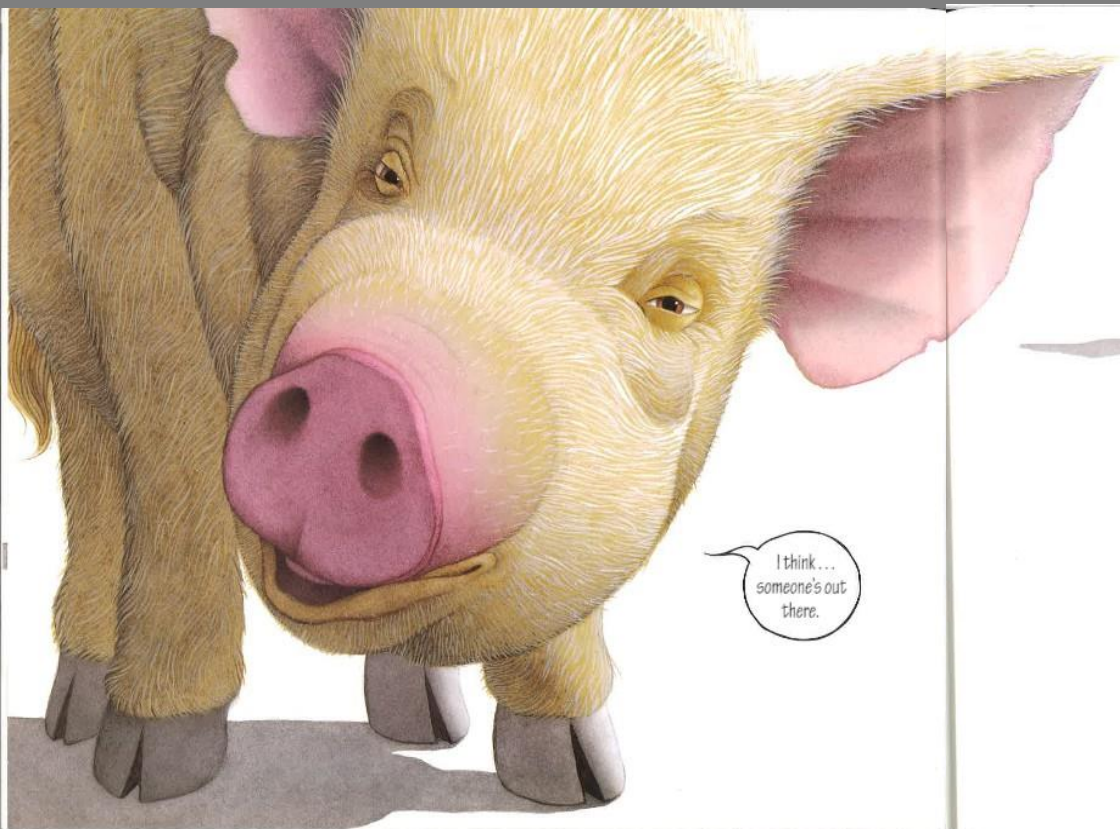




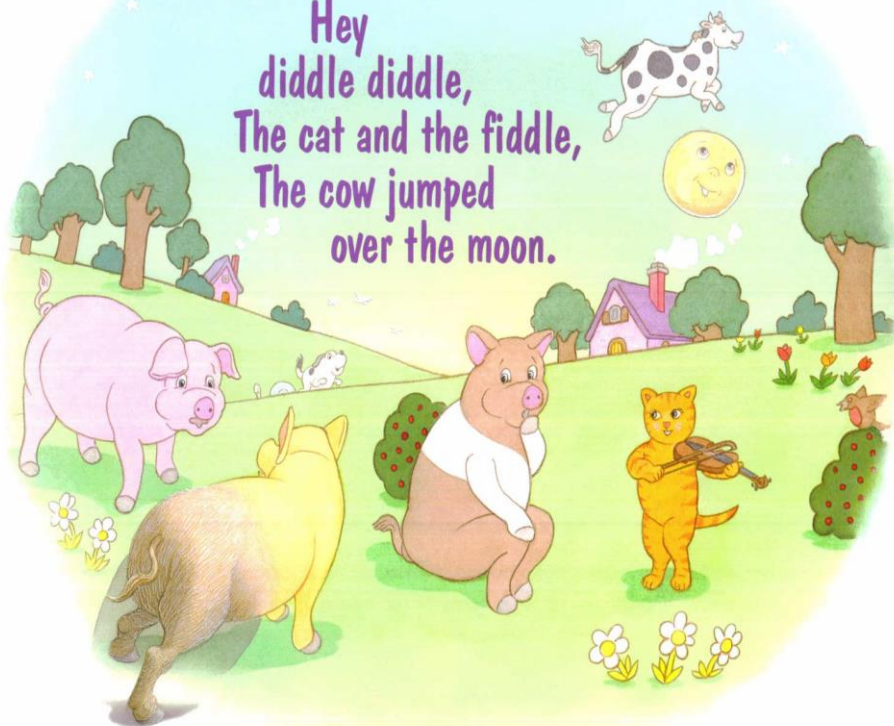




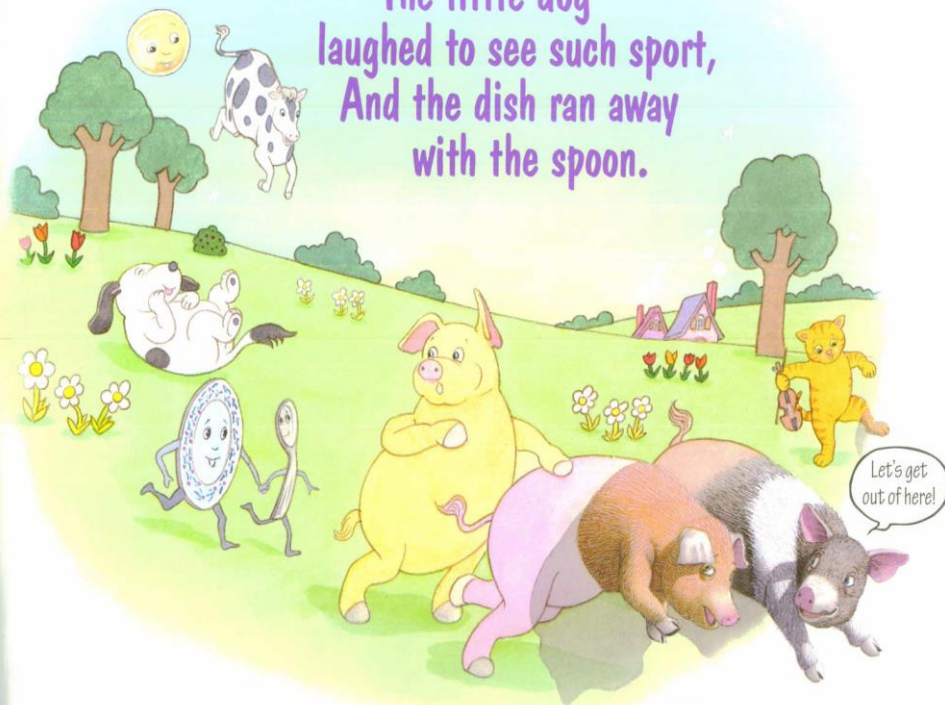




Hey
diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped
over the moon.



The little dog
laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away
with the spoon.

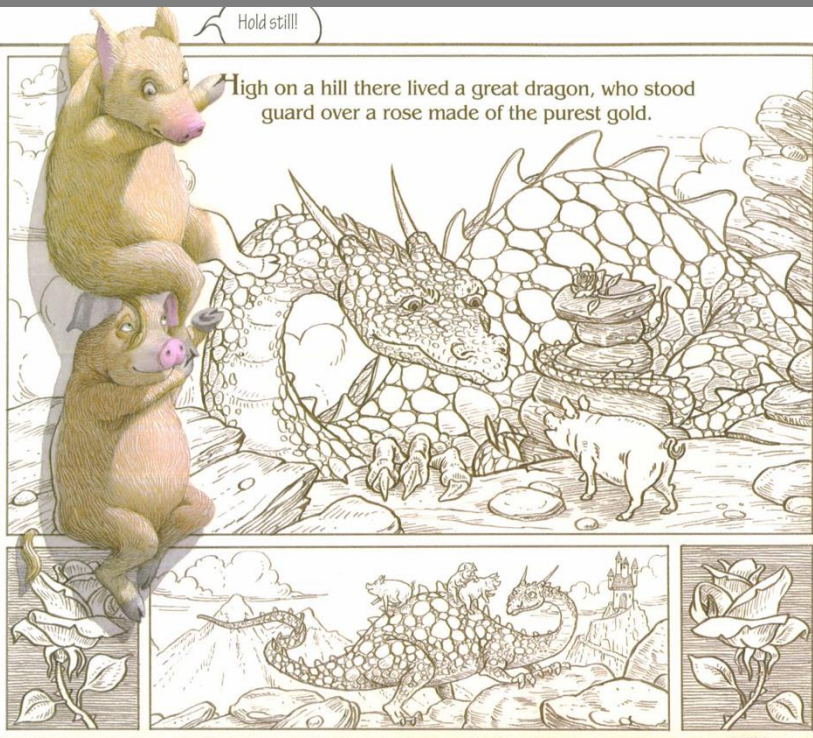




High on a hill then
guard over a r

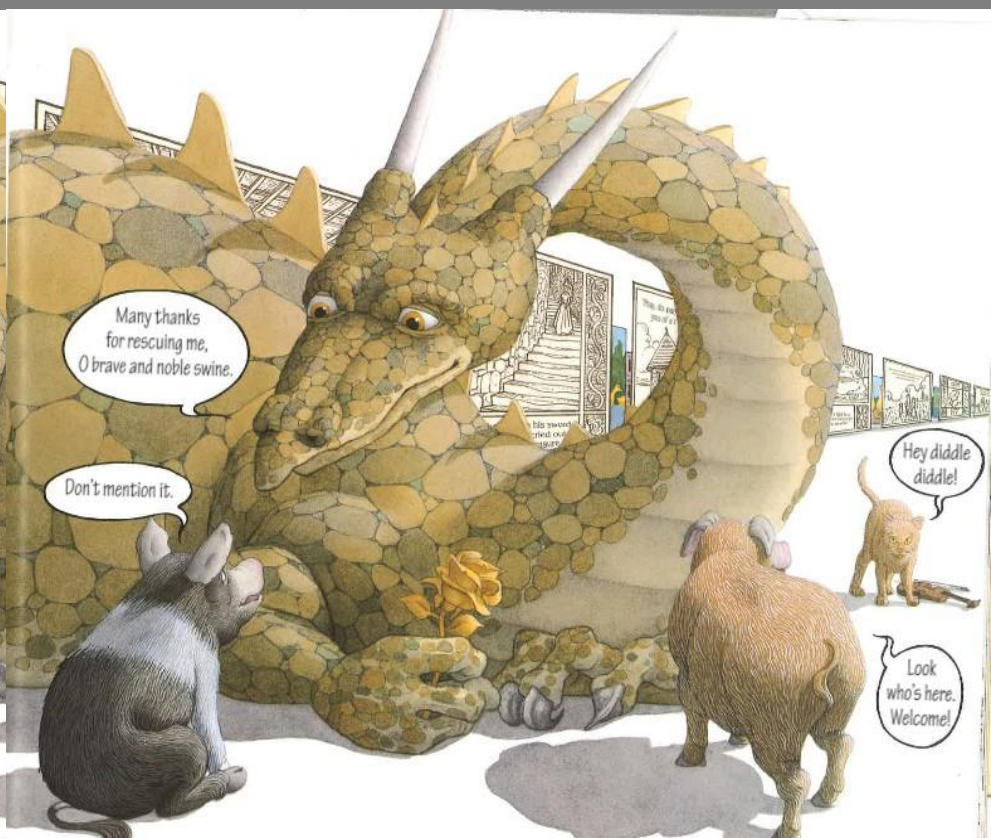
Hold still!

High on a hill there lived a great dragon, who stood guard over a rose made of the purest gold.

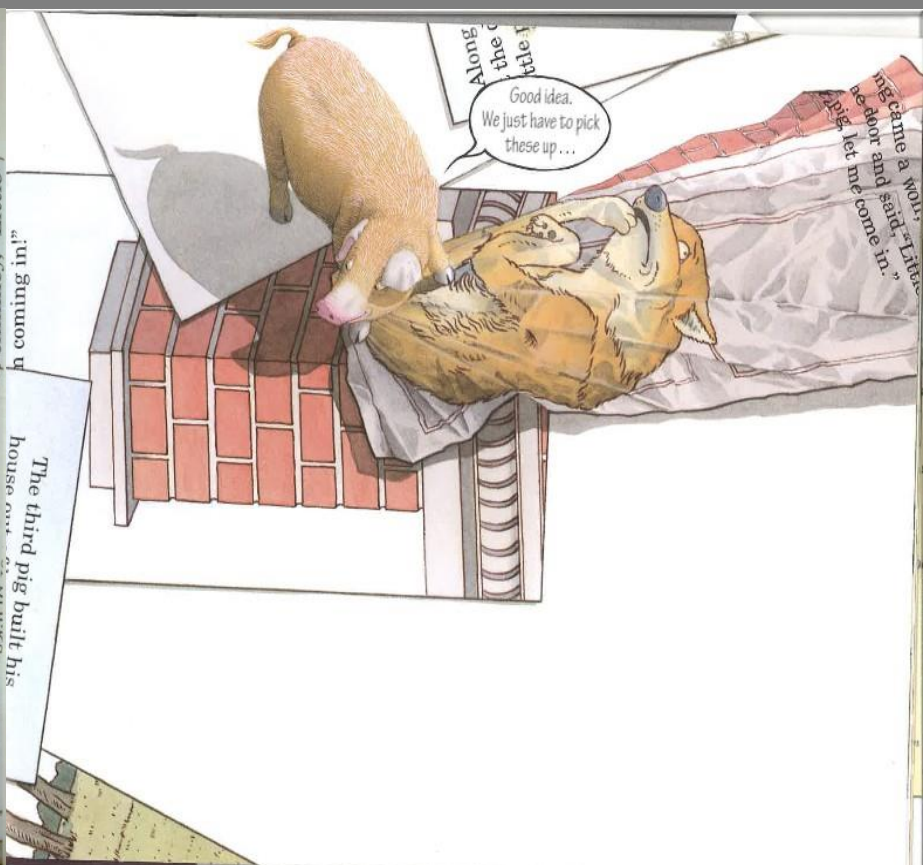


The king was determined to own this treasure. So he sent his eldest son to slay the dragon and bring back the golden rose.









bird pig built his
out of bricks.



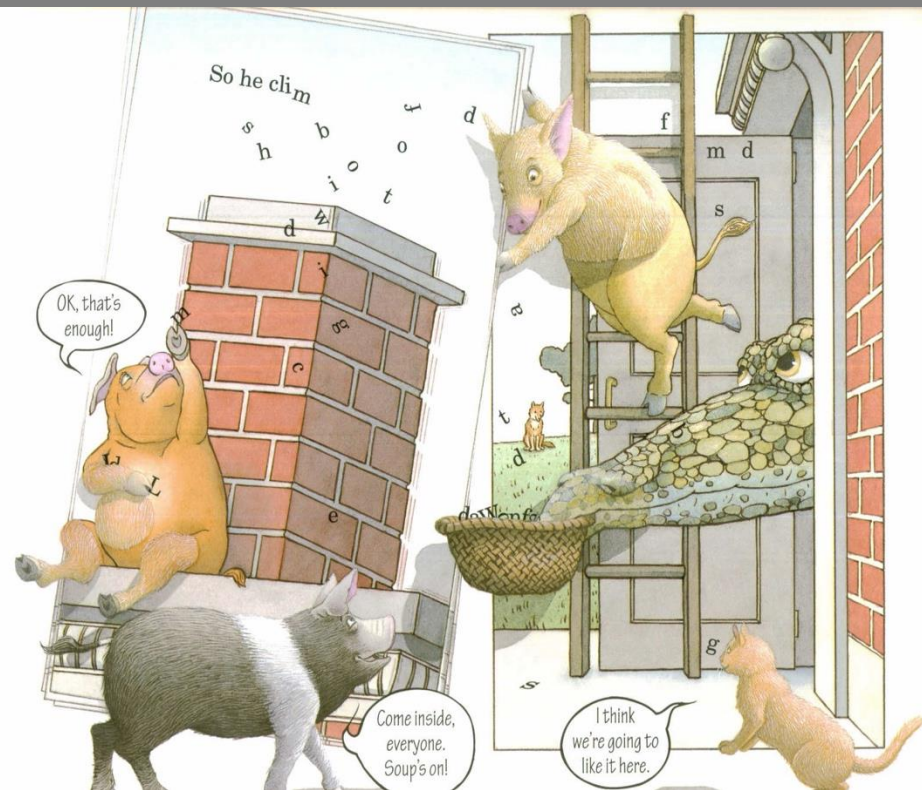
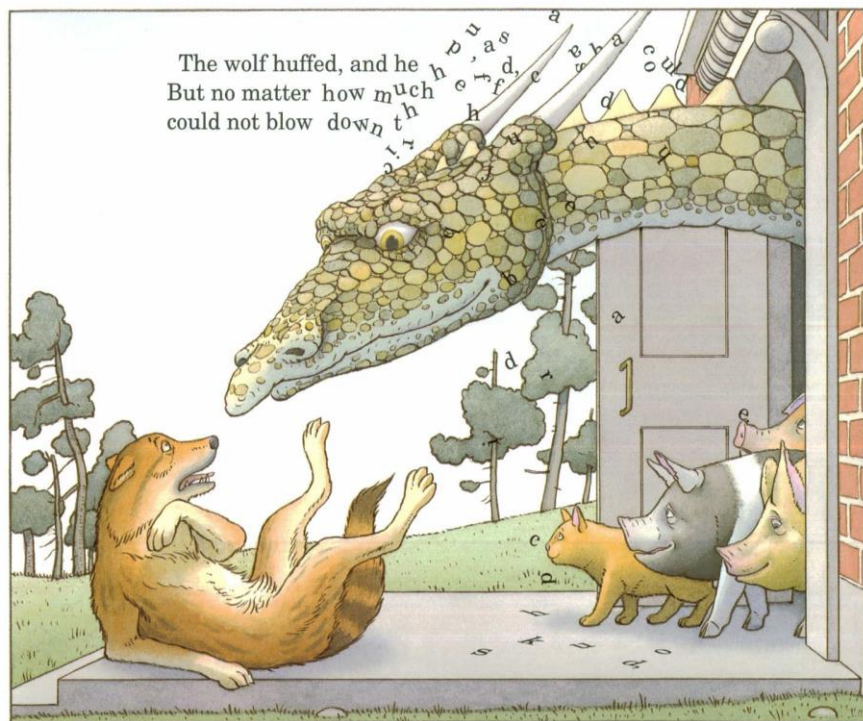
Along came a wolf, who knocked
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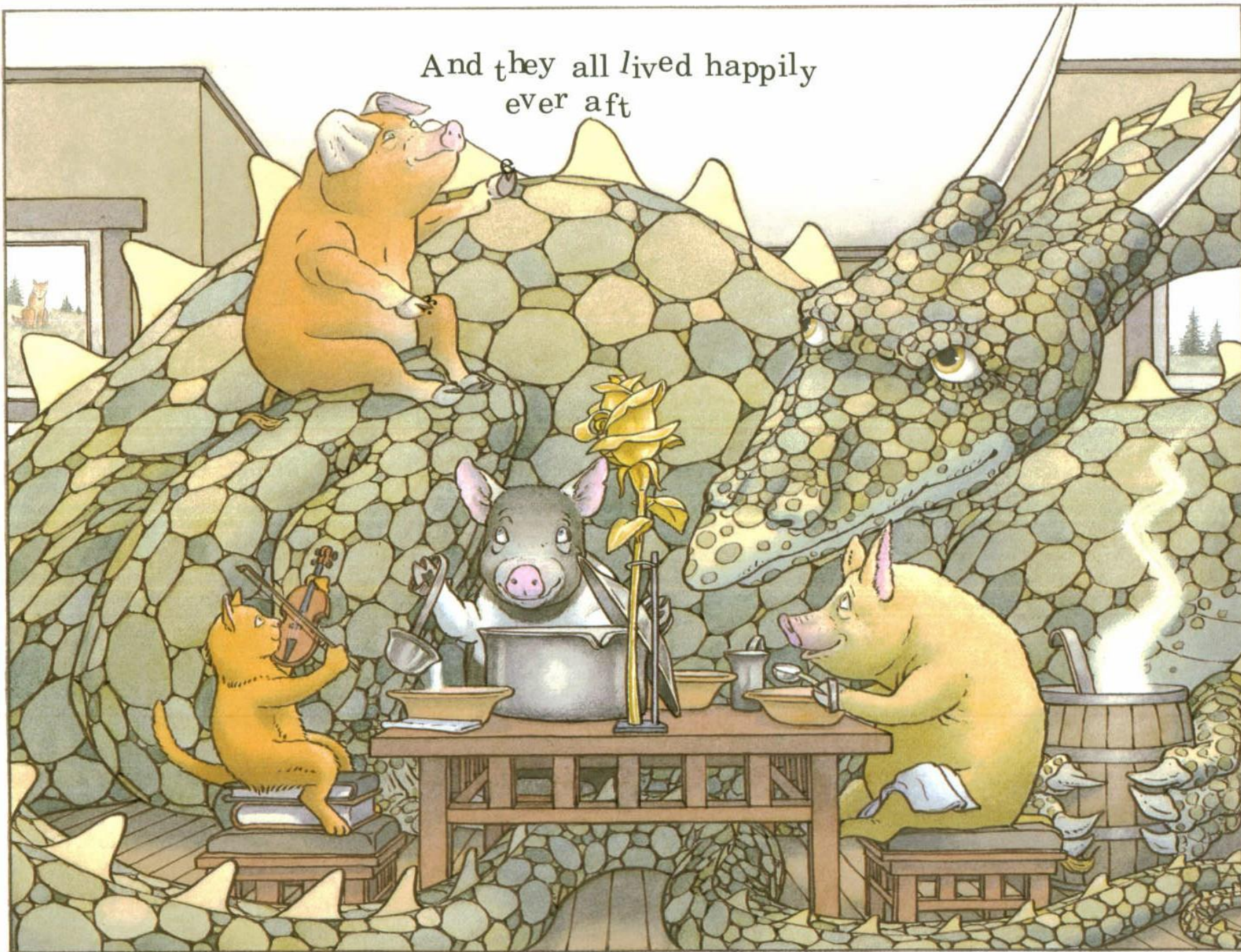


The wolf said, "Then I'll huff and
I'll puff and I'll blow your house in!"





And they all lived happily
ever aft



**These books shatter readers'
expectations, demand active
coauthoring, and raise questions about
what is real.**