



## Don't Think About Purple Elephants - Teacher's Notes

**Author:** Susan Whelan  
**Illustrator:** Gwynneth Jones  
**Publisher:** EK Publishing  
**Price:** \$24.99  
**ISBN:** 978-1-921966-69-9  
**Publication Date:** April 2015  
**Audience:** Children aged 4 - 7

**Type of Text**  
Picture book - Imaginative

**Key Curriculum Area**  
English

**Cross Curriculum Links**  
PDHPE  
Creative Arts

**Themes**  
Fear and anxiety  
Family  
Imagination  
Relaxation techniques

**Notes prepared by**  
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### SYNOPSIS

Sometimes Sophie worries — especially at night when everything is calm and quiet. Her family all try to help, but somehow they just make things worse. Until her mother thinks of a new approach ... that might just involve an elephant or two!

Whimsical and humorous, this little girl's story of finding a way to ease her worry will resonate with children and parents everywhere.

### AUTHOR BACKGROUND

**Susan Whelan** is a writer, editor, mother of three and passionate advocate for children's literacy. She loves tea and chocolate, dislikes Brussels sprouts, and loves to read anywhere, anytime. Susan lives in Newcastle/Lake Macquarie, NSW.

Susan is the Managing Editor of highly respected children's literature website Kids' Book Review. She is active member of both the CBCA and SCBWI. You can find out more by visiting Susan's website at [www.susanwhelan.com.au](http://www.susanwhelan.com.au).

### ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND

Gwynneth Jones drew all through her maths book at school, so left to study art at TAFE and then studied Plant and Wildlife Illustration at the University of Newcastle.

Since then, Gwynneth has been imagining and drawing madly, exhibiting and holding market stalls, and creating a picture book. She is a member of the Hunter Arts Network, SCBWI and CBCA. As well as art making, Gwynneth is also studying to be a future art therapist. More information on Gwynneth's art is at [www.facebook.com/gwynnejonesillustrator](http://www.facebook.com/gwynnejonesillustrator).

#### **ILLUSTRATION STYLE**

Illustration colours reflect Sophie's mood. Bright, vibrant colours are used for the daytime. The illustrations change to predominantly black and white when Sophie starts to worry, with the focus of her worry the only item appearing in colour. These worries are also disproportionately large in comparison to the rest of the illustration.

#### **SELLING POINTS**

A fun story with a gentle message that's sure to resonate with parents and children everywhere. Anxiety is an issue affecting more and more children; this is a simple, humorous story that could help children address some of their worry.

The first picture book from a talented new Australian author-illustrator duo.

## **AUTHOR INTERVIEW**

### **1. What was the inspiration for the story?**

I was inspired by my experiences with my daughter when writing this story. As a young child, she suffered with anxiety problems, usually at bedtime when there was nothing to distract her from her anxious thoughts. Memory games listing different coloured animals became part of her bedtime routine to encourage her to use her imagination and focus on positive things to enable her to get to sleep.

### **2. What was the most rewarding part of this project?**

The most exciting part of the process was seeing the story come alive through Gwynne's illustrations. It is an amazing experience to write a story and then have someone else interpret it visually. I love that the illustrations add so much to the original story.

### **3. What was the most challenging part of this project?**

The time between writing and publishing a picture books story can be very long. For *Don't Think About Purple Elephants*, it was almost 18 months from the first interest shown by the publisher in the story to the final publication. It's hard to be patient for such a long time, waiting to finally be able to show everyone the finished product.

## **ILLUSTRATOR INTERVIEW**

### **1. What mediums did you use to create your illustrations? Can you briefly describe your process?**

I used colour pencil, with some ink pen line and wash, and some pastel, mixed with lots of imagination. I traced over my original pencil roughs in pencil on the good paper for the final illustrations, then coloured them in. Sometimes I would change the illustration slightly, but only so it would fit with the text.

### **2. What was the most rewarding part of this project?**

The most rewarding part was being asked to do the book, and to show the illustrations to a delighted author and editor.

### **3. What was the most challenging part of this project?**

Remembering that everyone was going to look at the book when it was published and knowing that the illustrations were going to be all right!

## **PRE-READING ACTIVITIES**

1. What can you learn about the book by looking at the front cover?

- What do you think the book is about?
- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What type of story do you think this will be? Funny? Serious? Factual?

2. Can you find out more about the book from the back cover?

- What does the back cover blurb tell you about the subject of the book? Does it match the clues you found in the front cover?
- Who is the publisher of the book?

## **TEACHING RESOURCES**

Assortment colourful, stuffed animals, cushions (stimulus)

## **ART RESOURCES**

Pencils, and paper, collage materials such as coloured paper and glue.

Writing materials.

## **TEACHING NOTES**

### **KLA – ENGLISH**

#### **Learning Objectives**

1. To enable students to identify and use descriptive language
2. To enable students to identify 'imaginative' texts, for their own story telling.

#### **Learning Outcome**

Students are to write and illustrate an imaginative poem and/or story of their own in response to the themes in the story: *Don't Think About Purple Elephants*

#### **Discussing the Text**

1. Discuss the plot of the story. Who is the central character? How does the story begin? What is the conflict/problem in the story? How is that problem solved?
2. What do you learn about Sophie from the text and illustrations on the first page of the story?
3. Do the illustrations change when Sophie starts to think about her worries? How?
4. Why do you think Sophie worries more at night time?
5. How does Sophie's family try to help her?
6. How does Mum help Sophie to stop thinking about her worries?

### **Main Teaching Activity**

Students to work in pairs, or discuss as a whole class, the following questions:

1. What are some of the things that you do during your day to make you happy?
2. Where are you when you are doing these things?
3. Who is with you?
4. What else would be a fun thing to do?
5. What do you think about in your dreams when you go to sleep at night?
6. Using your **imagination**, think about what you would like to think about when you go to sleep at night to help you to sleep if you are **worried** about something?

### **Independent Activity/s**

Students to draw or paint a picture of what they would like to think about when they go to sleep at night. Talk about worries?

Teacher to emphasise a good use of imagination!

Students to write a poem to describe their painting – could be an acrostic poem?

Extension: students to write a story about what makes them happy and stops them from worrying, drawing on the themes in the book

### **Other Activities**

Role plays, Reader's Theatre and Dance activities could also be effectively utilised!

**For more teaching suggestions and craft activity ideas, visit [www.purpleelephants.com](http://www.purpleelephants.com).**