



*Owl Bat, Bat Owl*

Written and illustrated by Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick  
Candlewick Press, 2016, 32 pp  
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A family of owls sleeps on a branch in a treetop. A family of bats suddenly joins them. Eight pairs of eyes wide open. The owls move to the left. There is tension, uncertainty, and fear in the air. A small owl visits one of the small bats. Ooh, bad idea! The small owl returns atop the branch. All animals are back asleep. Then it happens. Strong and wild spiral currents shake bats and owls equally. Where are the small bats? And the small owls? Scared eyes, terrified eyes,

concerned eyes, compassionate and supportive eyes. When the moon reaches the sky, the big owl and the big bat help each other to find the small ones. Back on the branch, there is no need to move left or right, bats and owl are at center, and together, they are ready to play and welcome others.

Through owls and bats, the author shows the uneasiness, fear, and defensiveness often present when facing an unknown situation, an unheard or unwitnessed perspective. The larger animals show these emotions, while the smaller ones make several attempts to play with each other. The characters come closer after sharing a traumatic experience. The storm forces them to see each other past their differences, to trust, and work together to save all. This book creates spaces for readers of all ages to enter conversations about inclusion, caring, and community. In current times, *Owl Bat, Bat Owl* is a needed story about hope and restoring humanity through social responsibility.

The illustrations are created digitally. Starting with the endpapers, readers can see white spiral dashed lines on a blue background suggesting wind currents. The title page adds small green leaves and butterflies floating above and below an invitation that reads: "Turn the book upside down and see what it's like to hang out with the bats!" A white background frames every double-spread illustration, except when the wind turns into a furious storm. In this double-page spread, the author plays with size, positionality, movement, and emphasis to indicate that the magnitude of the storm goes beyond the corners of the story world. Eye contact between the owls and the bats, a constant throughout the story, is utilized in this part of the story to follow the smaller animals being carried away by the strong winds. The larger animals could represent anyone able to care for small ones. However, the book jacket and the author's website refer to the large owl as Mama Owl. These distinct messages can support explorations around concepts, such as family and children's agency.

*Owl Bat, Bat Owl* can be paired with other books with animal characters searching and offering refuge, while moving from fear toward understanding and empathy, such as *Shelter* (Céline Claire, 2017) and *Room on Our Rock* (Kate and Jol Temple, 2019). Another potential pairing includes books that present perspective as a filter for exploring similarities and differences, such as *Up Above and Down Below* (Paloma Valdivia, 2012), *They All Saw a Cat* (Brendan Wenzel, 2016), and the all-time classic *Voices in the Park* (Anthony Browne, 1998).

Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick is an Irish author and illustrator, whose primary goal as a creator of children's literature is "charting the personal journeys we make in early childhood, the small events which change us, the little battles and triumphs as we grow up" (official website). Four of her picturebooks have received awards such as the Children's Book Ireland Book of the Year awards. *Owl Bat, Bat Owl* is a CCBC Choices 2018 pick for Picture Books for Young Children. This is her first visual narrative. Her growing collection of picturebooks and short novels can be explored at [marielouisefitzpatrick.com](http://marielouisefitzpatrick.com).

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