



The Black Rabbit

Written and illustrated by Philippa Leathers

Walker, 2014, 40 pp.

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The Black Rabbit is the story of a rabbit who cannot escape from a companion who follows him everywhere. Rabbit does not know that the large creature following him is his shadow; therefore, he is literally frightened of his own shadow. Rabbit cannot lose his shadow until he enters a dark forest. There, he is able to escape his shadow only to come across something more dangerous.

The Black Rabbit by Philippa Leathers is her debut book as an author. Philippa Leathers studied at Trent

University and focused on Character Animation at Central Saint Martins in London. She has worked as a freelance animator on children's TV series, including the BAFTA-award winners, *Peppa Pig* and *Charlie and Lola*. Currently she works as a freelance animator and illustrator. Philippa previously worked as a visual effects data operator on such big screen movies as *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and *Troy*.

The Black Rabbit's illustrations and text are simple and uncomplicated. The simplicity of the rabbit, wolf, and scenery help to highlight the emotional feelings of rabbit's initial fear and eventual easing of that fear. The illustrations support the text without being overly redundant of the text. The black rabbit first originated from an animation Philippa made years before in college. She liked the small white rabbit she had created so much she wanted to give him his own story. She drew the rabbit with "short, stumpy little legs" so that he moved in a particular way. Philippa has stated, "I loved the way he ran, his short legs meaning he comically wiggled from side to side and had to put in a lot of effort." Philippa illustrated *The Black Rabbit* when her daughter was only a few months old, which she thought was challenging because she only had the opportunity to paint whenever her daughter took naps. The illustrations are mostly drawn with pencil and then painted with watercolor, though she also uses ink and colored pencils.

This story draws mostly a younger audience who may share similar fears. The appeal of *The Black Rabbit* lies in the common childhood experience of being frightened at one time or another by something that later is realized to not be frightening. Its universal appeal points to the authenticity of this experience while framed within fantasy.

Books that can be paired with *The Black Rabbit* having a focus on shadows are *Moonbear's Shadow* by Frank Asch (2014), *Boris and the Wrong Shadow* by Leigh Hodgkinson (2012), and *Lilly and Lucy's Shadow* by Christopher Aslan Kennedy (2007). Another theme that can be

paired with *The Black Rabbit* is friendship. Three book suggestions with the theme of friendship are *Arlo Makes a Friend* by Wendy Wax (2008), *Same Same, but Different* by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw (2015), and *The Skin You Live In* by Michael Tyler (2005).

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