

Good Night Pillow Fight

By Sandy Cook • Illustrated by Laura Cornell
Harper Collins, 2004



Reviewed by
Michelle Swanson

This book is a realistic conversation between a parent, insisting on bedtime, and a child, reluctant to call it a day. The animated, ink-and-watercolor illustrations are by Laura Cornell, artist of the *New York Times* bestseller *Today I Feel Silly*. If teaching question-and-answer strategies has ever been a challenge, then *Good Night Pillow Fight* is the perfect piece of literature for your classroom. The title is an early indication of the contents: its two-part rhyme sets up the rhythmic pattern for the rest of the book. The 15 phrases that follow model how rhythmic question-and-answer phrases are related, but not identical.

When the parent suggests heading to bed ("good night") the child's response is for another use of bed pillows ("pillow fight") – not exactly the response the parent had in mind. Setting up this scenario for students is helpful because this correlation relates an abstract musical concept to a concrete life experience. Students can understand that the child's response is related, rhyming and contains the same number of beats.

The unique correlation between each pair of phrases is an ideal setup for highlighting relationships between musical questions and answers. Just like in real conversation, it is not correct to exactly restate the question as the answer. This book creates a playful relationship between the first and second parts of each couplet. Its tie to nighttime and bedtime routines will surely win over young children. For instance, "let's count sheep" and "I can't sleep" directly correlate, and yet show a playful relationship between a parent (encouraging sleep) and a

child (endlessly awake).

Sometimes, things that seem to have no connection are, in fact, related in some way. For instance: "No more juice ... Mother Goose." Taken out of context, these two parts may seem completely unrelated. Those experienced in this nighttime tug-of-war will recognize that the desperate parent, insisting that the child stop asking for another drink, and the child, wheedling for another story, are both talking about procrastination. The hilarious pairing of parental entreaties followed by ever more creative efforts to avoid bedtime are great models of how musical questions and answers can stretch artistic connections.

When classroom discussions begin to analyze what makes a good

"answer" to a musical "question," the pages of *Good Night Pillow Fight* make an excellent teaching tool. Adults and children alike will relate to the realism and humor of the bed time challenge. This book won't lull anyone to sleep, but it will inspire some creative music making in the classroom. Be sure to add this book to your wish list!

Michelle Swanson is a Music Education Instructor at the University of Northern Iowa, where she teaches college elementary general music methods courses and elementary school students at Price Laboratory school on the campus. She is also president of the First Iowa Orff Chapter of AOSA.

Write Swanson at:
cmwanson@cfu.net

