

CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Karen Williams

Quiet Bunny

By Lisa McCue

New York: Sterling Publishing Co., 2009

This delightful story tells how Quiet Bunny, a small rabbit without a voice, finds a way to join the other animals in the night song. The tale begins with Quiet Bunny listening to the sounds of the animals entering, one by one, to create the music of the night. Although the evening song is his favorite part of the day, the little bunny is sad that he cannot participate.

Quiet Bunny wishes upon a star, wishing for a voice. The next morning, he excitedly opens his mouth but nothing comes out. Disappointed, he tries to imitate the sounds of the other animals. The small rabbit hops around the forest, unsuccessfully trying to tweet like a bird, croak like a frog, and call like a loon. Again no sound comes from his mouth. He tries to hiss like a snake, hum like a hummingbird, growl like the bear cub, buzz like a bee, and even tries to make the sound of the bat wings by flapping his paws. There is still no sound. He finally gives up when even rubbing his big, furry feet together doesn't make the chirp of the cricket.

After a wise owl tells him to be himself, Quiet Bunny thinks of all the good things he knows about himself, and realizes that even though he can't sing, he is still a special, unique bunny. Feeling better, Quiet Bunny hurries to the

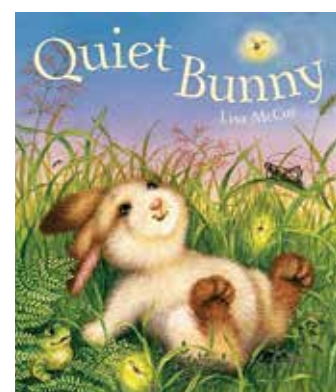
meadow for the start of the night song. He leaps onto a hollow log landing with a thump. Tapping a rhythm on the hollow log, he finally finds his own bunny sound. The other animals join in the night song as Quiet Bunny dances on the hollow log.

Detailed illustrations enhance this story of self-acceptance. The greens of the forest and meadow and the blues of the daytime sky deepen from sunset into darkness. Friendly-looking animals are appealing to young students. Lisa McCue also captures Quiet Bunny's expressions perfectly. Starting with his relaxed enjoyment listening to the night song, his face shows the excited anticipation of a wish coming true, his intense concentration while trying to make a sound, his disappointment when failing to make a sound, and finally, his exuberant joy as he creates music with the others.

This is a great story for vocal exploration as children imitate the sounds of the animals. The low sounds of the bear cub and frog contrast with the high sounds of the mosquito, cricket, and owl. The wail of the loon and the wolf's howl slide through both vocal registers. As Quiet Bunny wishes on a star, ask children to sing a song, such as "Star Light, Star Bright," adding a chime tree or glockenspiels for sparkle.

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Instrument exploration is another option with this book. Allow children to choose small percussion instruments to represent each sound in the story. The sound of sandblocks or rainsticks suggest leaves rustling in the wind, guiro or rasp mimic frogs croaking, maracas approximate the



snake's hiss and, of course, drums convey the sound of Quiet Bunny's feet thumping on the log. The animal sounds of the night song can be arranged rhythmically as ostinati or freely, with no rhythm. They may be performed individually in sequence or cumulatively. Random entrances and endings, or having everyone start and/or end at the same time are other possibilities.

This story also lends itself well to dramatization or puppets. All students can act out the Quiet Bunny part, doing the motions in place, silently opening their mouths as wide as possible whenever he tries to make a sound. Alternately, assign each animal to an individual student. Some children can play hopping music on Orff instruments or other percussion instruments as Quiet Bunny hops from animal to animal. Try dimming

the lights on scenes that take place at night and add flickering flashlights for the fireflies.

Kindergarteners and first graders enjoy this book although it can be used with students through second grade. This wonderful story has many vocal, instrumental, and dramatic possibilities for actively engaging students in your music classroom. ■

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