



# I Wish I'd Written? The Bird

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Article Category:

I Wish I'd Written

Byline:

**Joyce Dunbar** chooses Nicholas Allan's **The Bird**.

Joyce Dunbar on Nicholas Allan's **The Bird**, a picture book that makes you realise the interconnectedness of all stories?

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Amelia Edwards, book designer at Walker, was asked what her job was, exactly. 'I'm in charge of the white space,' was her alleged reply.

I like white spaces in books ? depending on how inviting it is. This book is full of white space, both around the pictures and between the words. This space is far from empty. It is full of implied meaning and suggestion, so cleverly constructed that the reader is surprised and delighted by how much they themselves bring to bear.

The hermit wants to be alone on his island. The bird wants to sing and splat. The hermit struggles to find the right balance between the conflicting needs of solitude and companionship ? which figures in all relationships. With a touch that is absolutely sure, the writer strikes up all sorts of associations in the reader's head.

Waiting in the wings of this small story with its big theme is an even bigger story. It comes sailing in at the end like a great ship into a tiny harbour ? and realisation rises like a wave ? about the interconnectedness of all stories. It makes you smile, and sigh, and understand that 'no man is an island?'. At least, no reader is.

Nicholas Allan's **The Bird** is published by Hutchinson, 0 09 176707 5, £6.99 hbk.

Joyce Dunbar's latest books is **Tell Me Something Happy Before I Go to Sleep**, illustrated by Debi Gliori (Doubleday).

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