This ?alphabeast of a book!? is based on a simple but very interesting question: What is the effect on meaning of removing one letter from a word? Each letter of the alphabet gets a turn at being the missing letter in a particular word. So without the C ?CHAIR? becomes ?HAIR? and ?without the U my AUNT is an ANT?. There is a wonderful harmony between the work of author and illustrator: the word play is amusing and the pictures show the delightfully absurd images conjured up. When the I is taken away from ?STAIRS? the illustration, in a subtle palette typical of the book?s artwork, shows a winding staircase leading to the ?STARS?. Nocturnal creatures ? an owl and the little mouse that is pictured on many of the spreads ? add food for conversation.

There is some intertextuality when the N is removed from ?MOON? so that we are left with ?MOO? ; in a playful reference to the nursery rhyme the illustrator has the moon shouting ?MOO? to the cow leaping over it.

Although technically an alphabet I think this book will be best appreciated, with some exceptions, by children beyond the pre-school years. It is likely to encourage slightly older children?s developing knowledge about and enjoyment of language. There are many imaginative ways of using this playful book in the early years classroom. Children will enjoy telling the story shown in each spread, creating their own ?missing letter? pages and there is potential for lively improvisation too.