



# Two Children Tell: Rebecca and Nick And Michael

Article Author:

[Virginia Lowe](#) [1]

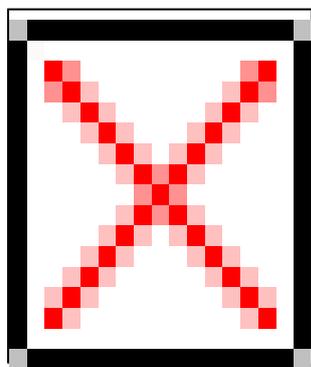
[217](#) [2]

Byline:

Rebecca and Nick and **Michael Foreman**

In the latest of her series describing children's early responses to stories and language, **Virginia Lowe** observes the reactions of her son and daughter to some of Michael Foreman's picture books.

By June 1976 (very hot) we had spent three months in a campervan touring Europe, with Nicholas (1y0m-4m), Rebecca (4y3m-7m).

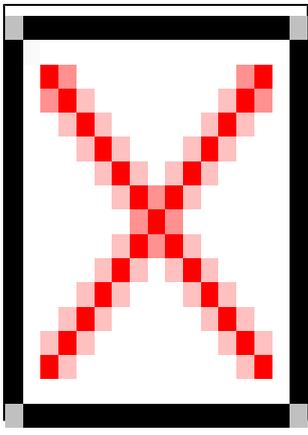


In London we bought Foreman's **Dinosaurs and All That Rubbish**. Rebecca was looking through the pictures as we left. 'It's about dinosaurs on another planet and a man meets them and makes friends with them'. Cars and dinosaurs were two of Nick's favourite things, so I expected the cover, dinosaurs stomping on cars, to worry him. However he only chatted a bit in jargon, and didn't repeat 'car' even when I pointed one out. The wrong gestalt I suppose - he expected wheels on the ground.

Instead it was Rebecca who had concerns. That evening she said 'I don't like that book'. We had had a lot of mechanical trouble with the campervan, and a stranger often looked into the engine (inside the van - our living area.) This had worried her, and I'm sure **Dinosaurs** brought it back.

Two years earlier Rebecca had been given a copy of **Moose**. She had heard it quite often, and loved the openings of the animals singing. She enjoyed saying 'piggy piggy piggy' to all the pigs (2y4m) and by 3y10m was counting ten of them, and joking that the cows were pigs, their horns tails.

As for the moral, she quoted 'sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me' then asked for 'my new



book? at 2y4m. The word 'Yahbooh' appealed to her, especially at 4y0m, shouting it at her unmoved baby brother.

She had thrown a stick at playgroup at 2y11m. I gave her a lecture without mentioning the book, but she began quoting 'sticks and stones' to herself. When we finished it at 3y10m:

Text: 'Shouting and fighting didn't do them any good' said Moose. 'Perhaps one day they will discover that it is more fun to sing.'

R: It's much more fun shouting and fighting!

V: That's not what the book says.

R: Well we'll rub it out and write it again! (jokingly)

This reading she spent a long time on the opening of the animals helping Moose with his cantilevered construction, wondering if specific stones were going to fall, if some were being pushed off, how the animals would get down, and similar.

A month later she assembled everyone, including an aunt and uncle.

'Everybody! I'll show you what Moose does, everybody.'

There's Moose. There's a bear and an eagle. 'I'm shouting at the flea-bitten bear' [quotation shouted]. He takes all the things they throw and makes a shelter. 'Sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me'. [Skips several pages] Now it's night time.'

At 3y6m Nicholas asked 'Why are they shouting at each other?' (My brief explanation excluded nationalism.) When Eagle began to throw: 'How could he throw stones?' (A good question, considering Eagle only had bird feet to balance on and throw with).

**Dinosaurs and All That Rubbish** also led to logical thinking. At 2y4m Nick liked the opening with the birds best. He worked hard to find a reason for each of them being 'funny', and would call me in excitement, as he spelt it out. 'Mummy! Mummy! Dat a funny one. Dat bird got no eyes!' or 'Dat bird upside down'.

At 4y5m Nick was trying to locate 'that pretend book that's got a dodo in'. 'It's got the dinosaurs and all those birds and the man who goes to a planet and there's nothing there.' '**Dinosaurs and all that Rubbish**' Is there a dodo in that?' 'Yes - it's right at the end. And it's different. I don't know which the real one is.' (There had been a dodo in another book we had recently read). At 4y11m Nick wanted to know where all the cars came from, there was only one man and he couldn't have made them all.

He sang one day at 3y9m. With many repeats:

'All the animals have teeth except the birds - except the birds and the snakes. Dinosaurs have teeth but birds don't. A man looked at a star and he wanted to go to the stars. He got lots of birds - some ate mice and some ate apples. They

crashed up the road, they crashed up the little road.?

Rebecca's favourite book for many years was **Barbapapa's Ark**. When I read her **Dinosaurs and All That Rubbish** at 5y0m, I asked if it reminded her of anything but she didn't recognise the thematic similarity. However a month later, as we were reading **Ark** she asked 'Do you know what this reminds me of? It reminds me of **Dinosaurs and All that Rubbish**, because it gets dirty with all those factories and things and it gets cleaned up ? and it gets dirty and cleaned up in the other book too.?

In 1984 Foreman came to Australia and the children met him. Rebecca wanted to take the feminist **All the King's Horses** and was disappointed that it was o/p. Michael told her it was one of his favourites too. They listened to him avidly at 12y2m and 8y11m.

Dr. Virginia Lowe lives in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. She is the proprietor of [Create a Kids? Book](#) [3], a manuscript assessment agency, which also runs regular workshops, interactive writing e-courses, mentorships and produces a regular free e-bulletin on writing for children and children's literature generally. Her book, **Stories, Pictures and Reality: Two Children Tell** (2007) is published by Routledge (978-0-4153-9724-7, £29.99 pbk).

Page Number:

20

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Nov '18):** <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/217/childrens-books/articles/two-children-tell-rebecca-and-nick-and-michael>

**Links:**

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/virginia-low>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/217>

[3] <http://www.createakidsbook.com.au>