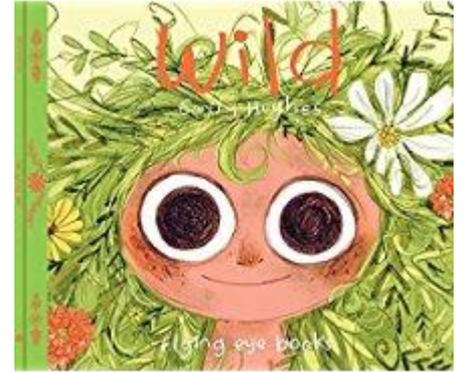


***Wild* by Emily Hughes**
Flying Eye Books

Story notes by Gail Ellis

Story summary

'Illustrators invent worlds. They can invite you to step into the detail of a painted woodland, a woodland so decorative that you might lose yourself in the page.' This is how Lauren Child sums up the visual splendour and detail of the beautiful, colourful and expressive illustrations in *Wild*. The text in *Wild* is short, but the illustrations work with and beyond the text to create and enhance meaning.



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Wild is a story about a feral girl. *No one remembered how she came to the woods, but all knew it was right.* She is taught to talk by bird, to eat by bear and to play by fox. All live happily together in the forest, free from human restriction, until one day the child is caught in a trap by two hunters and taken back to civilisation.

A psychiatrist and his wife try to get the girl to speak and eat and live like them, unsuccessfully, and the girl is unhappy. However, the story has a happy ending as she returns to live in the forest, along with the psychiatrist's pet dog and cat! *Everyone remembered how she left, and all knew it was right.*

This is a story of nature versus nurture, which can be used to support personal, social and emotional development. The story sparks lots of book talk opportunities and raises many thought-provoking questions from children.

Emily Hughes is based in the UK and grew up in Hawaii. *Wild* has been translated into many languages, including Spanish, French, Italian and Chinese.

Before reading

Picture dictation and introducing the picture book

1. Tell children they are going to listen to a story about a young girl. First, the children are going to do a picture dictation of the girl. Give each child a sheet of paper and explain that they need to listen carefully to your descriptions and then draw the girl's face. *She's got a round face. She's got two big, round, brown eyes. She's got freckles on her cheeks. She's got thin lips and a small smile. She has a short neck. She's got long, tangled, green hair! She's got a white flower in her hair.* Repeat each description two or three times and use gestures/mime to help convey meaning.

2. Show the children the front cover without revealing the title of the book. Ask children to describe the girl, for example *She's happy, pretty, strange, wild,* etc. Ask questions to set the context and to help children predict the content of the story, for example *Where do you think the girl lives? Elicit forest, in the wild. Who do you think are her friends? Elicit birds, bears, foxes, deer, rabbits, squirrels, owls,* etc. *How do you think the girl feels?* Allow children to

make any modifications they wish to their drawings and tell them they will come back to these later. Ask children to suggest a title for the book. Reveal the title and read, *Wild by Emily Hughes*.

3. Show children the end papers. Ask, *What can you see?* Elicit, *flowers, leaves, mushrooms, fruit.*

4. Show the children the title page and read, *Wild by Emily Hughes*. Ask, *How does the girl look in this picture?* Elicit, *She looks cross, angry, unhappy.* Ask, *What is different about her appearance?* Elicit, *Her hair is plaited with a ribbon, she is wearing clothes.* Ask, *What do you think happens in the story?* Draw children's attention to the dedication.

Reading the story

If possible, have children sit on the floor around you. Make sure all children can see you and the illustrations and can hear you clearly. If this is not possible, walk around, giving all children the opportunity to look at the illustrations as you repeat the story. Repetition increases opportunities for exposure to the language and gives children time to work out the meaning.

- Front cover. Read the title, *Wild by Emily Hughes*.
- First double spread. Point to the baby and read, *No one remembered how she came to the woods, but all knew it was right.* Point to the animals and read, *The whole forest took her as their own.* Give the children time to 'read' and comment on the illustrations.
- Second double spread. Point to the bird and read, *Bird taught her how to speak* and imitate the birds, *Kraw, Krawk, Kraa!*
- Third double spread. Point to the bear and read, *Bear taught her how to ...* Point to the girl eating the fish. Can children predict *eat*? Ask, *What is she eating?* Give children time to look at the illustration and notice the baby bear and the crab.
- Fourth double spread. Point to the fox and read, *Fox taught her how to play.* Ask children if they know where foxes live. *In a den.*
- Fifth double spread. The left page is a blank, white page with no illustration. Point to the right page and read, *And she understood, and was happy.* Let children look at the details in the illustration and notice the other animals. Ask, *How do you think the girl feels?* Elicit, *happy, secure, comfortable, relaxed, etc.* Ask, *Would you like to live in the forest? Why? Why not? How do you think you would feel?*
- Sixth double spread. The illustration is on the left page and the white right page contains the text. Let children look at the illustration, and ask, *What has happened to the girl?* Elicit, *She is caught in a trap, her hair is caught in a trap.* Ask, *How does she look? How do you think she feels?* Elicit, *cross, frightened, etc.* Read, *One day she met some new animals in the*

forest ... Ask, *Who are the new animals? Elicit, humans, hunters. How do they look? Elicit, They look worried. What do you think they should do? What would you do?*

- Seventh double spread. The illustration covers the double spread. Ask children to say what they see in the illustration and to notice the colours, which are now dark and grey, it's raining, trees are cut down, and there is a city in the distance. Read, *They found her strange ... and she found them strange too. Ask, How do the hunters look? How does the girl look? What do you think the girl is thinking?* Point to the dog. Ask, *What do you think the dog is thinking? What do you think will happen if they take her to the city? How do you think she will feel? Do you think she will be happy living there?*
- Eighth double spread. The newspaper headline informs us that 'Famed psychiatrist takes in feral child'. Give children time to look at the details in the illustration. Point to the child and ask, *How do you think she feels? What are the adults doing?* Read, *They did everything wrong!*
- Ninth double spread. The next illustration shows the psychiatrist trying to teach the child the alphabet, and the child repeats, *Kraw*. Read, *They spoke wrong*.
- Tenth double spread. Point to the illustration and invite children to predict, *They ate wrong*.
- Eleventh double spread. Point to the illustration and invite children to predict, *They played wrong*.
- Twelfth double spread. Point to the child and ask, *How do you think she is feeling?* Read, *And she did not understand, and she was not happy. Ask, What do you think will make her happy again? What do you think is going to happen?*
- Thirteenth double spread. Ask, *What has happened?* Read, *Enough was enough!* Ask, *What do you think she is going to do?*
- Fourteenth double spread. Let children look at the illustration. Ask, *What has she done? She has destroyed the house!*
- Fifteenth double spread. The child leaves with the dog and cat. Read, *Everyone remembered how she left, and all knew it was right. Ask, How do you think the girl is feeling now? Where is she going? How do you think the psychiatrist and his wife are feeling?*
- Final double spread. The child is back in the forest, swinging in a tree with her animal friends. Ask children if they can see the dog and cat and to say what other animals they can see. Ask, *How is the girl feeling now? She feels happy, pleased, content, glad. Read, Because you cannot tame something so happily wild ...*

After reading

Discussion

Discuss the title of the book. What do the children think the title means? Discuss the different connotations of the word 'wild'. Ask, *How did the girl arrive in the forest? Who were her parents? Was she abandoned? How did she survive? What things does she like? What things does she dislike? What is she good at? Would you like to live like the girl? Why? Why not? How did the girl feel when she lived in the forest? Why did the hunters take her from the forest? Do you think they were right to do so? How did she feel when she lived with humans? Why did the psychiatrist and his wife try to 'tame' her? Do you think they were right to do so? Did the story end in the way you expected? What do you think she will do when she grows up?*

Encourage children to use conjunctions such as 'so' and 'because' when they give their responses.

Thinking about and responding to illustration

Introduce Lauren Child's words, chanting and using actions, and get children to repeat. Repeat each time you encourage children to notice details in the illustrations.

*The more you look
the more you see,
the more you see
the more you understand.*
(Lauren Child)

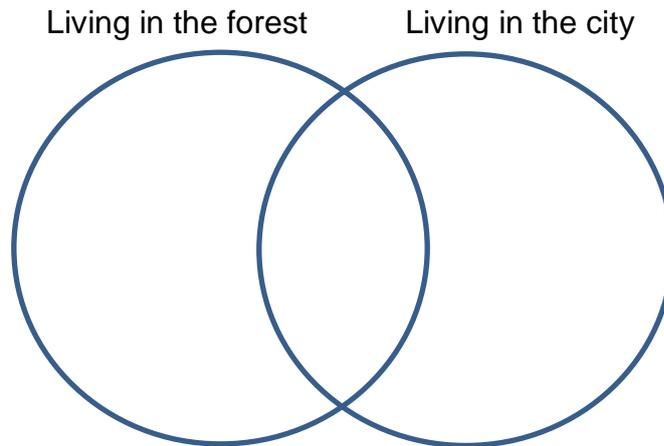
Re-read the picture book, giving children time to enjoy and respond to the illustrations. Ask children to imagine how the forest smells and what sounds they can hear. There are several forest or woodland sounds on YouTube you could play as a stimulus. Ask children, *What do you notice about the use of colour in the illustrations?* (lots of greens and browns) *What do you notice about the details in the illustrations? What is the effect of the illustrations? How do the illustrations make you feel? How do the illustrations contribute to your understanding of the story?*

Describing the girl

Ask children to look at their picture dictations again and explain that they are going to write a brief description of the girl. Elicit suggestions from the children and build up a model on the board to scaffold children's writing. Help children as necessary with vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. Create a display for the classroom with the front-cover illustration in the centre. Children can tear up strips of green tissue paper or use pieces of green wool and stick these on the front-cover illustration to create the girl's long, green hair. Display children's picture dictations and descriptions around the central front cover.

Comparing and contrasting

The story shows two different ways of living: in the forest and in the city. Draw a Venn diagram on the board and ask children to say what is the same and what is different. Record children's ideas.



Ask, *Why did the girl prefer living in the forest?* Encourage children to respond, *She preferred living in the forest because ...*

Children's rights

You may like to ask older children to consider the story from a children's rights perspective. A child-friendly version of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is available here: <https://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf>

Bring children's attention to, in particular, Articles 3, 12, 30 and, of course, any others they wish to discuss. Ask,

- Do you think the girl was allowed to exercise her rights? Why? Why not?
- Do you think the adults acted in the best interests of the girl? Why? Why not?
- Do you think the girl should have been asked her opinion about where she preferred to live?
- Do you think it was right that the psychiatrist tried to teach her to speak his language? Why? Why not?
- Why did the girl destroy the house? Do you think her behaviour was acceptable? Why? Why not? Do you think her behaviour was understandable? Why? Why not?

Write a newspaper headline

Show children the newspaper headline again and ask them to think about the language used. For example, short words are used to make an impact. Verbs or articles are omitted, for example in spoken English we would say, 'A famed psychiatrist takes in a feral child.' Verbs are usually in the present tense rather than the continuous or perfect tense, and alliteration is often used, for example *famed, feral*.

Invite children to write a newspaper headline for the penultimate illustration, where the girl leaves the house. For example:

- *Famous psychiatrist fails to tame feral child*
- *Feral child abandons psychiatrist*
- *Feral child returns to civilisation*
- *Wild girl exercises rights*

Developing empathy

Show children the illustrations again and revise the feelings and emotions the girl expresses throughout the story and how these change. Ask children to say how they empathise with the girl. Explore viewpoints and encourage children to see the story from the other characters' perspectives. How did the hunters, the psychiatrist and his wife, the pet dog and cat feel?

Personal response

1. Encourage children to reflect on their learning, participation and effort as well as their personal response to the picture book. Allow children to do this reflection in their own language if needed, as this will allow greater participation and provide richer data.
2. Children complete the personal response sheet.
3. Conduct a discussion about children's personal responses to the picture book.

Home link – Forest or woodland walk

1. Ask children to retell the story to their family members. They can do this in their home language if necessary. This will involve the reprocessing of content, and allow the child to expand, extend and intensify what they have learned through one language in school through discussion with the family in the home language.
2. Ask parents to take their child on a forest or woodland walk or a walk in their local park at the weekend to collect (depending on the season) leaves, twigs, acorns, conkers, flowers, berries, mushrooms, fir cones, etc.
3. Back in class, create a forest or woodland display with the items the children bring from their walks.
4. Play Kim's game/What's missing? with the items to develop children's observation, their memory skills and their vocabulary.