

# Owl Babies

SECTION

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## About the book

*Owl Babies* introduces three baby owls who wake up one night to find that their mother is not with them. The three worried little owls sit and think and talk to each other about where she has gone, and finally make a wish for their mother to return. Their wish comes true and their mother soon returns to their tree-trunk home.

The story is written in an accessible and engaging style using simple sentences and refrains, and fits into the genre of stories with patterned language. As the three owls sit and think and wait, their characters begin to emerge. Young readers readily join in with their comments, particularly those of the youngest owl, Bill, who always speaks last. The owls' simple statements help to build up a sense of suspense as they wait in the dark wood. Children will identify with the nervousness of waiting and feel their relief when their owl mother returns.

The text is ideal for reading aloud for both group and independent reading. The deceptive simplicity of the story is excellent for building confidence, and there are many opportunities to develop reading with expression. The characters of the owls themselves, the setting and the development of the plot are all instrumental in developing this skill. The uncomplicated structure of the story with its simple repetition links *Owl Babies* with PNS English objectives for Years 1 and 2.

Essential to a full appreciation of the book are Patrick Benson's beautiful and sensitive illustrations which give immediate insight into the world of the baby owls. The atmosphere of the wood at night and the expressive faces of the small owls add an extra dimension to

the story. Many of the illustrations can be used for encouraging observation or for group discussion.

## About the author

Martin Waddell lives in the area in which he was born near the mountains of Mourne in Northern Ireland. His love of stories began as a small boy from his experiences of having tales read to him by people who knew how to read them well. This sense of a story being alive is very much part of his own writing.

Many of his stories are based on personal experiences he has had near his home by the sea. He describes himself as 'a happy man'. He has survived being blown up and being buried alive and has overcome cancer. Such events have left their mark, but there is a sense of optimism and warmth shining through most of his stories.

Waddell 'dreams' his stories in his garden and on long walks on the beach by his house. He

tells his stories to his dog before settling down to write them in the stone barn beside his house.

A familiar and popular writer, he is widely regarded as one of the finest contemporary storytellers for children and young people. His stories are always powerful, ranging from *Owl Babies*, *Farmer Duck*, the Little Bear series and *Once There Were Giants* to his trilogy for young people based on living in a troubled Northern Ireland.



### Facts and figures

*Owl Babies*

Author: Martin Waddell

Illustrator: Patrick Benson

First published 1992 by Walker Books Ltd.

Martin Waddell has over 90 titles to his name.

Patrick Benson has illustrated over 24 titles.

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