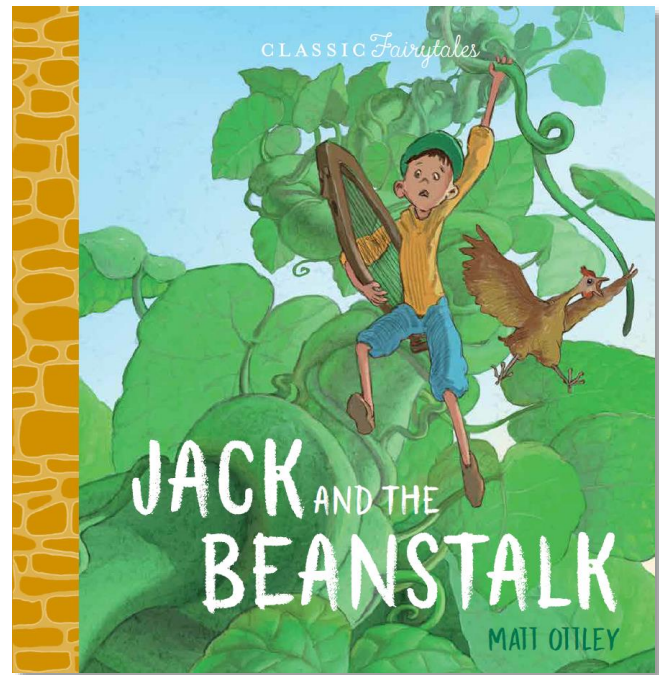


# Jack and the Beanstalk

Author and illustrator  
**Matt Ottley**



## Synopsis

A delightful new version of the classic fairytale, Matt Ottley has retold and illustrated the traditional story of a little boy who trades the family cow for three magic beans, and finds himself climbing the largest beanstalk he has ever seen up into the clouds. Once at the top of the stalk, Jack discovers an enormous castle inhabited by giants. The woman is kind, but the man is terrifying and Jack hides in fear. When the giants fall asleep, Jack flees down the beanstalk, taking with him a magic harp, and a hen which lays golden eggs. The giant wakes up and chases him, but Jack manages to reach the bottom of the beanstalk and cuts it down before the giant can reach the bottom. Safe at last, Jack and his mother can now live well on their profits from the hen's golden eggs, and even manage to buy their cow back! Filled with danger, adventure, and magic, and with a happy ending to round things off, the story of Jack and the Beanstalk has delighted children for generations and Matt Ottley's version is sure to continue this tradition.

## About the Author/Illustrator

Matt Ottley is a multi-award-winning picture book creator and musician. This is Matt's third book with Scholastic Press. His first, *Teacup* (text by Rebecca Young) was the winner of the Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature, 2016, and has most recently been named as the IBBY Australia Honour Book for Illustration, 2018.

## Themes

Fairytales, magic, giants, poverty, family, theft, danger, adventure, wealth.

## Writing Style

Written in the third person, the narrative follows the point of view of Jack. Ottley's language choices are representative of the genre, and the vocabulary is modern and colloquial enough to be easily understood by children today, while the sentence structure and narrative flow retains a flavour reminiscent of

traditional fairy-tales. The characters remain true to their fairytale stereotypes throughout, and the giant chants a variant of the well-known *fee fi fo fum* rhyme.

### Illustration Style

Ottley's artwork consists of a few single page illustrations interspersed amongst what are predominantly double page spreads. His palette contains for the most part soft neutral tones appropriate to the bucolic nature of the environment shown, with brighter splashes of colour appearing in the vivid green of the beanstalk, and in individual items of clothing worn by the various characters. Backgrounds are pale in hue, while foreground details are more intense. Figures are shown in greater detail, and the faces of the characters are highly expressive, and conform to the traditional stereotypes; Jack and his mother are fresh-faced and innocent, while the giants are gnarled and ugly. Ottley's shading is subtly graduated, with stronger use of crisp shadows in some of the interior scenes. The beanstalk is shown from a variety of angles, and Ottley's use of foreshortening and convergence supports the illusion of it being something enormous which has grown all the way up to the sky.

## TEACHER NOTES

- 1) Before reading the story, as a class discuss the cover and title of the book. Some things to include in your discussion are:
  - Who has heard the story of Jack and the Beanstalk before?
  - What do you know about the story of Jack and the Beanstalk?
  - What is a beanstalk?
  - How big do beanstalks usually grow?
  - What is a fairy tale?
  - When were fairytales first written?
  - What does the picture on the front of the book show?
  - What do you think might happen in this story based on the cover illustrations?
  - Who do you think is shown on the cover? Why do you think this?
- 2) As a class, reread the story, noting and discussing all the words that are in a different font. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
  - Why do you think the author chose to use a different font for these words?
  - What does a word being in a bold font tell the reader?
  - When you read a story aloud, should you say the words that are in a different font differently from the other words? If so, how should you say them and why?
- 3) Create a Jack and the Beanstalk word-search using the bolded words in the text.
- 4) How do you think Jack's mother felt when she found out he'd swapped the cow for three beans? Why do you think she felt this way? Draw a picture of her face that shows how she is feeling when she finds out, and caption your picture with a word that describes her feelings.
- 5) When Jack first knocked on the door of the castle what do you think he was thinking and feeling? Why do you think this? What sort of feelings do you think you would have if you found yourself knocking on the door of a giant castle in the sky?

- 6) Draw a picture of a magical castle in the clouds that you would like to visit. Your castle might be for giants like the one in the story, or it could have different inhabitants. Think about what the castle is made of, and the different features and decorations it would have.
- 7) How do you think the hen felt when she was living in the giants' castle? How do you think she feels now that she lives with Jack? Why do you think this? Draw a picture of the hen that shows what her life was like with the giants, and what her life is like now that she lives with Jack and his mother. Caption your pictures with a short description of how the hen feels in each scene.
- 8) If you had three magic seeds or beans, what would you like them to grow into? Would you like them to grow a giant beanstalk to the sky like Jack's, or would you prefer them to grow into some other sort of magical plant, bush, or tree? Write and illustrate a short story of your own about a small child who plants some magical seeds and what grows from them.
- 9) Jack's beans grew overnight into a beanstalk as tall as the sky, but beans don't normally grow nearly this fast. Plant a real dried bean in a cup full of potting mix, and see how long it takes it to germinate and grow. You will want to make sure that you water your bean regularly, and that it is in a warm (but not too hot!) spot where it gets enough sun. Record your bean's progress, measuring how tall it is, and writing a description of what it looks like each day. You might also like to draw sketches of it, or take photos at regular intervals. After three to four weeks, use your records to create a poster about growing your bean. Be sure to include a chart or graph showing how tall it has grown and how long it has taken to grow this large. When your bean gets too tall to stand up by itself, you will need to give it a stake to climb up, and either transfer it to a larger pot, or take it home and plant it in the garden. If you are lucky it will grow well, and produce beans for you to eat!
- 10) In the story, Jack, his mother, the man who buys the cow, and the giants are all wearing quite old-fashioned clothes. This is because the story is a very old tale that has been being told to children for hundreds of years. Look carefully at all the illustrations in the book, and in small groups or as a class discuss what other things you can see that indicate that the story is taking place a long time ago.
- 11) Who do you think the old man who gave Jack the beans was, and why do you think he was happy to trade them for a cow? As a class discuss your speculations around what the man's story might be. Individually or in pairs, write a short story that tells us who he is, why he is willing to trade away the magic beans, and what happened to him next. Think about what he might have known about the beans, where he could have got them from, and what he would have predicted would happen to Jack when they were planted and grew.
- 12) In the story, Jack plants the beans, enters the giants' castle, and then steals their things while they are sleeping. What would the story have been like if Jack had overslept that day, and the giants had found the beanstalk first? How might events have turned out differently for Jack and his mother if the giants had climbed down the beanstalk before anyone on the ground even knew it had grown? Draw a picture of the giants visiting Jack's house unexpectedly, and caption it with an appropriate title.
- 13) What is your favourite part of the story and why? Draw a picture showing your favourite part, and caption it with a description of what is happening, and why you like that scene.