

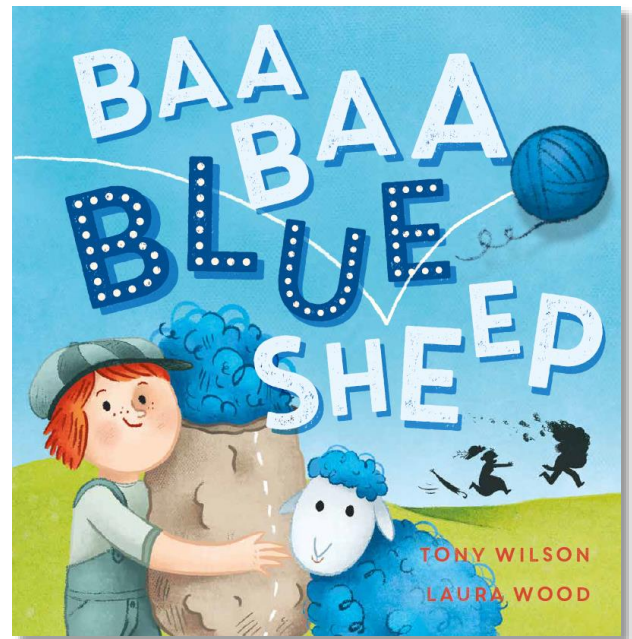
Baa Baa Blue Sheep

Author

Tony Wilson

Illustrator

Laura Wood



Synopsis

A new take on an old nursery rhyme, *Baa Baa Blue Sheep* is a cautionary tale of how greed and selfishness can lead to everyone missing out, while sharing has a much better result all round. For when the Master and the Dame find out that there are nine bags of wool from the blue sheep, they battle for possession until the wool is lost. The same thing happens again and again, with the eight bags of purple wool, seven bags of red, and six bags of yellow all ending up ruined. The orange and green wool meet the same fate as the other colours, but when it finally comes to the three bags of black wool, the little boy who lives down the lane takes a stand. Sharing, he states, is far more sensible than this ridiculous fighting. He demands that the Master and the Dame stop their wasteful bickering over the wool, and insists that they share instead. Persuaded by his eloquence they do indeed share the black wool, and at the end of the day are so taken by the idea that the little boy gets his own bag of wool as well. A new fable wrapped around a much-loved old tale, *Baa Baa Blue Sheep* is filled with colour, action, and a happy ending to delight any wool-loving reader.

About the Author

Tony Wilson is the author of much-loved picture books including *Grannysaurus Rex*, *Harry Highpants*, *The Princess and the Packet of Frozen Peas*, and *The Cow Tripped Over the Moon*, which won the Honour Award for the CBCA Book of the Year in the Younger Readers category in 2016, and was selected as the National Simultaneous Storytime title for 2017.

About the Illustrator

Laura Wood is an independent illustrator living between Melbourne, Bristol and Milan. She grew up in the north of Italy devouring books, drawing on the kitchen walls of her parents' house and imagining animals could talk to her and become her friends. Now she spends her days creating visual worlds and truly enjoying every minute of it.

Themes

Nursery Rhymes, sharing, greed, fighting, sheep, yarn crafts, humour, colour, counting.

Writing Style

Written throughout in the third person, from the point of view of an outside observer, *Baa Baa Blue Sheep* incorporates the original nursery rhyme within a larger story of greed, consequences, remorse, and sharing. Written exclusively in rhyme, each verse contains opening lines patterned on the traditional verse, as well as a more lengthy section further elaborating on the fate that befalls each colour of wool, while the final verse after the denouement is a direct recital of the original rhyme in full. Wilson's language choices are colloquial and relevant, and lend a humorous air to this modern day cautionary tale. Perfectly suited for reading aloud, the text is both accessible to the youthful readership, and intriguingly novel enough to entertain the adult reader who is sharing it with them.

Illustration Style

Created digitally, Wood's artwork displays a deft touch with a modern medium. The background scenery and human characters are all portrayed using a palette of neutral and earth tones. In direct contrast, the sheep and their wool are rendered in the bright primary and secondary rainbow colours described in the text, while the black wool is inkily dark. The visual narrative directly parallels the textual narrative, with each scene being shown precisely as described. Wood has chosen to use a series of single and double page spreads throughout, and the use of white space is limited overall.

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:
 - What can you see on the cover?
 - What colour are the sheep in the picture?
 - What do you think might happen in this story?
 - What rhyme do you already know that is similar to the title of the story?
 - What happens in the rhyme you already know - do you think something similar might happen in this story? Why/why not?
- 2) What is your favourite colour wool in the story?
- 3) Paint a picture of a woolly item of clothing or toy made from your favourite colour wool in the story. Caption your picture with the name of your item, and its colour.
- 4) What sorts of different things can people make from wool? Bring an item from home that has been made of wool to share with the class.
 - As a class discuss all the different items that have been brought in, and organise them into different categories.
 - Some categories you might like to use are: clothing; footwear; toys; homewares; decorations; bedding and blankets; and floor coverings.
 - Make a large chart showing how many items are in each category and what the items are.

- How have the different items been made? Try and identify what process was used to create each item and include this information on your chart.
 - Use your chart to help you create a graph or graphs to display the information you have collected.
- 5) How do you think the sheep feel about all this fuss being made over their wool? What do you think their opinion of the way the adults in the story are behaving is? Draw a picture of a colourful sheep, and caption it with how the sheep is feeling.
- 6) Write a moral for this story; think about what everyone has learnt and try to capture it in a single sentence.
- 7) What is the funniest scene in the story? Why do you like this one?
- 8) How many bags of wool were wasted altogether? Reread the story carefully and work out how much wool the Master and the Dame managed to lose overall.
- 9) What colour are sheep in real life? Do you ever think you will see a blue or red sheep wandering the paddocks of a farm? Research sheep online or in the library, and find out what colours their wool can come in.
- 10) How do people make red, blue, green, or orange wool in real life? Visit a yarn store in your local area and see how many different colours of wool and yarn there are. Ask the owner of the store if they can tell you about how yarn is dyed.
- 11) Dye your own skein of rainbow yarn. You will need: A ball of white woolen yarn (make sure it is wool, not acrylic); food colouring; vinegar; warm water; a plastic bucket; plastic bowls or containers; and clingwrap. NOTE: this dye will stain clothes, carpet, or furnishings so be careful when dyeing!!
- First, you will need to unwind your ball of wool to make a skein.
 - Lie a chair on its back on the floor.
 - Loosely wind the wool around the top two chair legs.
 - Keep winding the wool around the chair legs until it has all been wound out of the ball and into a skein.
 - Gently place your skein of wool into a bucket of warm water and allow it to soak for 10 to 20 minutes.
 - To make your dye, mix 2 cups of warm water, 1 tablespoon of vinegar, and a bottle of food colouring in a plastic or glass container. The more food colouring you use, the brighter your finished product will be, so be generous with it!
 - Mix each colour of dye in its own container.
 - Remove your skein from the bucket, and gently squeeze the water out until it is no longer dripping.
 - Place two or three containers of different coloured dyes next to each other, and place different sections of the skein in the different colours. Be sure to put the containers so they are touching each other. You want to make sure that as much of the yarn as possible is in the dye.
 - Leave your skein soaking in the dye until it has absorbed almost all of the dye from the containers, and the parts which are out of the dye have also gained some colour.
 - Carefully wrap your dye-soaked yarn in several layers of cling wrap to make a watertight package.
 - Microwave your clingwrapped yarn for 5 minutes. Watch it carefully to make sure it doesn't dry out and burn, and remember it will be VERY HOT.
 - Remove the yarn from the microwave and allow it to cool.
 - Once cool, unwrap your yarn, and rinse the excess dye out in cool water.

- Place your skein on a towel or over an airing rack to dry.
 - Once dry, rewind your skein into a tidy ball.
 - Enjoy crafting with your new rainbow wool!
- 12) Experiment with different yarn crafts. Use your home dyed rainbow wool to crochet, knit, or weave a basic potholder or coaster.
- 13) Use two crossed over ice cream sticks and weave your yarn in and out to make a gods eye ornament.
- 14) Make pompom sheep. You can use a commercial pompom maker, or simply use two half-circles of cardboard, with a smaller semicircle cut out of the straight edge of each one.
- Place the two half-circles on top of each other, and wind yarn around them from the middle of the straight edge, out to the curved edge, and back again.
 - Keep winding yarn until there is a reasonable amount on the card. The more yarn you use, the fatter and fluffier your pompom will be.
 - Thread yarn between the two pieces of card, and then tie it very tightly around the yarn that is gathered in the cut-out part of the straight edges. This will be the centre of your pompom.
 - Use scissors to very carefully cut the yarn along the curved edge of the semi-circle. Place one blade between the two pieces of card, and cut the yarn as it passes over the top edge. Your yarn should puff out into a pompom as you cut.
 - Use the pompom for the body of your sheep, glue on toothpicks for legs, a smaller pompom for the head, and buttons or beads for eyes.
- 15) Visit a sheep farm and watch a sheep being shorn.
- 16) Act out the story of *Baa Baa Blue Sheep* at a school assembly.