

## A LEAF CALLED GREAF

KELLY CANBY

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YEAR LEVEL: Y1–4

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Bear is all alone and lonely until he finds the greenest, most beguiling leaf. A leaf called Greaf. Bear holds Greaf tight throughout the days and nights that follow. Bear can barely remember a time before Greaf. It is as if things have always felt how they felt right now. Until one day, they don't.

Greaf changes with the seasons, and so does Bear. As Greaf leaves him, Bear feels a lightness and warmth that he had almost forgotten. Greaf has gone, but Bear knows its memory will hold a special place in his heart forever.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly Canby is an internationally published illustrator and author. Kelly was born in London but has lived in Australia since the age of three, which is probably around the same age she started playing with pencils and crayons, and it was probably only a few years after that that she decided that playing with pencils and crayons was something she wanted to do for the rest of her life.

### THEMES

- Grief
- Loss
- Hope

### AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y1–4 English

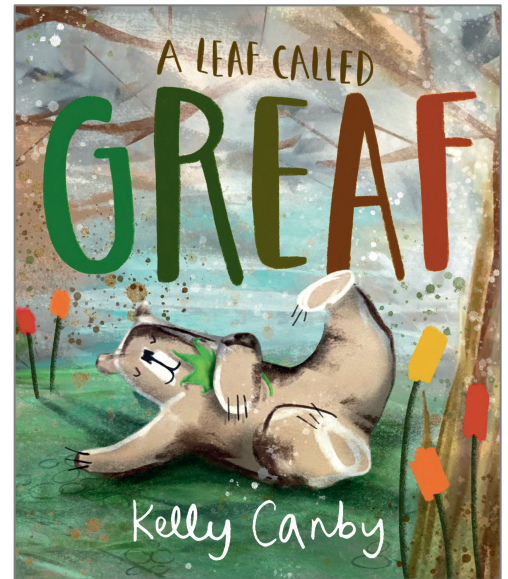
Y1–4 Visual Arts

Y1–4 Science

Y1–4 Health and Physical Education

### USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author's website: [kellycanby.com](http://kellycanby.com)
- Kid's Helpline: [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)



## CLASSROOM IDEAS

### Discussion questions

1. Before reading the story, point out the title, author/illustrator and blurb. Make three predictions about the story based on the title and cover illustration. After reading the story, consider whether your predictions were accurate or not.
2. Look closely at the first spread. Describe what you see. How does it make you feel?
3. What do you think the white bear outlines represent?
4. What words and phrases from the text show that Bear looked after Greaf?
5. Act out or draw these examples of personification from the story:
  - a. **The wind bit and flicked at his fur.**
  - b. **The cold scratched at his nose.**
  - c. **... a single leaf broke free from the tree and danced and swayed and floated ...**
  - d. **The cool breeze tickled at his fur.**
  - e. **The sunshine tapped at his nose.**
6. *Greaf* and *grief* are homophones, words that sound the same but have different meanings. Can you think of a homophone to pair with these words from the story: bear, mourning, nose, would, weight.
7. What does *beguiling* mean? Find a definition, then use it in a sentence.
8. What do you think this line from the story means: **In the shadow of a tree that felt larger than life itself ...**
9. Did you like the book's ending? Why/why not?
10. How does the character of Bear grow or change throughout the story?
11. Why do you think the leaf is called Greaf?
12. What is grief? What is mourning? How does this story relate to grief? If appropriate to your class context, discuss how it feels to lose or move away from someone/something you love.
13. How can picture books help young people understand big ideas? Can you name any other picture books that help young people understand big ideas?
14. Explore the connection between the changing seasons and Bear's emotions. Discuss how different seasons may symbolise stages of grief.
15. Explain to students that different people take different messages from any work of art, depending on how they interpret it. What do you think is the overall message of the book?
16. Bear is an animal but has some human qualities and feelings. Compare the benefits and disadvantages of having a bear/animal character rather than a human character? Which do you prefer in picture books?
17. What three words would you use to describe this book?
18. Rate this book out of five stars in each of the following categories:
  - a. Story
  - b. Illustrations
  - c. Character
  - d. Overall

### Creative writing

1. Write an imaginary letter from Bear to Greaf. What do you think he would like to say?
2. Choose a page from the book and describe what Bear would see, hear, smell and feel in that scene.
3. Write a poem using weather/seasons to symbolise an emotion.
4. Bear describes Greaf as, **waxy and smooth and quiet and calm**. Find a real leaf, then make a list of words and phrases you could use to describe it.

### Visual arts

1. Take a walk outside and collect some fallen leaves. Use them to create rubbings, prints or a collage.
2. Discuss the symbolism used in the illustrations. Explore how colours, objects and positioning contribute to the overall theme of the book.
3. Create a self-portrait to represent your emotions and experiences with grief. Use colours, shapes and symbols to convey feelings.

4. The last spread of the story mirrors the first. What can you see that is the same? What can you see that is different? Why do you think the illustrator included similar artwork at the start and end of the book?
5. List three ways the illustrator has shown that time is passing throughout the story.

## Science

1. Research to find answers to these questions about bears:
  - a. Name three types of bears.
  - b. What physical features do bears have?
  - c. On which continents do bears live? Mark them on a world map.
  - d. What do bears eat?
  - e. How do bears live?

## Health and physical education: Personal, social and community health

1. Brainstorm the emotions Bear feels throughout the story. How do the words and illustrations show how he is feeling?
2. How does Bear find comfort when he is sad? What comforts you when you're sad?
3. Make a list of people who could help you if you were feeling grief or other strong emotions.