

Nicky Somewhere Else

By Saskia Janse
Translated by Purni Morell

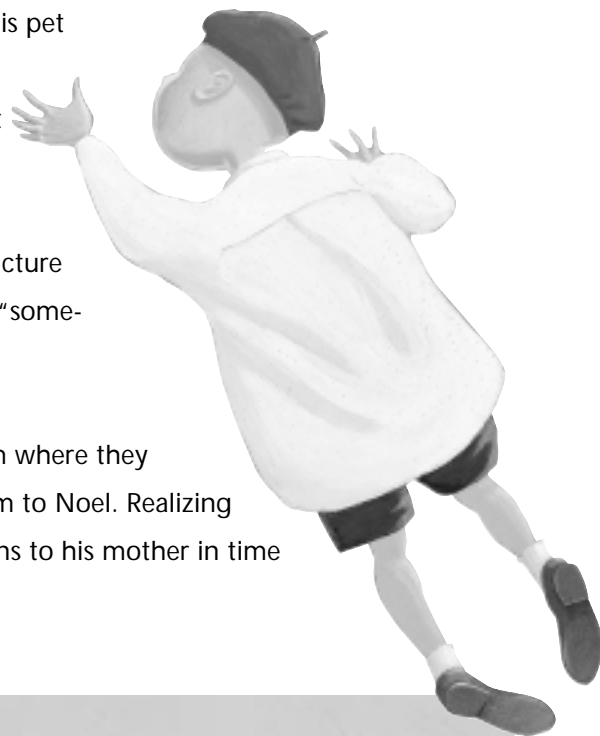
Synopsis

Recommended for
everyone age 6
and older

As angels look down on his life, Nicky, his mother, and his pet rabbit all prepare to celebrate his upcoming birthday. The angels argue over whether to tell Nicky a secret that is being kept from him—that he had a twin brother.

Setting the wheels in motion, the angels arrange for Nicky to find a picture of himself and his twin. His mother tells him that his brother, Noel, is “somewhere else,” so Nicky and Rabbit go off in search of Noel.

With the help of the angels, Nicky and Rabbit cross into another realm where they encounter Nicky’s Grandfather and Santa Claus, who finally leads them to Noel. Realizing that he doesn’t belong in this land, Nicky leaves his brother and returns to his mother in time to celebrate his, and Noel’s, birthday.



RESOURCE LIST

Prepared by Chance Hunt, Seattle Public Library

FOR CHILDREN

In the Night Kitchen

Maurice Sendak

Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge

Mem Fox

William Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Retold by Bruce Coville

Angels: poems

Eloise Greenfield

Bonjour, Lonnie

Faith Ringgold

Dog Heaven

Cynthia Rylant

SPOTLIGHT

The Little Prince

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

An aviator whose plane is forced down in the Sahara Desert encounters a little prince from a small planet who relates his adventures in seeking the secret of what is important in life.

FOR PARENTS & EDUCATORS

Playwriting for the Puppet Theatre

Jean M. Mattson

The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales

Bruno Bettelheim

How the Animals Got their Colors: Animal Myths from Around the World

Michael Rosen

In the Beginning: Creation Stories from Around the World

Virginia Hamilton

SPOTLIGHT

Magic Trees of the Mind: How to Nurture your Child’s Intelligence Creativity, and Healthy Emotions from Birth through Adolescence

Marian Diamond

Supported by scientific research, this work provides background information and practical ideas for parents and teachers interested in sparking and stimulating the growing mind of children and teens.

Puppetry Blends STORYTELLING & *Action*

Contemporary theatre brings together storytelling and action. This blend is fertile ground for puppetry, which enhances the use of the audiences' imagination, and helps to explain the art form's expanding appeal on the international scene. Douglas Paasch, master puppeteer and puppet designer, says that what he particularly loves about puppets is that "there are so few limitations; anything and everything can be a puppet. A chair can have as much character and thought as the person sitting in it." This idea brings the magic of theatre closer to us—it opens up possibilities and shows us things we've never thought of before.



*In SCT's production of Winnie-the-Pooh, Piglet was a glove puppet.
Photo by Chris Bennion.*

Many countries around the world like China, Indonesia, and Italy have been using highly stylized and artful puppets to tell stories for centuries. Japan is famous for its bunraku style of theatre, which is reliant on puppetry and wildly popular. However, Europe's puppet theatre reached its height during the twentieth century, and Speeltheater Holland, the Dutch company that created *Nicky Somewhere Else*, is a good example of the kind of work that is currently being produced.



*A marionette puppet, one of the four main types of puppets: hand or glove, rod, marionette, and shadow.
Photo from Puppets and Puppet Theatre by David Currell.*

Speeltheater often takes puppets and puts them into real-life situations alongside humans. They have both the live actors and the puppets interact with each other and their circumstances in fanciful and creative ways. The use and animation of inanimate objects can create a dynamic dramatic scenario. Playwright Saskia

Janse notes that, in *Nicky Somewhere Else*, the mythical characters are cast as humans and life-size puppets play the human characters, "so, in a way we turn everything upside down." This type of reversal can be particularly useful when difficult topics, like death and loss, are discussed. These issues can easily overwhelm anyone and can terrify a child. Puppets, because they are removed from reality, can allow a person of any age to connect to difficult subject matter without feeling threatened by it.

The use of puppets can also help young audiences feel empowered and spur them to action. As Janse says, "puppets can teach children to do more." She goes on to say that, "if you

[the puppeteer] believe in your puppet, your audience is usually willing to go with you." When the audience is really there with the puppeteer, they have a chance to go places they've never gone before, like Nicky's "somewhere else."

ACTIVITY

- Have your students find an ordinary object, like a pencil or a ball, and turn it into a puppet. First, it is important to give the puppet eyes; you don't have to draw or glue anything (although it can help) but make sure that you have the eyes' placement set in your mind. This will allow your puppet to have a point of focus (a point on the puppet that guides the direction it is looking). What sort of character is your puppet? What personality does it have? How does it move and talk? How does it act when it feels mad, sad, happy, scared, etc.? Then, have your students pair up and create a scene.



COMMUNICATION—listen and observe; communicate clearly
E A L R S ARTS—communicate; connect

MYTH & THE HERO'S JOURNEY

A popular theme of many enduring myths is the journey through life.

This journey, with its adventures and pitfalls, is what gives the hero of myth such intriguing depth. Most likely, when you picture this hero a six-year-old boy does not spring to mind. But *Nicky Somewhere Else* shows us that anyone can be a hero, and everyone can embark on a journey of mythological proportions. We see Nicky struggle, falter, and face obstacles and fears, and these are what allow us to connect with him and mythological journeys in general. We all have to experience trials in our lives. Myths and stories help us to see we are not alone in doing so.

Nicky goes “somewhere else,” the storybook equivalent of the afterlife. “Somewhere else” is where you go when you die. As in the legend of Orpheus, who journeys to the land of the dead in order to bring back his true love Eurydice, Nicky travels somewhere else and attempts to bring back his twin brother Noel.

According to scholars of mythology, like Joseph Campbell, the archetypal hero’s adventure always involves a going away and a coming back. The hero feels something is taken away or missing from his/her life, and goes on a quest to fill that void, returning with something that wasn’t there before, though usually not what he/she set out to find. That “something” often leads to a new understanding of the world. The value of the journey is thus intangible and spiritual rather than physical and quantifiable.

With its transformative power, a hero’s adventure becomes a rite of passage, as the hero can never go back to the way things were. Nicky is unable to return to who he was before he knew about Noel, as that knowledge changes the way he views himself. He also learns firsthand that loss is a part of life. Metaphorically, a large part of childhood innocence is lost to him, but in its stead lies a doorway to a growing awareness of the world around him.

Through myths and stories, we are able to understand more about our own life’s journeys. Inextricably entwined with elusive subjects like religion, psychology, and art, myth touches on the most mysterious and significant aspects of our lives. We all must take our own journey, and we are all the heroes of our own story.



Through mythology we can learn that life is a journey and we are the heroes of our own life’s story. The Behemoth and the Leviathan by William Blake.

ACTIVITY

• Ask your students to create a story of someone going on a journey full of obstacles and excitement. Who is their hero? What is his/her life like before they embark on the quest? How is the hero changed by the journey? Does the hero change in only positive ways? Let your students tell their hero’s story to the rest of the class. Encourage them to use their whole bodies as well as their voices to communicate.



EALRS

WRITING—write for a purpose

COMMUNICATION—listen and observe; communicate clearly

ARTS—communicate; connect