

In conversation with Freya Blackwood, creator of *The Boy and the Elephant*



***The Boy and the Elephant* is told entirely through illustration. What made you decide to publish this story as a wordless picture book?**

The idea for *The Boy and the Elephant* came from a concept drawing I did for a series of murals based on the idea of hide-and-seek. I stored the idea away and over time kept thinking of ways it could become a story. Eventually I had an entire story developed, but as drawings. Both my publisher and I thought it worked without text, and by the time I finished the illustrations, I loved how quiet the story felt and didn't want to add words.

No matter the weather, the boy visits his friend the elephant in the lot next door. Do you have a similar place you like to visit regularly?

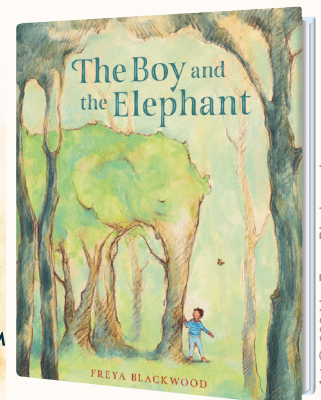
My family has a farm that I visit all year round. At different times of the year, we swim and row a boat in the dam, walk down to a creek and picnic, check cattle and feed two old horses. It's beautiful countryside that we love protecting.

When the land is sold, the boy comes up with a plan to save his friend. What message do you hope children, and adults, will take from this story?

I hope this story encourages readers to try to make a difference even if succeeding seems impossible. The very act of trying—of being brave enough to go out on a limb for something you believe in—is sometimes the hardest part. But it can encourage others to stand up, too, and together, we can bring about change.

Do you have a favorite image from the book?

I have favorites for different reasons. But with this book I think my favorites would have to be the page where the boy starts to lead the elephant, and you can see the elephant's shadow, and the following page when you realize there are more animals following. I love the feeling of freedom, relief, and joy you get from these pages.



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