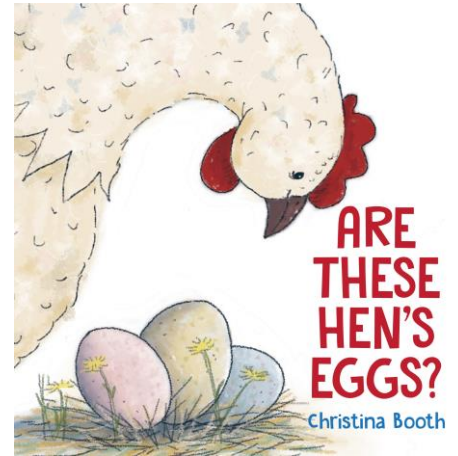


# Are These Hen's Eggs?

By Christina Booth

February 2020 ISBN 9781760523497  
 Hardback picture book  
 Recommended for 3-6-year-olds



## Summary

One sunrise, one sunset more...Hen can't wait for her eggs to hatch. But then the storm comes, and her eggs are lost.

Who can help her find them? What will Hen do? And are all these eggs hers?

A warm and heartfelt story of community, hope, acceptance and unconditional love.



This simply-told story about helping, caring and accepting features an unexpected ending that will delight readers young and old. One of the book's great strengths is that it encourages interaction and discussion with younger children, all the while including some simple counting and science elements. Although perfect for Easter activities, *Are These Hens Eggs?* can be read, shared and discussed all year round.

## Use in the curriculum

*Are These Hen's Eggs?* demands the interaction of children with the text and pictures. It is impossible to read or listen to the story without detailed examination of the charming pictures to locate the various eggs and follow the story.

Thematically, the story arc traverses contentment and expectation, danger and confusion, seeking and finding, helping each other, finishing the job, and the satisfactory conclusion of all the babies finding a mother.

Themes can be extended to include fostering, adoption, mixed families, communities, acceptance and unconditional love.

The text lends itself to reading aloud, chanting or reciting, acting out and making activities.

In the development of numeracy, the pictures and story enable:

- counting (numbers are represented in coloured text)
- distinguishing shapes (find the eggs / note the differences between them)
- ordering by size (see front endpapers)
- classifying by distinguishing features (see back endpapers)

To develop visual literacy, have children:

- follow the pictures of the owl throughout the book and tell her story;
- describe how weather and the time of day are depicted;
- discuss how the pictures add emotion to the text.

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## Themes

- resilience
- diversity
- friendship
- family
- the life cycle

## Discussion questions

**1.** Before opening *Are These Hen's Eggs?* look at the title and cover design. Discuss what students think the story might be about and the clues in the picture that make them think that. Ask questions, such as:

- What sort of animal do you think the story will be about?
- What do we call the things that hens lay?
- What are the baby chickens called when they hatch?
- How many eggs can you count here?
- Can you name other animals that lay eggs?

**2.** Open the cover to the double-page image of the row of eggs just inside the cover and lead the class in counting the numbers 1 to 8.

Ask students:

- Why might the eggs all be different sizes and shapes?
- Which of the eggs looks the most like the sort a hen might lay? [*Hint:* if students are unsure ask them to choose which egg or eggs look the most like what you might find in a refrigerator at home.]

**3.** Read the story through once and ask students the following questions to help them explore the story:

- How did Hen lose all her eggs?
- How did she feel when they were lost?
- Name the different farm animals who come to help Hen find her eggs.
- How many eggs do her friends gather for her?
- Are they all her eggs?
- What happens at the end of the story to prove they aren't all her eggs?
- Other than chicks, what other species of animal hatch out of eggs?
- Who is the one non-bird to hatch in the story?
- How does Hen show that she loves Turtle as much as all her other chicks?
- Including Turtle, how many 'chicks' does Hen have at the end of the story?

**4.** Reread the story, this time pointing out the little owl in the tree sitting in its nest on the first double-page spread. When you get to the page where Hen is sitting on all the eggs that were found, point out that the owl is looking very sad in the tree and ask students why that might be. Keep reading until you come to the page with the numbers '6,7,8 and 9' and ask why the owl might be much happier now. [*Hint:* its egg has hatched and a healthy baby owl is born.] Turn the page again and point out that the owl is no longer alone in its nest.

**5. (a)** Explain that sometimes the way a word is shown on a page can tell us a lot more about that word than just its meaning: for instance, it can tell us whether the word should be read in a soft voice or a very loud voice. *(continued over page)*

5. (a) *continued:*

Turn to the spread with the words, 'Then the storm comes.' on the left-hand page and 'SNAP! CRACK! BOOM!' on the right. Ask students to describe how the words 'SNAP! CRACK! BOOM!' look different to the words on the opposite page. [*Hint:* encourage students to think about differences in size, colour and angle.]

Now discuss how these differences help us know how to read the words.

**(b)** Read the story one more time and see if students can point out other examples where a word looks different to the others on the page. [*Hint:* the page featuring the word 'Hooray!' and the page where Turtle's egg starts to 'Crack'.]

**6.** Compare the double-page images on the inside front and back covers. How do they differ? Read the names of the different types of eggs on the back inside cover and then turn back to the page in the story with the word 'Hooray!' and see if students can match each image of the different bird species to its egg.

**7. Easter Time:** Decorate eggs with a beautiful marbled effect. All you will need is one boiled egg per student, a small bowl of cold water for every three students, some different pastel-coloured nail polishes, toothpicks, a wire egg dipper or wire whisk and waxed paper.

1. Fill each small plastic container with one cup of cold water.
2. Pour about 10 to 20 drops of each shade of nail polish into the container or water.
3. Swirl the colours with the toothpick.
4. Submerge each egg in the water/polish mixture with the egg dipper or wire whisk.
5. Push eggs gently around the bowl and remove quickly.
6. Place eggs on the wax paper and wait to dry.
7. Once finished, place all eggs in a large basket and display in your classroom.

**NB: Do not allow students to eat the eggs.**

**8.** Watch a video of a chick growing in its egg and hatching. There are hundreds on YouTube to choose from.

Follow this up with a visit from some real-life hatchlings. Many companies offer a service where they will bring 10–12 eggs to your classroom, along with an incubator, food, bedding and a brooding pen. The eggs should hatch approx. 2–3 days after arrival and your students can monitor their development from hatchling to chick.

**9.** Study the life-cycle of each bird species represented in the story and what they do with their eggs once laid. Is it just the mother who sits, or does the father sit as well? What happens once the birds or animals have hatched? Who looks after them and for how long? Find out why the turtles' mum didn't come with the other animals.

**10.** Use the chart on the back endpapers as a guide and create the class's own size line of eggs from different bird species. You could also do a time line of how long the eggs take to hatch.

**11. Art:**

**Egg shell mosaics.** Colour egg shells and get young children to create a mosaic of chicks and eggs. Use a pre-drawn outline or get them to create their own drawing first.

**Collage.** Using fabric, feathers and textures, create a collage of chicks in their eggs.

**Class installation.** As a class collaborative project, build a nest with found objects. Create a hen using litho paper and coloured crayons and dye, make two sides, cut it out and join both sides, leaving room to gently stuff with shredded paper. Seal and place in the nest. Create eggs using other found objects (stones, papier mâché etc.) and add to the nest.

## From the author

'I live on a bushy block on a hill and we have chickens. Often, they become broody, but we coax them off the nest. We had one hen who was determined and started laying her eggs in the garden. At first, we would find her as she would cackle when she laid an egg but then she disappeared. We thought we had lost her.

'She was so well hidden, right next to where we walked every day, perched under a tree on a steep slope. Sadly, the eggs were not fertilised so there was no hope of chicks, but she wouldn't budge. We moved her to her own safe yard and hutch and bought her what we thought were fertilised eggs and we waited. Sadly, none hatched. She had now been sitting on eggs for over six weeks. She wouldn't move. So, we got some day-old chicks, ten of them. We popped them under her in the night and she became the best mum we had ever seen. Even though they weren't "her eggs", she loved them all just the same.

'I wondered what would happen if, during a storm (which we often had), her eggs had been lost? How would she find them and return them to her nest? The story began to grow.

'The day I finished the final illustrations for the book, I sent them away to the publisher. It had been a couple of years since the hen who inspired the story had her chicks arrive. One of them, now grown up, had recently gone missing. We feared she may have been taken. She was missing for a quite a few weeks. I heard a strange noise so left my studio to see what was messing up our garden. There she was with her surprise brood of eight chicks. A very proud Mum. I love it when life imitates art.'

— Christina Booth

## About the Author

Originally trained as a teacher and painter, Christina Booth is an award-winning author of eight books, and illustrator of over twenty.

Christina was awarded a CBCA Honour Book Award for her book *Kip* and she has won numerous notable book awards as well as the Environment Award for Children's Literature for *Welcome Home*.

