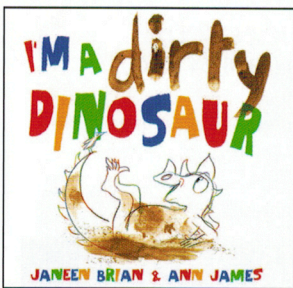


# Before School



## **I'm a Dirty Dinosaur** (2013)

Janeen Brian, ill. Ann James, Penguin, 20pp.  
978 0 670 07615 4 **\$19.99** Hb



The enthusiastically grubby little dinosaur around whom this tale revolves is a treat. As he cavorts across the pages, proudly proclaiming his delight in all things muddy (and especially his own naked little body), his enthusiasm taps into an unforgettable, and oft forbidden, facet of childhood fun—the endless possibilities offered by a puddle of mud.

Janeen Brian and Ann James have utilised, to great effect, the universal appeal of baby animals, as with low-slung toddler-like tum (complete with belly button), sturdy legs and impudent eyes, the dirty dinosaur's shape, as well as his consummate curiosity, make him an endearing protagonist.

With unbridled glee the little fellow stomps and slides through a series of mud-splattered actions, revelling in his increasingly grubby body and the fun one can have with a catchy rhythm and a nonchalant state of mind.

*I'm a dirty dinosaur/ with dirty, dirty feet/  
I splash in all the puddles/ and I stomp about  
the street./STAMP, STAMP, STAMP, STAMP,/  
STAMP ABOUT THE STREET!*

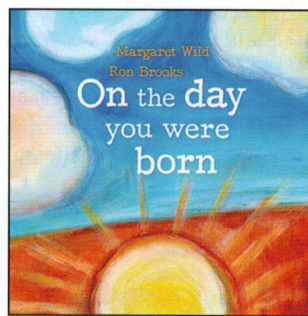
The intermeshing text, illustrations, and book design are masterly. There is a dextrous, deceptive simplicity to the whole: Brian's narrative, delivered with verve and wit; James' sure, expressive touch and energetic line with magic pencil, watercolour and actual mud; the interspersing pages with uppercase 'shouting text' in a clear, mostly primary palette—an effective counterpoint to the tertiary tones of the swamp.

There is a swing to the rhyme, matched by the illustrations, which demands attention and involvement.

This is a pre-schooler gem. Made from sturdy stock, with rounded corners, and, like the little dinosaur who 'jumps straight in'—so the end papers have been dispensed with and the story starts immediately. The imprint information sits unobtrusively in the swamp, inside the back cover. The outside of the back cover delivers the unexpected punch line—don't miss it.

Highly recommended.

Christine Horsfield



## **On the Day You Were Born** (2013)

Margaret Wild, ill. Ron Brooks, Allen & Unwin, 24pp.  
978 1 74114 754 4 **\$24.99** Hb



This beautiful book celebrates the arrival of a new baby. The storyline is written some time later from the new child's perspective.

*My daddy said,  
On the day you were born, I wrapped  
you up warm  
and took you for a walk to see the  
world*

...  
*My daddy said,  
On the day you were born,  
falcons and hawks did acrobatics in  
the sky,  
and a feather fell to earth,  
right into your hand.*

Margaret Wild's skillfully chosen words envelop the reader whilst the glorious, brilliantly coloured illustrations by Ron Brooks are the right fit for the text. Double pages feature Australiana with vivid blue skies, red earth, eucalypts, corrugated iron buildings and colourful parrots.

Pre-school children will adore the repetition in this read aloud book, along with an opportunity to extend their vocabulary with text such as *the moon was full and white and sumptuous as it lit our way home*. They will delight in investigating the superb illustrations in detail, searching for ladybirds, crickets and butterflies amongst the wildflowers. This is a feel good book for adults as well, as they too reflect on the emotions experienced when a new life arrives in this wonderful world.

A very special picture book has been created by these two highly talented individuals. I cannot wait to read it to my grandchildren and witness the wonderment in their eyes.

Highly recommended.

Patricia Halsall