

# Read for Pleasure

## The Tear Thief

By Carol Ann Duffy and Nicoletta Ceccoli



Each night, in the hours between supper and bedtime, the Tear Thief carries her waterproof sack over her shoulder as she soundlessly steals the tears of every child who cries.

But what does she do with all those tears?  
And why are the tears of real sadness the most special of all?

### Title Talk

*The title of this story is: The Tear Thief.*

- What does this thief like to steal?
- Whose tears might they belong to?
- Why might a thief want to steal tears?
- What might this tell us about who the Tear Thief is?
- Where and when do you think the Tear Thief will strike?
- What kind of tears might the Tear Thief want to steal?
- Are all tears the same or are some tears more precious than others?  
Discuss.
- Where might the Tear Thief keep these stolen tears?
- Do you think this story will end happily ever after or might it have a sad ending? Why might this be?



## **Cover Chat**



Now look at the cover of this picture book.

- Can you spot the Tear Thief? Describe her.
- Did it surprise you as to who the Tear Thief appears to be?
- What do you notice about which lights are switched on in each of the houses?
- What might this suggest about the time at which this story is set?
- What does the Tear Thief appear to be doing outside this window? Why might she be doing this?
- How cold and how loud is this scene? Why might this be?
- How might this contribute to how we perceive the Tear Thief? Discuss.

## **Page 1-2**

- When did the Tear Thief creep into town?
- Why do you think she did this late one evening?
- What did the Tear Thief carry with her?
- Why might she be carrying this?
- What did the Tear Thief look like? Can you see her on page 2?
- What did the Tear Thief wear?
- Why do you think she wore silk slippers?

## **Page 3-4**

- When did the Tear Thief fly into a tall tree?
- What did she do when she flew there?
- Whilst there, what did the Tear Thief hear?
- What might this mean for the Tear Thief?
- How might she be feeling at this time? Why might this be?



## **Page 5-6**

- The Tear Thief decides to investigate. Silent as smoke, she quietly listens out for the crying to start again. Where does the crying come from?
- Who is it who is crying at Number 17?

- Look at the picture on page 6. Why do you think he might be crying?

### **Page 7-8**

- What does the boy's mother say to him to stop his crying? Does it work?
- What did the Tear Thief do with the single plump tear that dangled from the boy's nose like a pearl?
- How would this make the Tear Thief feel? Why would this be?

### **Page 9-10**

- Can you see the Tear Thief sitting on the lamp post on page 9? What is she doing there?
- What do you think she is listening out for?
- From which house number does she hear more crying?
- Look up the word SOBBING. Why might these tears excite the Tear Thief? Discuss.
- Can you see the Tear Thief peering inside the bedroom window of house Number 25?



### **Page 11-12**

- Why is the red-faced girl crying?
- *I WANT CHOCOLATE!*  
Why might these words have been written in capital letters? Discuss.
- We are told that these words are BAWLED. What do you think this word means? Look it up. How did your definition match up to the definition that you found?
- How many tears did the Tear Thief collect from the red-faced girl? Why do you think this? Might this be why the author chooses to use an ellipsis on page 11? Discuss.
- Did the red-faced girl eventually get the chocolate she so desperately wanted? Why not?



### **Page 13-14**

- Why do the following people cry?
  - \* The boy with a flute?
  - \* The baby?
  - \* The twins?
  - \* The boy with a hole in his trousers?
- Can you see these children crying in the illustration on these pages? More importantly, can you see the Tear Thief collecting all their tears?
- Interestingly, in the bottom left-hand corner we see a little girl crying as she hugs a teddy bear and stares out of her bedroom window. How do we know for sure that she is crying? And why might she be crying? Discuss.



### **Page 15-16**

- Which jewels are the following tears described as while Clinking and chinking and winking in the Tear Thief's waterproof sack?
  - \* Tears of rage?
  - \* Tears of envy?
  - \* Tears of self-pity?
  - \* Scared tears?
  - \* Guilty tears?
- Can you see the Tear Thief's waterproof sack BRIMMING with her bejewelled tears?
- Yet one young girl is not in her bedroom, nor is she in her bathroom or living room. Indeed, she is not in her house at all. Where is she stood?
- Why might she be stood there?

### **Page 17-18**

- What kind of tears was this young girl crying?
- What kind of tears were they not?



### **Page 19-20**

- Where does the young girl see the Tear Thief?
- The young girl asks the Tear Thief four questions. What are they?
- How does the Tear Thief answer each one?



### **Page 21-22**

- The young girl asks a fifth and final question about why her tears are so precious? How do you think the Tear Thief will answer?

### **Page 23-24**

- What does the Tear Thief tell the young girl she does with all the different tears she collects? Act it out.
- How do the tears of pure sadness differ from all the other tears the Tear Thief collects? Discuss.
- We also discover why the young girl is crying tears of real sadness. Why is this?

### **Page 25-26**

- When the young girl opens her eyes, where is the Tear Thief?
- Where does the young girl look in order to see and speak to her again?
- What (or who) does the young girl find instead?

### **Page 27-28**

- Where is the young girl when she finally wakes up?
- Who is with her curled up in his basket?
- What does the young girl see from her bedroom window? How beautiful is this? Discuss.



### **Page 29-30**

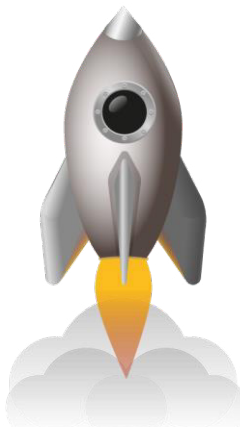
- Where does the young girl see the Tear Thief for one last time?
- What is the Tear Thief doing?
- The sight of this is so beautiful, the young girl begins to cry tears of joy.

Interestingly, we also begin to hear the tears of a new born baby crying next door. Might this be significant? Discuss.

**Think about the book as a whole:**

Do you agree that people cry different kinds of tears depending on what they are crying for?

Do you agree with the Tear Thief that the most precious of these tears are those that are cried in real sadness?



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## **John Murray**

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John is a recognised specialist in developing children's reading and comprehension.

The creator of Reading Explorers, Top Class Comprehension and Reading Rocketeers, his seminars and CPD training focus on the teaching, learning and enjoyment of reading.

An independent Literacy consultant, he aims to support schools to improve their performance and secure best practice. Above all, it is to ignite within us a passion for books and a genuine love for the written word.

His enthusiasm and expertise can be seen throughout his work and his resources and training are used in classrooms worldwide.

“There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate’s loot on Treasure Island.”

Walt Disney