



Story Summary

A little boy faces his fear of the dark by engaging in a conversation with it. Imagining the dark as a friendly shadow creature, the boy comes to the realization that the dark is not only a necessary part of life, but that it can be fun as well! The boy and his new friend play make-believe, meditate, and listen

to music until it's finally time to fall asleep.

Wai Mei Wong is an early childhood educator with a passion for making sure children and their families have the emotional support they need to thrive. Her debut picture book, *Hello, Dark*, celebrates a child-led solution to nighttime anxiety as a little boy overcomes his fear of the dark by befriending it. Born in Hong Kong, Mei now lives in Toronto with her husband, her nature-loving son, and two feline friends, Sesame and Pepper.

Tamara Campeau's illustration journey began at Dawson College in Montreal, where she earned her associate's degree in illustration and design. Shortly after, she furthered her studies at Ontario's Sheridan College, where she attained her illustration bachelor's degree with honors. Tamara works digitally, using strong lighting and vibrant color palettes to bring stories to life in her painterly illustrations. She loves creating endearing characters with a strong sense of personality and emotions, taking inspiration from wildlife, children, and the environments they reside in. When she's not at her desk, Tamara can be found breaking a sweat at the local gym or exploring nature with her standard poodle, Peanut.

Links:

3 Minutes Peaceful Breaths: Mindful Breathing for Anxiety in Kids | Calmer classrooms - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3Aol2CCsdo>

Pair this book with:

The Night Lion by Sanne Dufft



Picture book ages 4–7 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-221-9 | Pages: 32

THEMES

Fear, courage, sleep

BISAC CODES

JUV010000 JUVENILE FICTION / Bedtime & Dreams

JUV039140 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Self-Esteem & Self-Reliance

JUV051000 JUVENILE FICTION / Imagination & Play

JUVENILE FICTION / Health & Daily Living / Daily Activities

READING LEVEL

Fountas & Pinnell: K

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Read-Aloud; Comprehension; Mental Health; Science; Math; Drama; Poetry; Visual Art

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

ACTIVITY	MAIN SUBJECT AREAS	SPECIFIC SKILLS
Read-Aloud	Comprehension	Activate prior knowledge Infer, predict, make connections
Facing Fears	Mental Health	Addressing fears
Light and Shadows	Science Math Drama Shared Reading	Changes in light from the sun Measurement (length) Puppetry Poetry
Dark Art	Visual Art	Multi-media 2-D art works
Sweet Dreams Kit	Mental Health	Dealing with fear, self-soothing, bedtime routines

THE READ-ALoud

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- identify reading comprehension strategies (e.g., activate prior knowledge, infer, predict, make connections) and use them before, during, and after reading to understand texts

You Will Need

- *Hello, Dark*
- Chart paper and markers
- Other books about darkness, sleep, or fears, such as *The Night Lion* by Sanne Dufft, *Ben and the Scaredy-Dog* by Sarah Ellis, *Can't You*

Sleep, Little Bear? by Martin Waddell or *Little Mouse's Big Book of Fears* by Emily Gravett

How To:

Before Reading

Read and show the cover to students. Invite discussion around what is happening in the picture and what the book might be about. Point to the shadow and ask, "Who might this be?" Invite students to tell what they do to fall asleep at night. Read the dedication page. If necessary, explain its purpose to students. Plan to discuss the illustrator's dedication after reading the book.

During Reading

First spread:

- After reading, ask, “How is the child feeling?” “How can you tell?”

Second spread:

- Point to the shadow. Say, “Oh! Who’s this?” Invite a student to explain how the child is talking to the dark.

Third spread:

- Read expressively.

Fourth spread:

- Invite students to use the ears and eyes of their imaginations to hear and see what the child is going to describe. Read the page expressively.

Fifth and sixth spreads:

- Read expressively.

Seventh and eighth spreads:

- After reading, invite students to suggest other benefits of the dark or of sleep (e.g., in hot weather, the earth cools off at night; moths pollinate plants at night, our immune systems are strengthened by having a period of darkness every day).

Ninth through twelfth spreads:

- Read expressively.

Thirteenth spread:

- Before reading, invite students to look at the pictures and infer what the child is doing in each one, and why. Read the page. Invite students to share experiences using these or other falling-asleep strategies.

Fourteenth spread:

- Read and invite students to respond.



After Reading

Make a feelings chart using words from the book (worrying, helpless, alone, afraid), and other words students suggest. Invite students to suggest how the child feels in the last few pages of the book and add those to the chart. Contrast with how the child felt at the beginning.

Read other books about darkness, sleep, or fears, such as *The Night Lion* by Sanne Dufft, *Ben and the Scaredy-Dog* by Sarah Ellis, *Can’t You Sleep, Little Bear?* by Martin Waddell or *Little Mouse’s Big Book of Fears* by Emily Gravett.

ACTIVITY I: FACING FEARS

Using this activity, teachers can give students a safe space to name and address their fears.

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- Begin to understand that mental health is a part of overall health and reflect on the things they can do to appreciate and take care of their body and mind
- Begin to understand that a person’s thoughts, emotions, and actions can affect mental health
- Name their feelings (e.g., happy, relaxed, calm, uncomfortable, sad, angry, frustrated, scared, worried) and recognize when they might need to get help

You Will Need

- Chart paper and markers or digital equivalent
- Other picture books about facing fears, such as *The Night Lion* by Sanne Dufft, or *Ben and the Scaredy Dog* by Sarah Ellis
- Calming music, art paper, and crayons or markers
- Internet

How To:

1. Read *Hello, Dark* again, this time stopping to record on a chart some ideas about the child's response to the dark. If students are non-readers, include drawings as cues, say the words as you write them, and review the chart often as a shared reading activity. Example:

Name the fear: The Dark

What is bad about it?

- I stay awake.
- I worry what will happen when I'm asleep.
- I hear noises.
- I can't see things.
- I feel helpless and alone.

What is good about it?

- It shields the sun's bright light.
- The world can sleep.
- Owls and foxes are safe.

What can I do about it?

- I can see the moon and stars.
- I can talk about happy things.
- I can play imaginary games.
- I can count sheep.
- I can practice breathing.
- I can listen to music.

2. Read some other stories about facing fears, such as the ones listed in the "You Will Need" section. Answer the same or similar questions for each book.
3. Invite students to draw freely while listening to calming music. If students draw about their fears, make a chart similar to the one above using fears they suggest.
4. Practice the techniques listed in the "What can I do about it?" section. An introduction to mindful breathing for children can be found here: [3 Minutes Peaceful Breaths: Mindful Breathing for Anxiety in Kids I Calmer classrooms - YouTube](#)
5. Encourage students to talk to you, a caregiver, or a counselor about their fears.
6. Investigate further one or more of the topics highlighted in the "What is good about it?" section, such as Sun Protection, The Importance of Sleep, Nocturnal Animals, or The Night Sky, according to the interests of your students.



ACTIVITY 2: LIGHT AND SHADOWS

For brevity, this activity is described as a series of teacher-led items, but it would also make an excellent student-led investigation.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- ask questions about and describe some natural occurrences, using their own observations and representations
- select an attribute to measure, determine an appropriate unit of measure, and measure and compare two or more objects
- explore a variety of tools, materials, and processes (e.g., puppets, flashlights) to create drama
- explore the effects of light from the sun
- investigate the changes in the amount of light from the sun that occur throughout the day and year
- read literary texts (e.g. rhymes)

You Will Need

- Light source
- Clipboards, pencils, paper
- Card stock, scissors
- Prisms (optional)
- Black construction paper, adult volunteer
- Poem “My Shadow” by Robert Louis Stevenson

How To:

1. *Understand shadows:* Darken the classroom. Invite a volunteer to stand a few feet away from a screen or blank wall, facing the wall, while you shine a bright light on them (e.g. the flashlight on your phone). Draw the students’ attention to the volunteer’s shadow. Explain that the shadow is formed because the light from the flashlight is blocked by the volunteer’s body and can’t reach the wall.

2. *Measure shadows:* Take students outside on a sunny day with clipboards, pencils, and paper. Go out three times, once near the beginning of the school day, once at noon, and once near the end of the day. In pairs, have them measure and record the lengths of each others’ shadows (using standard or non-standard units as appropriate). Assist as needed. Afterward, discuss their observations and link them to the apparent differences of the height of the sun in the sky, using a globe and a flashlight. Repeating the activity six months apart, as close as possible to the winter and summer solstices (around Dec. 21 and June 21), can yield even more discussion.
3. *Create shadow puppets:* Review the illustrations from the tenth spread of *Hello, Dark* to the end, inviting students to examine “The Dark” character. Provide students with card stock, pencils, and scissors. Invite them to draw and cut out their own version of “The Dark”, and attach a craft stick at the bottom.
4. *Play with shadow puppets:* Set up a station where students can engage in imaginative play with their puppets. You will need a light source (an old overhead projector, a lamp, or a flashlight) and a blank wall or screen. Turn the classroom lights off, if possible, while this station is in use. Extend the learning at this station by providing prisms for students to experiment with as well.
5. *Silhouettes:* Have each student in turn sit on a chair between a light source and the wall, facing sideways, so that a shadow of their profile is visible. Have an adult volunteer trace the child’s silhouette onto black construction paper that is fastened to the wall. Cut out and mount the silhouettes. Use them as caregiver gifts and/or to decorate the walls for a special event such as kindergarten graduation.
6. *Poetry:* Use the poem “My Shadow” by Robert Louis Stevenson as a shared reading selection. Invite students to comment on the narrator’s ideas about shadows.



ACTIVITY 3: DARK ART

In this activity, students create a glow-in-the-dark picture to hang on their bedroom wall.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- use a variety of materials, tools, and techniques to respond to a design challenge

You Will Need

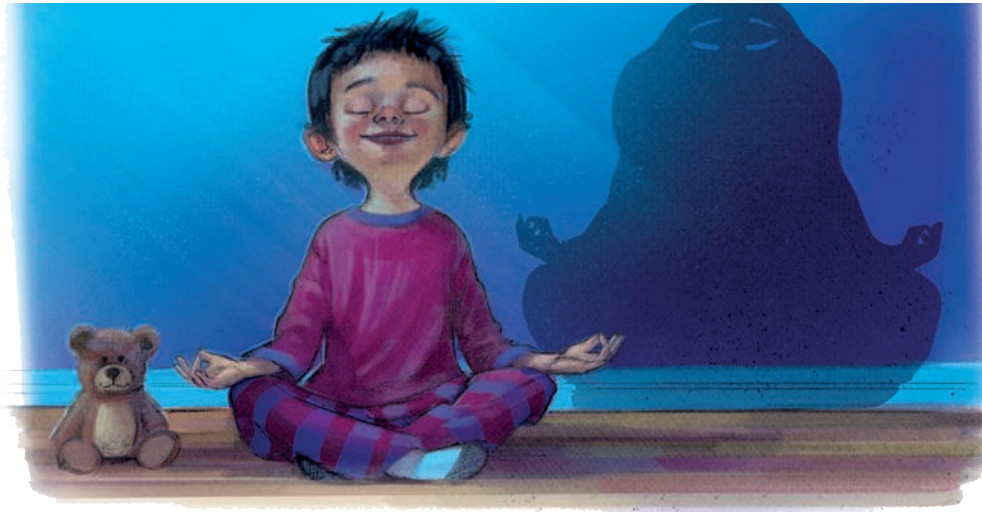
- Black construction paper
- A variety of glow-in-the-dark media, such as paper, tape, stickers, glitter, paint, glue, crayons, markers, stickers (search online stores for maximum variety)

How To:

1. Using black construction paper as a base, use various glow-in-the-dark media to make a few samples to show the students how their finished product will work. You might make a picture of the night sky using star-shaped stickers and a faint swath of glitter for the milky way, a sea-scape of fluorescent jellyfish using paints, and a portrait of “The Dark” (the character in the book) using markers. Many students will want to pile on as many items as they can, but you can model a more selective approach.
2. Take students into a room that can be darkened (e.g. the gymnasium or auditorium), bringing your samples with you. Once students are safely seated, turn the lights off and show students how your work glows in the dark (depending on the materials used, you may need to “charge” your pieces using the flash from a phone camera for maximum effect).



3. Set up a station with the materials and allow students to create their own art pieces.
4. Take students back into the room that can be darkened with their finished artwork, and allow them to see their work glow when you turn off the lights.
5. Send the work home with a note to caregivers, encouraging them to hang it in their child's bedroom.



ACTIVITY 4: SWEET DREAMS KIT

In this activity, teachers prepare a kit for students to borrow at their caregivers' request.

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- Begin to understand how a person's body and brain respond to challenging or uncomfortable situations, and describe what they can do to feel better at those times
- Learn how to improve their sleep hygiene

You Will Need

- Gift bag or small backpack

Wai Mei Wong, illus. Tamara Campeau
Hello, Dark

- Permanent Marker
- *Hello, Dark*
- A nightlight
- Sweet Dreams Kit suggestions for caregivers (included below)
- A supply of small stuffed toys
- A supply of growth charts (or paper tape measures)
- A flashlight
- A supply of blank, unlined journals

How To:

1. Take a gift bag or small backpack and write on it with permanent marker: Sweet Dreams Kit.
2. Place *Hello, Dark*, a night light, the suggestions for caregivers, a stuffed toy, a growth chart, a flashlight, and a journal inside.
3. In a class newsletter, let parents know that this kit is available to borrow upon request, and that it is especially for children who are afraid of the dark, but that anyone may borrow it.
4. Send the kit home when requested, with a due date card attached (e.g. one week later).
5. Replenish the kit with a new stuffed toy, growth chart, and journal—and anything else that has gone missing.

This guide was created with
support from Ontario Creates



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Bibliography

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<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.pdf>

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/healthcurr18.pdf>

[The Kindergarten Program 2016 | Ontario.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/healthcurr18.pdf)

Sweet Dreams Kit

Suggestions for Caregivers:

- Read *Hello, Dark* to your child. Some of the items shown or mentioned in the book are also in this kit.
- Invite your child to talk about things that make the dark scary, then things that are good about the dark.
- Make a tin-can telephone and play with it with your child.
- Go outside at night together and look at the night sky.
- Play games with a flashlight, making hand shadows on a wall.
- Guide your child to close their eyes and count imaginary sheep.
- Guide your child in meditative breathing, or use an online guide like this one: [\(1\) 3 Minutes Peaceful Breaths: Mindful Breathing for Anxiety in Kids | Calmer classrooms - YouTube](#)
- Choose some calming music with your child and play it as they fall asleep.
- Encourage your child to choose a stuffed toy to take to bed. They may keep the toy.
- Use the nightlight if you wish.
- During the day, put up a growth chart and measure your child twice a year. You may keep the growth chart.
- Encourage your child to draw or write about their experience with the kit in the journal. Keep the journal as a place for your child to draw or write about their feelings.

Sweet dreams!