

Arriving Home

When Maggie, the Magpie Goose and Eric Echidna return from Italy back to Mapleton, they discover new happy memories. From old tractors to sweet, syrupy pancakes, art to waddling ducks, this picture story celebrates friendships, community, home and belonging.

What influences helped in making decisions while writing?

Using popular tourist names like Maleny Showgrounds and The Barn on Flaxton helped me to shape the story. Mapleton Lilyponds park is a place where my grandchildren play, therefore it seemed important to include it in the story. I love Australian animals and thought children could identify with them easily. Our native animals are popular overseas too.

How did the collaboration work with the artists?

I approached a group of women one day who come together regularly at the Mapleton Library to paint, sketch and do botanical art. They agreed to take on the story. We then had to coordinate nine different styles to create the vision for the book. Watercolour scenes, coloured pencil and ink resulted in a vibrant Maleny Showgrounds, the wood ducks crossing the road, cockatoos and children playing at the Lilyponds park.

What do you think works well in the story?

Probably the variety of places the animals visit, the scenery, plants and quirky conversations between Maggie and Eric. I hope children enjoy the action and description of the animals, paying attention to the hidden lizard on nearly every page. The story promotes the region as a positive place to create happy memories. It is light-hearted and entertaining.

What do you want your book to do for readers?

To enjoy making memories wherever you are. To celebrate community and friendships. To pay attention and respect the animals, flora and fauna. Mostly, I would like the book to bring a sparkle to someone's day.

Tell us about yourself, Marg as a writer.

I love connecting to children through story, poetry and picture books. I belong to a writers group called The Round Table, attend many literary conferences and workshops, write a blog, and share my love of children's books with my ten grandchildren who live in Brisbane. My trip to the Bologna Book Fair in Italy was the highlight of 2019. I have published poems in two anthologies and the *Hinterland Times*. I talk at primary schools about authors

and illustrators of kid's books. Currently, I am working on a manuscript for adults that will be self-published in 2020.

Teacher notes are written by Marg to accompany this charming story, which is intended for families and children ages three and above.

Arriving Home, is available for purchase at the Mapleton Library or from Marg Gibbs, for \$10. (m.j.gibbs@bigpond.com)



Arriving Home author, Marg Gibbs

LAST MONTH THE HT shared news of a forthcoming children's picture book, *Arriving Home*, where nine local artists, called Mapleton Art, collaborated to contribute the illustrations. The book promotes some of the beautiful towns of the Sunshine Coast Hinterland, and concludes with facts about the places and the animals (such as the long-nosed bandicoot and marbled velvet gecko). This month we talk to the book's author, Marg Gibbs.

Marg, tell us what inspired you to write this story?

When my husband and I returned from a trip to Italy, I thought how lovely it was to come home to a beautiful part of the world in Mapleton. It occurred to me that arriving home means feeling a sense of belonging and love. I thought about the attractions we have that make the Sunshine Coast Hinterland a special place. I used animals and places to show the fun, beauty and appeal of our country towns.

The Little Book Nook

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Collaboration produces children's picture book with local flavour

A MAPLETON author has incorporated the Sunshine Coast hinterland in a new children's book illustrated by local artists.

Arriving Home, written by M.J. Gibbs, aka Marg Gibbs, is the story of Maggie Magpie Goose and Eric Echidna, and their relationship with the hinterland towns of Maleny, Montville, Flaxton and Mapleton.

With good friends like Willow Wombat and Rosie the Lorikeet, they make happy memories at places including the Maleny Showgrounds and Mapleton Lilyponds.

"The story promotes the region as a positive and happy place to make rich memories," Marg said.

The picture book is a collaboration between writer and artists that was serendipitous.

Marg and her husband, Bill, were passing the Mapleton Library one day when they noticed some artists working inside.

They had discovered the ladies of Mapleton Art and Mapleton Art discovered that Marg was a writer.

After discussion, agreement was reached for nine artists to illustrate a story that Marg had written but had been

"sitting on".

The picture book is close to Marg's heart as Maggie and Eric take their names from her aunt and father and Marg's nickname is Goose.

Combining the work of nine artists of different styles and mediums - watercolour, ink, digital art - was a challenge and five months went into achieving a book with flow.

The artists involved were Sue Bennink, Lois Collins, Diana Dodds, Nita C. Lester, Nita Shoyer, Joyce Simpson, Helen Stewart, Ros Tooker and Coral Usher.

Australian animals at the rear of the book may provide an education for some and

talk topics for parents and kids.

The book is the first picture book for Marg, who has had poems and short stories published and is working on a non-fiction book for adults.

The former teacher at Matthew Flinders Anglican College has pursued an interest in writing since retiring two years ago.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to share a love of writing," Marg said.

Copies of *Arriving Home* are available for \$10 from the Mapleton library or contact Marg at 0412 362 947 or m.j.gibbs@bigpond.com



Marg Gibbs has written a children's picture book illustrated by artists from Mapleton Art.



Marg Gibbs reads her new book to her grandchildren.