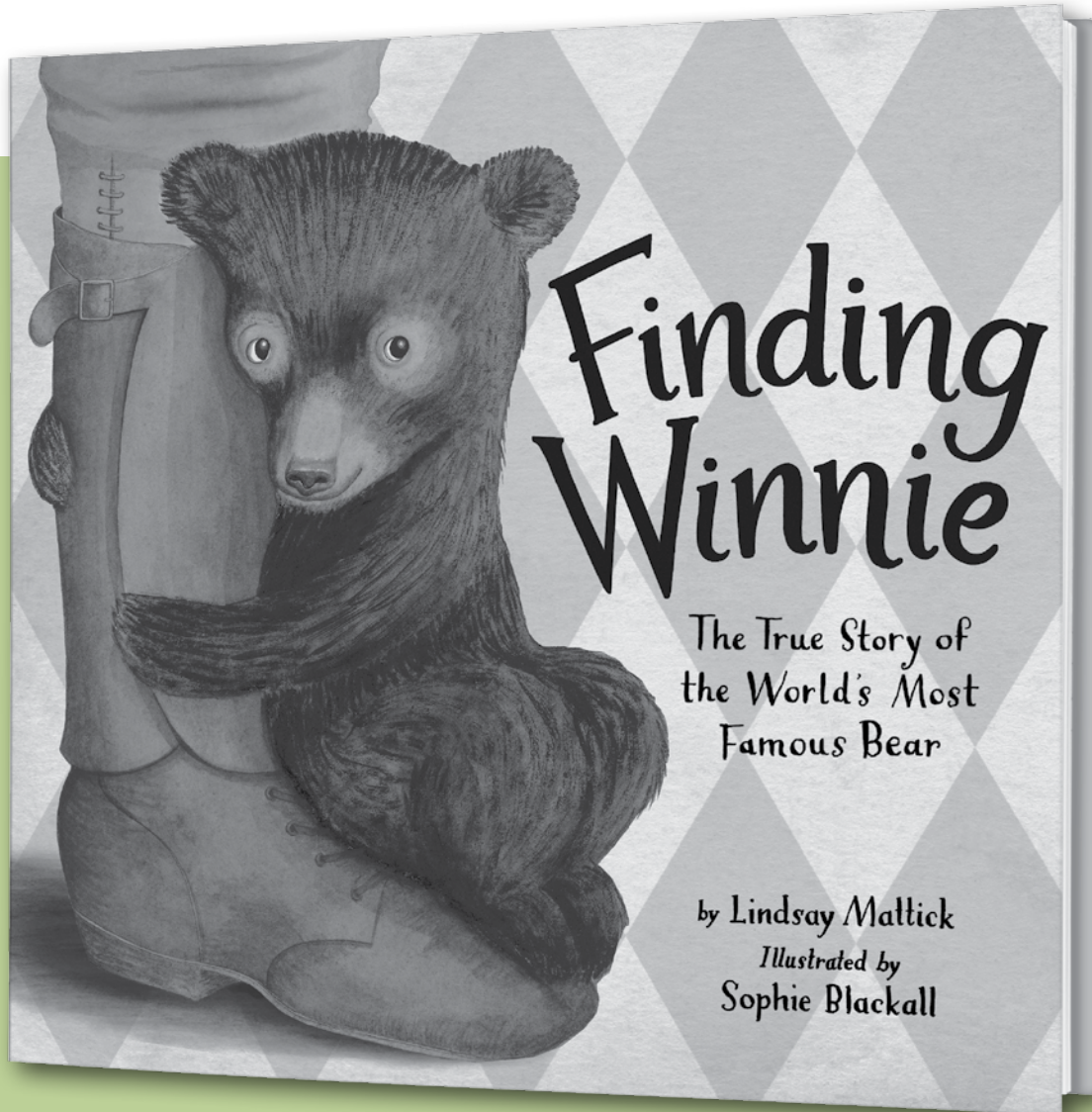


# Finding Winnie

The True Story of the World's Most Famous Bear



## Curriculum connections

- ❖ Biography
- ❖ Math
- ❖ Science
- ❖ Social Studies
- ❖ Language Arts
- ❖ Art

Ages: 3 – 6

by Lindsay Maltick

*Illustrated by*  
Sophie Blackall

Dear Teachers,

*Finding Winnie* is one of those special books that holds appeal and depth across ages. Preschool and primary grade students will ‘ooh and ahh’ over Winnie as an adorable bear cub, find humor in her antics while she is embedded in Harry’s regiment, and marvel that children just like them were allowed to romp with Winnie in her enclosure at the London Zoo. At this age, they will delight in making the connection to the “silly old bear” they know from stories and screens and will find reassurance in the familiar closeness of the bedtime tale told by mother to child.

Students in the intermediate grades will also find the storybook character connections engaging and will have a strong appreciation for a story well told and well retold. They will be fascinated by the concept of a bear on the battlefield and intrigued by Harry Colebourn’s role as veterinarian. At this age, they are ready to grapple with the idea of animals and humans on the battlefield. Their emerging sense of morality and their developing emotions will allow them to relate strongly to Harry’s attachment to Winnie and to weigh the decisions that he must make about her well-being.

Middle and high school students will be able to discuss and ponder the deeper themes that emerge from this compelling story. They will consider the relationship of love and care-taking, the pain and joy of separation and togetherness, and the way that stories forge connections across generations. They may be able to begin to articulate an understanding that in the most horrific of circumstances, in this case war, people find ways to express their humanity. Students of this age will begin to see themselves, like Harry, Winnie, Christopher Robin, and Cole, as caretakers of the people and animals they encounter in their everyday lives.

Adults and children alike will find much to learn from Mattick’s use of language and in the artistry of Blackall’s visual storytelling. Such rich matter for discussion, such rich opportunity for learning across content areas! The activities included here illustrate some possibilities for this book in the classroom when studying writing, visual design, book characters, life 100 years ago, World War I, ancestry, or animal-human relationships. We know you will find yourself, your students, and your curriculum enriched by *Finding Winnie*.

Yes, there’s something very special about this book!

## SOCIAL STUDIES

### Family Stories

Author Lindsay Mattick chose to tell the story of her great grandfather in the format of a bedtime tale to her son. Invite your students to remember family stories that they have been told. Model this process by sharing a family story of your own, describing who first told you the story, where and when the story was told and the story itself. You may want to have children talk with their families/caregivers about the special stories that help them to know and understand their family history. Invite students to share some of these stories with their classmates, either orally or through writing and illustration. You may also consider inviting parents/caregivers in to the classroom to share these stories, possibly recording them as podcasts. The recorded stories on National Public Radio's Story Corps website ([storycorps.org](http://storycorps.org)) can serve as inspiration for this project.

### "Raising" Winnie: The Concept of Caregiving

As he listens to his mother describe the moment when Harry met Winnie, Cole asks his mother to explain what she means when she says, "Trappers don't raise bears." Her response reflects a key concept in the book, that of caregiving. Ask your students to consider what it means to 'take care' of an animal or another person. Younger students can provide an oral response or draw a picture—be sure to document their responses on a chart, in a class-created book, or with a visual display. Engage students in a deeper discussion of Harry's actions in the book. At which junctures in the story did Harry make decisions that would impact Winnie's future? What examples of caretaking are provided in the book? How did Harry decide what would

be best for Winnie? Was this sometimes different than what he wished for? Connect this discussion to the phrase repeated in the book: "His heart made up his mind." Extend this activity by inviting students to tell a story or to write about a time when they engaged in a caregiving activity.

### Family Tree

The last pages of *Finding Winnie* include a family tree; illustrator Sophie Blackall has provided readers with an image that supports understanding of the family relationships described in the narrative. This particular family tree depicts direct lineage only. Provide students with other examples of family trees, either found in children's literature selections or elsewhere. What kinds of information are included in family tree representations? How are relationships represented graphically? What variations do they notice? Collaborate with an art specialist to provide students with the opportunity to create an illustrated family tree that reflects meaningful relationships in their lives (these need not be blood relatives). Share students' artwork with family members through a classroom museum display with an open house or via technology.

### What is a Veterinarian?

Harry Colebourn is described as an exceptional veterinarian, one who had a special affinity with and devotion to animals and whose "hands were never cold." Students may be familiar with the concept of a 'vet' who takes care of household pets like cats and dogs, but may be surprised to learn that the job can involve more. Explore students' understandings of this occupation by asking them to describe what a veterinarian does. Extend their understanding by inviting a veterinarian to speak to your class either in person or via videoconference. Prior to the visit, work

with students to develop a list of questions that they will pose. Students can take notes about the veterinarian's responses. If you have time, ideally you would also have students interview a second veterinarian whose job is very different from the first due to the types of animals he/she primarily works with or the context in which he/she works. The interview data can be supplemented with nonfiction books or digital resources that present the varied roles that can be played by veterinarians and the different settings in which they may work. Students can develop a presentation that showcases their new understandings of this important job.

## More About Winnie

To learn more about Winnie while learning more about the processes of research and writing, supplement *Finding Winnie* with primary source documents and additional texts, creating a text set for students to explore. Ryerson University Library and Archive has an interactive online exhibit, *The Real Winnie* ([therealwinnie.ryerson.ca](http://therealwinnie.ryerson.ca)), developed in collaboration with Harry Colebourn's family, that includes photographs, images of diary pages, essays, maps, and even a 3D vet kit. Other online resources to explore include:

White River Heritage Museum: The History of Winnie the Pooh [whiteriver.ca/article/winnie-the-pooh-6.asp](http://whiteriver.ca/article/winnie-the-pooh-6.asp)

The Fort Garry Horse Museum and Archives: Lt. Harry Colebourn and Winnie-the-Bear [fortgarryhorse.ca/j1526/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=59](http://fortgarryhorse.ca/j1526/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=59)

The London Zoo: The Bear Who Inspired Winnie-the-Pooh [zsl.org/videos/fun-animal-facts/the-bear-who-inspired-winnie-the-pooh](http://zsl.org/videos/fun-animal-facts/the-bear-who-inspired-winnie-the-pooh)

Students can make notes about new information that they learn while exploring these resources. You can also read Sally Walker's *Winnie: The True Story of the Bear Who Inspired Winnie-the-Pooh* (illustrated by Jonathan D. Voss). A comparison of Winnie's story across these two books offers an excellent opportunity to discuss the choices that authors make when writing. Comparing the content and writing style of these two books will lead to conversations about an author's research process, his/her choices about which content to include in a story and which to exclude, which aspects to emphasize, and how to use language to inspire a particular response from a reader, and finally, when to stick to the facts and when to infer and/or fictionalize.

## Animals in WWI

Winnie's role in World War I was to serve as a mascot for Harry Colebourn's Infantry unit. While Winnie was sent out of harm's way, this was not the case for other animals, including the horses under Harry's care. Older students can learn more about the varied roles played by animals in World War I. A good starting place for this research in *The Atlantic's* online photo essay "World War I in Photos: Animals at War": [theatlantic.com/static/infocus/wwi/wwianimals](http://theatlantic.com/static/infocus/wwi/wwianimals). You will want to preview this resource because it includes some graphic images.

Students can also learn more about animals and World War I in Mark Greenwood's *Midnight: A True Story of Loyalty in World War I* (illustrated by Frané Lessac), *The Donkey of Gallipoli: A True Story of Courage in World War I* (illustrated by Frané Lessac), or Ann Bausam's *Stubby the War Dog: The True Story of World War I's Bravest Dog*. Moving beyond World War I, students can read about



another bear on the front lines in Bibi Dumon Tak's *Soldier Bear*. Next, have students consider the roles that animals play in today's military consulting books such as Dorothy Hinshaw Patent's *Dogs on Duty: Soldiers' Best Friends on the Battlefield and Beyond* or the following online resources:

US Navy: Marine Mammal Program [public.navy.mil/spawar/Pacific/71500/Pages/default.aspx](http://public.navy.mil/spawar/Pacific/71500/Pages/default.aspx)

Smithsonian Institute: How Did Animals (Even Slugs) Serve in World War I [americanhistory.si.edu/blog/how-did-animals-even-slugs-serve-world-war-i](http://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/how-did-animals-even-slugs-serve-world-war-i)

## MATH

### Mapping Winnie's Journey

Revisit the pages in *Finding Winnie* that depict Winnie's travels by rail, ship, and car. Have students list the names of the locations to which Winnie traveled. Using an online mapping tool with satellite imagery (such as Google Earth), follow Winnie's journey so that students get a sense of the great distance that she traveled from the forest that was originally her home. Add up the

miles that Winnie traveled. Have students create a visual map/timeline that includes each of these locations. Students should include illustrations that depict key events for Winnie at each location and the dates and distances of her travels.

### What Did it Cost 100 Years Ago?

Cole asks his mother, "Is 20 dollars a lot?" Use this question as a launching point for an investigation of the rate of inflation over the course of a century. Ask students to brainstorm a list of commonly purchased items and research what these items would have cost when purchased in 1914. Recruit the support of your town historian who may be able to visit and share documentation/artifacts that provide information on the cost of daily life in 1914. Students can create an infographic that puts the cost of Winnie in perspective with other costs in 1914 and with those same expenses in 2014. While it is important to note that Harry was spending Canadian rather than U.S. dollars, a discussion of the exchange rate may only be relevant for older students.



## LANGUAGE ARTS

### Book Bears

Bear characters have played a prominent role in children's literature, with characteristics ranging from scary to silly to serious. Consider as examples: Paddington, Corduroy, Goldilocks's three bears, Baloo, Br'er Bear, Little Bear, and more modern counterparts. Ask your students to brainstorm a list of children's books that feature bears. Extend their listing of bears with others so that you can assign different bear characters to pairs of students, providing the partners with the book that features their character. Ask each pair to prepare a brief dramatic skit to present the bear character to their classmates. The skit should demonstrate essential characteristics of the literary bear, a brief plot summary, and a discussion of how the bear species is represented through the narrative. Is their character bear more like a bear or more like a human?

### Scrapbooking

How do we preserve physical artifacts associated with family stories and special moments? The back matter of *Finding Winnie* has been designed to look like the album that young Cole and Lindsey are looking at together at the end of the story. Study this section of the book with your students. What kinds of items are found here? How/why are these items important and meaningful to the story of Harry Colebourn, Winnie, and Harry's family? How are these items organized? How do they appear to be physically affixed to the page? Invite children to bring in any scrapbooks that they keep at home. Talk about the memories that are preserved in these albums. Consider inviting a scrapbooking expert from a local craft store into the classroom to discuss materials and strategies that can be used. You may also want to explore digital technologies

as modern day scrapbooking tools. Begin a class scrapbook to preserve classroom memories; students can take turns working in teams to document special events with images and writing.

### Storytelling Exercise: A Favorite Animal

Lindsay Mattick has chosen to tell the story of her great grandfather and Winnie the bear in the form of a bedtime story. This structure provides and excellent opportunity to explore both narrative structure and the art of storytelling. Ask your students 'What makes a good story?' and record their responses. Use the criteria they have set to evaluate the story in *Finding Winnie*; as you review the story it is likely that you can tease out new criteria to add to their listing. In this story, the author has chosen to incorporate a conversation between the storyteller (the narrator) and the listener into the overall narrative; talk about the effect of this authorial choice and explore additional picture books that use this technique, such as *The Chalk Doll* (written by Charlotte Pomerantz and illustrated by Frane Lessac) or *The Bear in the Book* (written and illustrated by Kate Banks). Following this exploration of storytelling techniques, invite your students to write and tell orally a story about a favorite animal (or leave the subject matter more open-ended). You may also find useful the following online resources on storytelling:

NCTE: Read Write Think: Qualities of Good Storytelling [readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/goodstorytellingR.pdf](http://readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/goodstorytellingR.pdf)

NCTE: Guideline on Teaching Storytelling [ncte.org/positions/statements/teachingstorytelling](http://ncte.org/positions/statements/teachingstorytelling)

International Storytelling Center: Learning Library [storytellingcenter.net/learning/learning-library](http://storytellingcenter.net/learning/learning-library)

## The Story Behind the Story

After reading *Finding Winnie*, read aloud the introduction and the first chapter of *Winnie-the-Pooh* by A.A. Milne. What connections can students make between these two very different stories? After this comparison, consider how Winnie the bear has both inspired A.A. Milne's stories and retellings of these stories and how her own story has been retold in text and film. Show students clips of Disney's version of *Winnie-the-Pooh* as well as clips of the television movie *A Bear Called Winnie*. Share Sally Walker's version of Winnie's story in *Winnie: The True Story of the Bear Who Inspired Winnie-the-Pooh* (illustrated by Jonathan D. Voss). Consider these questions: Where do stories come from? Why are stories retold? What happens when stories are retold or re-envisioned in a different media?

## Character Development

Following a reading of *Finding Winnie*, ask your students to describe the character of Harry Colebourn. Who was Harry? What kind of a person was he? How do they know? Reread the story closely, asking students to identify places in the text where they learn about Harry's character. What role do the illustrations play in helping the reader to get to know Harry? How do the details of his thoughts, actions, and conversations provide us with a sense of who he was? Invite students to create a life size portrait of Harry surrounded by text (including quotes from the book) that describes his character. As you read other picture books throughout the school year that feature characters who are positive role models, do the same for these characters; you will be combining writing instruction (character development) and character education!

## Dialogue: Conversation in Story

Throughout *Finding Winnie*, Cole interrupts his mother's story with questions. The conversations between Cole and his mother appear in italicized font and offer an opportunity to look closely at the conventions of dialogue in story. Project these conversational exchanges so that students can study them to infer guidelines for the use of punctuation and options in the use of dialogue tags. After students have generated a list of guidelines, test out their listing by examining samples of dialogue as it appears in Harry's story. This examination of conventions also offers an opportunity for a conversation about author's craft. Why has author Lindsay Mattick chosen to include dialogue? What effects does the dialogue have on the reader's experience? How can dialogue reveal character? Show progression in plot? Emphasize theme? Deepen understanding of setting? Older students will be ready for a conversation about the use of dialogue in fiction compared to the use of dialogue in nonfiction. While *Finding Winnie* is categorized as fiction, the story it holds is true. If Mattick had chosen to write a nonfiction book about Winnie, what responsibilities would she have had when including dialogue? Share nonfiction author Marc Tyler Nobleman's *The Horn Book* article on the use of dialogue in nonfiction titled "Danger! Dialogue Ahead": [hbook.com/2013/04/choosing-books/horn-book-magazine/danger-dialogue-ahead](http://hbook.com/2013/04/choosing-books/horn-book-magazine/danger-dialogue-ahead). Following this close study of conversation in story, invite students to revisit a piece of writing they are currently working on, adding in or revising dialogue to make their piece more engaging to a reader.



## SCIENCE

### Perceptions of Bears

Before reading *Finding Winnie*, ask your students to write or share orally their knowledge of and feelings about bears. After reading the book, invite students to note new information learned and questions they might have. Ask students to think about how their perceptions of bears have been formed; make a list of students' responses, they are likely to name stories, television clips, movies, or first hand reports. You could extend this activity by examining several different types of texts (that you have gathered or have asked students to collect): myths/religious beliefs about bears, fairy tales about bears, newspaper stories (mined from a digital database), fractured fairy tales that purposefully turn popular perceptions of bears upside down and/or contemporary children's books that have bears as characters. Working in small groups, students should review the texts they have gathered in order to be able to describe to their classmates how bears are portrayed in the story. Younger students will need more guidance to discuss the mixed representations of bears across texts. How do these texts reflect humans' awe and fear of bears? How might these perceptions of bears influence humans' interactions with bears on a larger scale (for example, willingness to participate in conservation efforts).

### Bears in the Wild

Winnie the bear lived quite an unusual life for a black bear. Provide your students with resources to learn more about this bear species and their life in natural habitats. Where are they found? What type of habitat best suits their needs? What do they eat? How do they behave? How do they raise their young? Use online resources, such

as those provided by *National Geographic*, and nonfiction texts, such as Stephen R. Swinburne's *Black Bear: North America's Bear*. Invite students to create a chart that compares and contrasts the life of a black bear in its natural habitat with the experiences of Winnie. Extend your study by dividing students up into small groups and assigning responsibility for researching and presenting information on other bear species. Jeannie Brett's *Wild About Bears* provides an overview of the eight bear species and is an excellent starting point.

### Endangered Bears

Winnie the bear was orphaned by the actions of a trapper, who killed her mother. In today's world many species of bears are threatened, both by human behaviors and environmental concerns. Invite your students to select a threatened bear species to research, preparing a presentation to share their findings. Working in small groups or individually, students should research: threats to the species, identified and suspected causes, and remediation efforts. The following texts will support students' research: *How Many Baby Pandas?* by Sandra Markle, *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in the Asian Tropics* by Sy Montgomery, *Garden of the Spirit Bear: Life in the Great Northern Rainforest* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, *Saving Yasha: The Incredible True Story of an Adopted Moon Bear* by Lia Kvatum, and *Jasper's Story: Saving Moon Bears* by Jill Robinson and Marc Bekoff.





## Zoos: Controversy Over Animals in Captivity

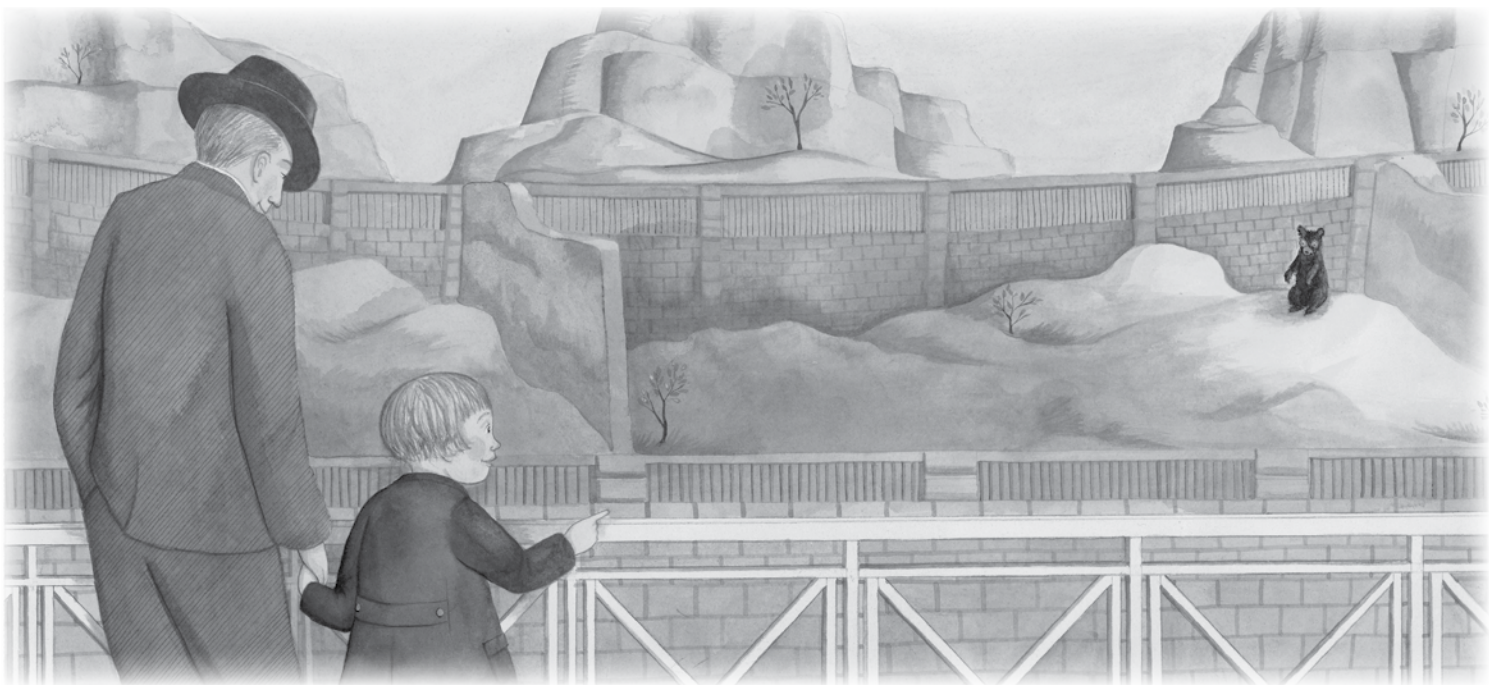
*Finding Winnie* offers students a chance to think deeply about the roles and responsibilities of zoos. Begin this conversation by reviewing Winnie's circumstances and life story. How did she come to leave her home in the wild? Who cared for Winnie? What kind of a home and habitat were provided to her? Why did Harry Colebourn decide to bring Winnie to the zoo? What did she experience at the zoo? Broaden the conversation to consider the ethical responsibilities humans acquire when they remove an animal from its natural habitat. Reading Kathleen Krull's nonfiction picture book *What's New? The Zool: A Zippy History of Zoos* (illustrated by Marcellus Hall) will support this conversation. Discuss the potential benefits and concerns for animals in zoos. Investigate the online resources provided by the accrediting agency The Association of Zoos and Aquariums ([aza.org](http://aza.org)) and, with older students, the critique offered by Rob Laidlaw's book *Wild Animals in Captivity*. Contrast Winnie's experiences with those of Ivan, the

Silverback Gorilla who spent much of his life on display in a shopping mall. Katherine Applegate tells his story in the nonfiction picture book *Ivan: The Remarkable True Story of the Shopping Mall Gorilla* and the Newbery-winning novel *The One and Only Ivan*. How do we make decisions about the fair treatment of animals in captivity? Does the opportunity for closer contact with wild animals engender respect and conservation efforts? Students can craft opinion papers or codes of ethics for zoos following their investigation of these questions.

## ARTS

### Illustrating History

In a picture book, art and text work hand in hand to convey meaning. Invite your students to describe their responses to the images created by illustrator Sophie Blackall. Which ones are their favorites? How do the illustrations enhance and expand their understanding of the text? Select a few key images to discuss (these might be your personal favorites, or pivotal moments in the story); ask students to discuss how Sophie Blackall uses elements of design



(such as line, shape, color, value, space, texture, and perspective) to express actions and emotions. Next, invite students to think about how an artist represents a historical time period. What kinds of research might the artist do to ensure historical accuracy? On her website ([sophieblackall.blogspot.com](http://sophieblackall.blogspot.com)), Sophie Blackall includes a link to her blog describing her research and illustration process for *Finding Winnie*. After learning from Sophie's process, students can then try out historical illustrations themselves. As a class project, research and accurately illustrate children playing with the toys they might have played with 100 years ago. What did Christopher Robin and his classmates look like and what did they play with? The BBC Schools site on World War I and the archived 1911 FAO Schwartz catalog in the Smithsonian's collection are good starting points for online research:

BBC Schools World War I: What did children do for fun? [bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25183931](http://bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25183931)

Smithsonian Archives: F.A.O. Schwartz Toy Catalog 1911 [archive.org/details/Reviewspringsum00FAOS](http://archive.org/details/Reviewspringsum00FAOS)

## Book Design

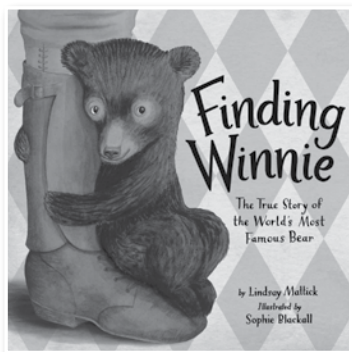
The author and illustrator of a picture book work with a team to create a finished product. This team includes collaborators who focus on the design of the book. For a book that emphasizes the concept of connections (across generations, across geographical distances, and between audience and storytellers), coherence in book design is of particular importance. Name and examine the parts of this picture book: the dust jacket, the end papers, the title and dedication pages, the back matter, and the gutter. Ask students to describe

what did they notice about the illustrations and the physical structure of this book. They will likely notice how the images on the front and back of the dust jacket reflect the two narratives, those of Harry and Winnie, and those of Winnie and Christopher Robin. They may comment on how the deep forest on the end papers reflects Winnie's origin and then transitions the reader to Cole's bedroom, which is also forest-like, and where the album that will become the back matter and end pages sits on a nightstand. Ask students to consider how the book design helps move the reader forward and backward over a century as the text shifts back and forth from Harry and Winnie's story to the conversation between Cole and his mother. Notice the use of texture and pattern throughout the book and its role in creating connection and coherence. There's so much to see and talk about! What can students conclude about the role of book design in storytelling?

## Storybook Statues

At the London Zoo and across the Atlantic Ocean in Winnepeg stand twin statues of Winnie and Harry. Consider the role of these statues. How do they help us to honor and remember? How are statues another form of storytelling? Using an online bookmarking tool such as Symbaloo, Blendspace, or Pinterest, create a visual display of storybook character statues found around the world. After gathering this inspiration, collaborate with your art specialist to offer students the opportunity to create their own statue of a favorite character. Students should also create a display plaque. What kinds of information are typically included on a statue's display plaque? How does this information enhance the viewer's experience?

## ABOUT THE BOOK



**FINDING WINNIE**  
HC 978-0-316-32490-8  
Also available in ebook

### Before Winnie-the-Pooh, there was a real bear named Winnie.

In 1914, Harry Colebourn, a veterinarian on his way to tend horses in World War I, followed his heart and rescued a baby bear. He named her Winnie, after his hometown of Winnipeg, and he took the bear to war.

Harry Colebourn's real-life great-granddaughter tells the true story of a remarkable friendship and an even

more remarkable journey—from the fields of Canada to a convoy across the ocean to an army base in England.

And finally to the London Zoo, where Winnie made another new friend: a real boy named Christopher Robin.

Here is the remarkable true story of the bear who inspired Winnie-the-Pooh.

## PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

- ★ “Little ones who love Milne’s classic stories will be enchanted by this heartening account of the bear’s real life origins.” —*Booklist*
- ★ “The book strikes a lovely, understated tone of wonder and family pride.” —*Publishers Weeklys*
- ★ “A perfect melding of beautiful art with soulful, imaginative writing, this lovely story, penned by Colebourn’s great-great granddaughter, is ideal for sharing aloud or poring over individually. Children everywhere will enjoy this tale for years. A must-have.” —*School Library Journal*

## about the author



Lindsay Matlack, great-granddaughter of Harry Colebourn, grew up thinking

of Winnie-the-Pooh as her own great-grandbear. She has shared Winnie’s story as a radio documentary, spearheaded an original exhibition, and traveled to the UK to commemorate Harry and Winnie’s experience in World War I. She lives with her family in Toronto, Canada.

## about the illustrator



Sophie Blackall is a celebrated artist whose work has appeared in the

bestselling Ivy and Bean series, in multiple glorious, award-winning picture books, as part of an international pro-literacy campaign with Save the Children, and on a renowned New York subway poster. She lives in Brooklyn with her family.



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY  
BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

LittleBrownLibrary.com

This educator's guide was written by Erika Thulin Dawes, an Associate Professor of Language & Literacy, Lesley University in Cambridge, MA.