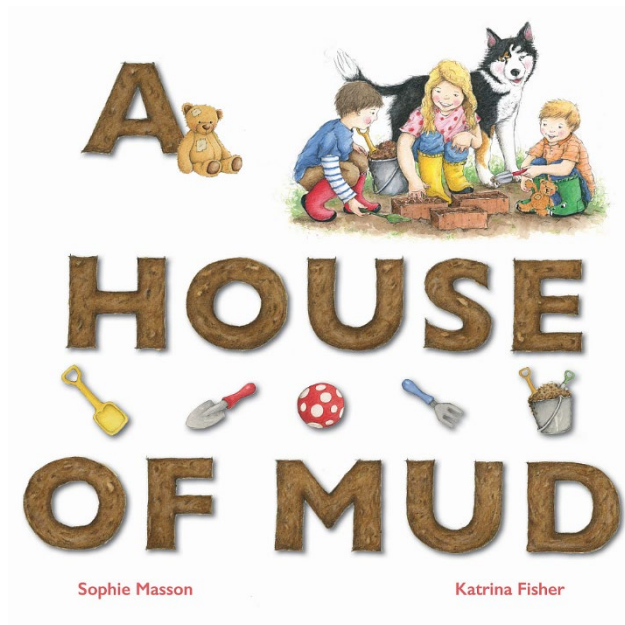




Teachers' Notes

A House of Mud

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A House of Mud

Written by Sophie Masson

Illustrated by Katrina Fisher

Published by Little Pink Dog Books, 2020

ISBN: 9780648256328

About the book:

Building a mudbrick house is an adventure for everyone—Mum, Dad, kids and even Tess, the family dog! Heading out to the block to help make bricks, seeing their house take shape week by week, the children decide that Tess needs her own house too...

With warmth, sensitivity and liveliness in words and pictures, this book recreates the fun—and work!—of a special family experience, building your own unique house.



Left: author Sophie Masson



Right: illustrator Katrina Fisher

About the author:

Born in Indonesia of French parents, and brought up in France and Australia, Sophie Masson is the award-winning and internationally-published author of over 70 books for children, young adults and adults. These include several acclaimed picture books, with the most recent being *The Snowman's Wish* (illustrated by Ronak Taher, Dirt Lane Press, 2020), *On my Way* (illustrated by Simon Howe, Scholastic Australia, 2019) and *Join the Armidale Parade* (illustrated by Kathy Creamer, Little Pink Dog Books, 2019)

Sophie has received several awards for her creative work, including winning the Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature in the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the Young Adult category in the 2005 Aurealis Awards, and numerous Notable Books citations in the CBCA Book of the Year Awards, including two in 2018. In 2019, Sophie received an AM (Member, General Division) award in the Order of Australia in the Australia Day 2019 honours list. Her citation read 'For significant service to literature as an author, publisher, and through service to literary organisations'. She holds a PhD in creative practice from the University of New England, and lives near Armidale in northern NSW.

About the illustrator

Katrina is an illustrator based on the beautiful Bellarine Peninsula, in Victoria Australia. She studied Fine Art at the University of Ballarat (Federation Uni) and holds a post graduate degree in Visual Communication Design from Deakin University.

Katrina works from her home studio illustrating children's picture books. Working in traditional mediums, she aims to convey a sense of emotion, playfulness and tenderness in her illustrations. She enjoys creating images of beauty and finds it wonderfully satisfying when her work connects with people and brings joy to the viewer. She also enjoys teaching art to primary ages children, conducting children's art classes during school terms.

Something from the author:

A House of Mud is based on our own real-life experience of building our beautiful mudbrick house near Armidale in northern NSW—an experience which included the lively involvement of our children—and the family dog, Tess!

In the story, I wanted to give an idea of the various stages of building a house from scratch, from the time we dug up the dirt and mixed the mud for the bricks, right to the time we had our beautiful new home finished. And I also wanted to highlight what it was like for the kids, how a project like that can start off exciting and then become boring for them—until you hit on the right idea for keeping everyone happily involved! It was also a tribute to our lovely dog Tess, who was so much a part of our family in her fifteen years of life and who is still much-missed but fondly-remembered.

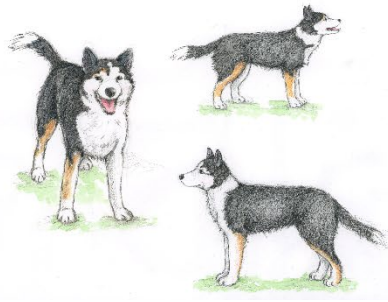
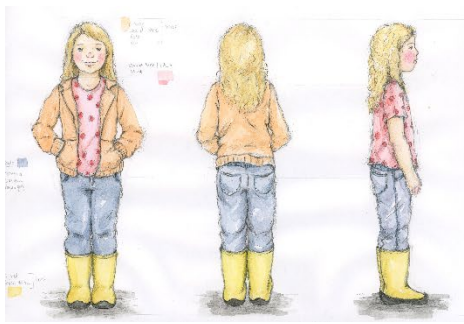
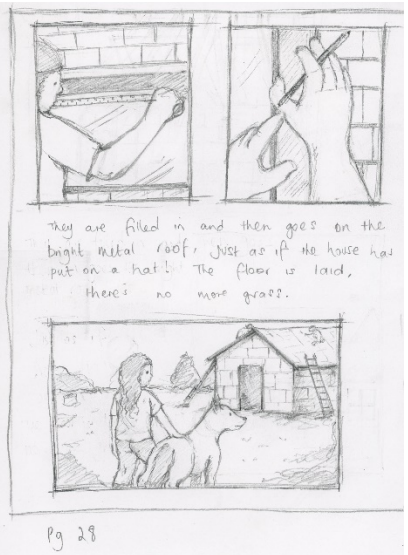
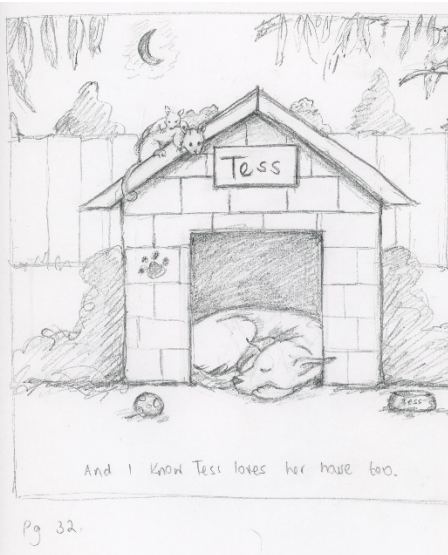
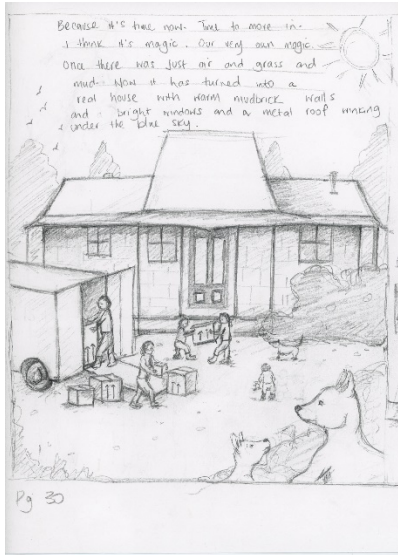
It took me several drafts to be able to mix all these things in the right proportion, to create an engaging story that would both keep the atmosphere of our experience but also appeal to readers who hadn't had that kind of experience. First I wrote the text as straight description. Then I rewrote it a few times to turn it more into a story, focussing on the children and their dog Tess. I loved writing it. And I love even more the beautiful book it's become, a joint creation with the fabulous illustrator Katrina Fisher, who has brought the world of that family experience to such touching, lively and perfect visual life.

Seeing *A House of Mud* become a picture book has long been a dream of mine and I am delighted it found such a wonderful illustrator, and such a wonderful publisher!

Something from the illustrator:

For 'A House of Mud', I created the illustrations using watercolour paints and coloured pencil on paper. My inspiration came from photographs provided by Sophie of when she was building her real mud brick house with her family. I also researched how mud brick homes were made to ensure the pictures were accurate. I wanted to create warm and bright illustrations which would complement the beautiful story Sophie had written.

Following the research, I created the characters and initial sketches and storyboard. From there, I drew full scale rough sketches and then created the final artwork. You can see some of these stages on the next page.



All artwork copyright Katrina Fisher

Post-reading discussion activities

Building a house is a big job. What do you think was the hardest part for the family in the book? And the part that was the most fun?

The bricks of course have to dry in the sun, once they are made. What do you think the family had to do, if it rained?

There are quite a few animals (other than Tess!) and birds and insects in the illustrations. How many kinds can you find?

The family in the book decided to build their own house from mudbricks. What other kinds of materials can you use to build a house? What is your own home built of?

Classroom research activities:

Mudbrick building has been done since very ancient times, and in many different countries. Look up examples of mudbrick houses and buildings around the world.

Research some 'recipes' for mudbricks. What are they mostly made from, and how many kinds of mudbrick making can you find?

The bricks in the book (and in the real-life experience of the author) were made by hand, but sometimes they can be made by machine. See what you can find out about that.

Classroom creative activities

Before you can start a house, whether it's for people or a pet, you need to draw a plan. Draw your own plan for a house for yourself, or your pet.

Write a version of the story, telling it from the point of view of Tess the dog.

Draw your favourite stage of the house-building in the book.

Write your own recipe for a mud-brick and illustrate the stages of making it.

