

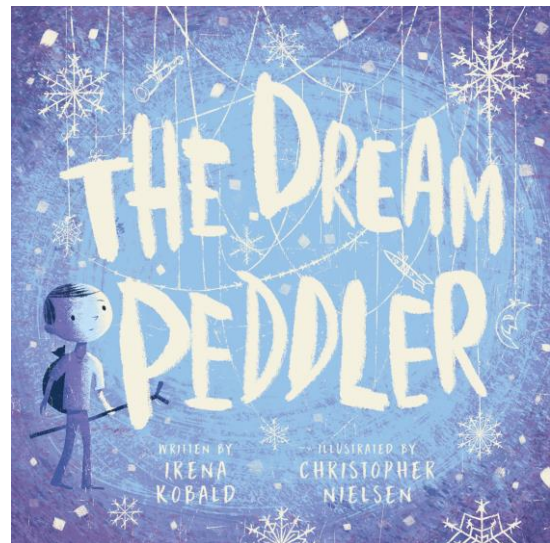
THE DREAM PEDDLER

Text by IRENA KOBALD

Illustrations by CHRISTOPHER NIELSEN

Published by DIRT LANE PRESS INCORPORATED

Once upon a time there was a boy with wonderful dreams for the future but who, when he leaves home, meets a peddler of dreams the like of which the boy has never imagined.



SYNOPSIS

A boy leaves his loving home to find his dreams, but is soon intercepted by a Dream Peddler who sells shiny and fantastical dreams that look far more enticing than the simple dreams the boy dreamed in his childhood. The boy doesn't notice that these new dreams are mere trinkets, or that their promise hides dangerous barbs. He is beguiled by their sparkles, but finds that the more trinkets he receives, the more he wants. In the end, he loses himself and becomes unrecognisable to both himself and his family. Only when his parents and the Dream Peddler reject him does the boy find a way to retrace his steps back to his former self and his family.

THEMES

Though this fable is brief and simply told, it is layered with universal truths. Themes that can be explored in this story include:

- self-knowledge
- false dreams
- false hope
- loss of self
- dysfunctional relationships
- unconditional love
- remorse
- self-healing
- instant gratification
- substance addiction

WRITING STYLE

The writing of this story is understated and, like the traditional fables upon which it models itself, avoids lyricism and relates the barest of details. The cold unemotionality of the telling reflects the theme of ice and snow that pervades both the visual and textual narratives. The understated telling emphasises the seriousness of the theme but, at the same time, poetic elements and rhythmic variation introduce an undercurrent of emotion that further heighten the drama of the story. Repetition is a dominant poetic device, and includes the repetition of words, phrases, images, sentence structure and actions. Short, terse and hard-hitting sentences alternate with and longer and more expressive constructions. There are few adverbs or adjectives. Vocabulary choices stress the rigidity and destructive nature of obsession – ‘withered’, ‘flaked’, ‘froze’, ‘stiff’, ‘crept’, ‘dragged’, ‘dark’, ‘cold’. The story ends almost abruptly, with an ambiguous ending that suggests both the hope of redemption and the danger of decline back into obsession.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

Irena Kobald is motivated to write by powerful events in her own life. *The Dream Peddler* is no exception, as it was inspired by Irena’s son’s addiction to *crystal methamphetamine* (‘ice’). The depth of Irena’s pain is evident in the stark writing style and in the metaphors she chooses to describe her son’s journey. However, although the genesis of this story is born of a mother’s trauma, the story itself is a universal tale about the lure of false promises. Therefore, although the author was thinking only of her son when writing this story, readers can find a range of meanings relevant to their own experience, or to life in general.

ILLUSTRATOR STYLE

Illustrator Christopher Nielsen was deeply affected by the story behind the writing of *The Dream Peddler* and wanted to do justice to the original inspiration as well as make the illustrations appealing to a wide range of readers. Chris has chosen a limited range of colours, with warm reds, yellows and reds representing the

positive moments of the story, and a range of chilly blues and purples representing the struggle and drama of the boy's journey. Chris also developed a visual theme of ice and snow to reflect the story's origins, and added menace to the snowflakes by representing them as made of barbed wire. Continuing the theme of ice, the hero is shown gradually transforming into an Arctic fox as the allure of the dream peddler's trinkets draw the boy further and further from his true dreams and enmesh him in obsession with the dream peddler's false dreams. Only when the boy feels regret for his lost former self does he gradually transform back into a human again. Chris created his illustrations digitally, but has made them look scratched, layered and rubbed to mimic worn old prints.



AUTHOR BACKGROUND



Irena Kobald was born in an Austrian mountain village. She always wanted to see the big, wide world and loves

travelling. As an adult Irena has lived in several different countries, including the former USSR, and has always been fascinated by different languages, cultures, religions and people. Irena has made Australia home for more than half her life, but considers herself equally at home in both Australia and Austria. She spent many years as a teacher of Indigenous students in the desert regions of the Northern Territory, and now lives in Toowoomba in Queensland. Irena's first book was the award-winning, international best-seller *My Two Blankets*, illustrated by Freya Blackwood.

ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND



Christopher Nielsen's illustrations flow forth from a love of vintage design. His images have been adopted by wineries, zoos, department stores and radio stations around the world. Chris began illustrating children's books in 2015 with *Once Upon and ABC*, by Sophie Masson, and he has been busy illustrating books ever since. When he's not illustrating books, creating images for businesses, or raising children Chris can be found on stage singing with his band The Ramalamas.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

- FRONT COVER *Magpies* September 2018
- launch programs in Orange, Bathurst, Sydney
- partnering with 'headspace', Lyndon Drug & Alcohol Rehab. Central West Region, TAFE Orange & Bathurst campuses
- bookstore events: NSW Central West, Sydney, Melbourne, Tasmania (venues tcb), Alice Springs, Toowoomba & SE Qld regional

STUDY NOTES

1. OVERALL THEME: *The Dream Peddler* can be read as a story about many things. Its core theme is the **enticement of false promises**. False promises can occur in all areas of life, including relationships, social life and advertising. Invite the students to consider how false promises might manifest in:
 - a. friendship
 - b. social situations
 - c. food, beverage or cosmetics advertising
2. Invite the students to consider whether or how they have encountered a 'dream peddler' situation in which false promises were made to lure them into a certain action (eg through advertising).
3. TEXT & THEME: Irena Kobald has used repetition throughout the narrative to enhance the emotional impact of the story. Invite students to find three different uses of repetition and to consider a) how their uses enhance the emotion of the story, and b) how their uses support the theme.
4. TEXTUAL STYLE: the author has alternated between long sentences and very short sentences. Invite the students to identify an instance of (a) short sentences and (b) long sentence construction, and to consider how each

contributes to the feeling and meaning of the story at the point at which they occur.

5. VISUAL THEME #1: the illustrator has used imagery of ice, snow, shadow and light to describe the stages of the boy's struggle with obsession. Invite the students to select one of these elements and examine the effectiveness of its use throughout the narrative.
6. VISUAL THEME #2: Christopher Nielsen has opted not to show the Dream Peddler except through hints and symbols. What are the main symbols Chris uses as substitutes for the Dream Peddler, and where have they been used? How are these substitutes effective?
7. ENDPAPERS: illustrators sometimes use the front and back endpapers of a picture book to encapsulate a book's theme. Ask the students to examine the front and back endpapers and describe how the two images encapsulate the theme and outcome of the story.