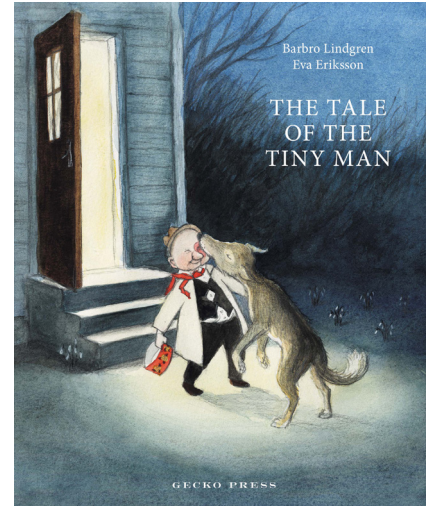


## Teacher Notes

# The Tale of the Tiny Man

Barbro Lindgren  
& Eva Eriksson



## About the book

Just like the Tiny Man at the heart of the story, this thoughtful book draws us close and helps us to connect. A sense of loss and longing is woven into every page, but it's the joy of friendship that prevails.

True to his name, the Tiny Man is small and lives a solitary life. Despite his kind attentions to those around him, he's either bullied or ignored. When he advertises for a friend, nobody responds – until a passing dog puts its nose in his hand, and the Tiny Man discovers companionship and joy.

The two care for each other and as the seasons pass, memories are made. Then Spring arrives, bringing a new challenge: a little girl who seems to know the dog. He shivers with happiness at the sight of her, and just like that, the Tiny Man's heart breaks. Convinced he's lost his only friend, he wanders sadly through the forest. But on his return, seven days later, the pair are waiting for him still. At that moment the snowdrops bloom, and the Tiny Man discovers that friendship is all the better for being shared.

Barbro Lindgren's gentle and affecting story has been a much-loved Swedish classic since it was published in 1979. Newly translated for Gecko and illustrated with kindness, sensitivity and humour by Eva Eriksson, this edition will delight a whole new audience and prompt curiosity, insight and debate.

## Talking about this book

This book makes a great read-aloud for the whole class and will prompt reflection and discussion. Here are some ideas to get you started.

### Your personal response

- What did you like about this book?
- What does it remind you of?
- How would you describe the pictures? How do they make you feel?
- Was there anything you didn't enjoy?
- Who would you recommend this book to, and why?

### Friendship

- Why are friends important? What do you look for in a friend?
- Does the dog like the Tiny Man? How can you tell?
- How does the dog change the Tiny Man's life?
- Do your friends change you? What impact do you have on them?

Resources for teachers  
working with children  
aged 5 to 10 years

Curriculum areas:  
English / Literacy  
PSHE / Citizenship / Health  
& Wellbeing  
Mathematics  
Drama / Expressive Arts  
Art and Design  
Science  
Moral Education

### Themes:

- Understanding and talking about emotions (including loneliness and self-esteem)
- Friendship
- Dogs
- Size
- Mindfulness, the changing seasons and our natural world



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## Size

How big is the Tiny Man? How big does he feel?  
Who is bigger than you? Who is smaller?  
What can you do because you're small? What can't you do?  
How does the Tiny Man's size affect his life?

## Emotions

How does the Tiny Man feel before he meets the dog?  
How can you tell?  
How do you think the girl is feeling in this story? What about the dog?  
If you're alone, does it mean that you're lonely?  
What stops the Tiny Man feeling more positive about himself?  
What is self-esteem? Do you think the Tiny Man has this quality?

## Mindfulness

Where does the Tiny Man do his thinking? What does he notice while he's there?  
Where do you go to think, and why?  
What did you notice on your way to school? What's going on around you right now?  
How does sitting quietly make you feel?

## The passing seasons

What does this story tell us about the passing seasons?  
Find a picture for each season. What do they tell us about each one?  
What changes in this story? What's changing in your life?

## Classroom activities

Below you'll find lots of ideas to help you explore the Tiny Man's story-world and build creative learning opportunities based on your experiences.

There are five themed sections, each focusing on different aspects of the story and offering lots of ideas for cross-curricular learning.

### THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING AND TALKING ABOUT EMOTIONS

#### Finding the right words for our feelings

Re-read the text and examine the pictures to find the emotions referenced in this book. List them. Can you find other names for these feelings? *Joy, delight, happiness...*

→ **DO** Work together to find as many as you can, then organise your word bank into 'feeling families' (*happy, sad, angry...*). Use your words in sentences, and illustrate.

#### Showing how you feel

The dog and the Tiny Man communicate without words and understand each other very well. How do they do this? Examine the pictures for clues, then share your thoughts. Talk about *empathy* and why it's important.

→ **DO** Recreate the pictures as a series of freeze frames by asking volunteers to role play the two friends. Pay attention to the characters' expressions and postures, and try to copy them. As each scene is presented, discuss your observations. What are these characters thinking and feeling? How can you tell?

→ **DO** Photograph and/or sketch your freeze frames. Add notes to remind you what happened, how you felt and what you learned.

#### Exploring sadness and happiness

What makes you sad? What does sadness feel like? Share responses and ideas.

Barbro Lindgren writes about sadness in ways that make pictures in our minds.

*"His tears fell like pearls on the moss..."*

*"The dog's head was hanging like a wilted tulip..."*

→ **ASK** Talk about these descriptions. What do you 'see' when you hear these words? Does talking about them in this way help us understand the characters?

→ **DO** Write your own Barbro-Lindgren-style sentences to describe sadness. Choose the most interesting and evocative, and use to construct a collaborative poem.

*"The Tiny Man felt warm..."*

→ **ASK** Look at the picture of the girl and the dog welcoming the Tiny Man home, then re-read the text. Why do you think Barbro Lindgren tells us about what's happening in the garden?

→ **DO** What makes you happy? What does happiness feel like? Create a companion poem about happiness by repeating the exercise above.

## Exploring loneliness and self-esteem

→ **DO** Draw an outline of the Tiny Man. Inside it, write what he thinks about himself and how he feels *before he meets the dog*. Around it, write what other characters think, say and know about him. What do you notice about the two areas?

Repeat the exercise, this time considering the Tiny Man as this story ends. How and why have his feelings changed?

→ **DO** Why do you think the Tiny Man feels so negative? Hot-seat a volunteer in-role, or use a multisensory approach to the artwork to find out more.

Choose an emotive picture and imagine you've stepped into it

What can you see and touch? Can you hear or smell anything? How do you feel?

What will you say or do?

Copy the Tiny Man's expressions and postures. Walk with the weight of his sorrow on your shoulders

Add sticky notes to record his thoughts

Use your voices to create a soundscape, or find music to capture the mood

→ **ASK** Talk about self-esteem. Could the Tiny Man have been kinder to himself? Find his negative comments and rephrase them. Then talk to him, advising him on how to be more positive.

→ **DO** Build on your experiences by writing descriptively about loneliness OR Write a letter advising a lonely friend.

If you're alone, does it mean you're feeling lonely? Discuss.

### Investigate loneliness in your school

Do people in your school feel lonely? Is there a way to find out, without making anyone uncomfortable?

→ **DO** Challenge children to come up with ideas. For example, organise a secret ballot by giving everyone a voting slip with three boxes: *I never feel lonely, I sometimes feel lonely, I often feel lonely*. Count the votes, then show results as graphs and charts.

→ **ASK** Could you make a difference by helping people feel less lonely? How? Come up with practical ways to help.

## THEME 2: FRIENDSHIP

→ **DO** What do the Tiny Man and the dog enjoy doing together? How do they show they care about each other? Draw a picture of the two friends. Add thought bubbles, or write a dialogue telling us how they feel.

→ **DO** On his advert, the Tiny Man doesn't say what kind of friend he's looking for. What qualities do you value in a

friend? Record your ideas in words and pictures. If you were going to advertise for a friend, what would you say? Talk about your ideas, then design posters.

→ **ASK** Is putting up a poster the best (or only) way of making new friends? How many other ways can you suggest?

→ **ASK** When the Tiny Man pins the notice in the tree, he's taking a big step. Is there something you'd like to change or achieve? Discuss ideas, then decide on first steps to get you started on your journey.

How does your school or community encourage and support friendship? *For example, benches in parks or playgrounds, lunch clubs for older residents*. Could you help? Or set up a new scheme of your own?

## THEME 3: DOGS AND OTHER PETS

→ **ASK** Do you have a dog, or know someone who does? Share your knowledge and experiences, then expand your discussion to include other pets.

Why do you think people keep pets? What are the benefits of having one? What are the responsibilities and challenges? Is the dog in this story a pet? Why/why not?

### From the dog's perspective

→ **DO** Look at the picture of the dog staring at the pastry box. Working in pairs, freeze frame this scene in role as the two friends, then show back and discuss.

What's the dog thinking? How do we know the box interests him?

What's the Tiny Man thinking?

What might be about to happen next?

On a given signal, bring your freeze frames to life and act or mime what happens next. Then write or tell a story based on this scene.

### Telling the dog's story

Working together, identify what happens in this story and create an event timeline. Who's the main character, the man or the dog? How do we know?

→ **ASK** Discuss the following questions:

How do you think the dog was feeling as these events happened? What was he thinking?

How did he come to be at the Tiny Man's house in the first place, and where did he go between visits?

Who was the little girl?

Write or tell the story from the dog's perspective.

## Finding out about pet dogs

→ **ASK** What do dogs need to be healthy and happy? How should people care for them? Talk about the *dos and don'ts* of interacting with dogs.

→ **DO** Invite a dog owner to bring their pet to school and answer questions. Use charcoal, pastels or thick graphite to sketch the dog from life, working as quickly and freely as possible to capture a sense of personality and movement.

## THEME 4: SIZE

→ **ASK** How tall are you? How tall is the tallest person in your school? Collect data and explore using mathematical language and infographics.

→ **DO** Guess the Tiny Man's height, then find someone the same size and draw round them. Paint your figure, then pin it on a wall. Who's taller than your Tiny Man? Who's smaller?

→ **DO** Work together to list the *positives* and *benefits* of being small. Use big, bright, beautiful writing to record your words and phrases, then display next to your Tiny Man.

→ **DO** Paint pictures of the Tiny Man and cut them out. Hide them around school, then challenge other classes to find them. How observant will they be? How many will they find?

## THEME 5: MINDFULNESS, THE CHANGING SEASONS AND OUR NATURAL WORLD

### Being mindful

Throughout this book, we observe the Tiny Man being 'present in the moment' as he contemplates his life. This helps him notice and experience his feelings, and gives him time and space to connect with the changing seasons and the natural world.

→ **DO** Find pictures showing the Tiny Man being thoughtful. Note the location. What does he observe when he takes the time to sit and think?

What's the difference between *being thoughtful* and *worrying*?

→ **ASK** Talk about focusing your attention inward (*on how you feel*) or outward (*on what you're experiencing around you*). Then try some exercises designed to help you connect with your inner self or the world around you.

For example:

→ **DO** Find somewhere quiet and comfortable to sit with your eyes closed. Focus your attention inward – notice how you're

breathing and acknowledge how you feel. Open your eyes, then draw annotated pictures to record your observations.

→ **DO** Find a safe outdoor spot in which to observe the natural world by

sitting quietly and closing your eyes to help you focus on sounds  
marking out a limited area and using your sense of sight to explore it close up  
getting to know a tree by touch alone, then finding it again with your eyes open

→ **EXTEND** Build on your experiences with observational drawing and descriptive writing, or compile a report.

### Changes in the weather, the seasons and your lives

→ **ASK** Find a picture in this book for each season. Why have you chosen these images?

What does this story tell us about the seasons? What animals, birds, plants and weather are associated with each season, according to this book?

→ **DO** Work as a class to plan and carry out long-term observations to record the changing seasons.

*Note the temperature; measure the rainfall; keep local weather reports together with your comments; write descriptions of the same place in different seasons; draw pictures of trees and plants; measure growth; take photographs in the same place at the same time every day for a month/a term/a year etc. Write about what you've done and display your work.*

Why does the natural world keep changing? What impact do the changing seasons have on us? How do they make us feel?



### For more information

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