



The Name of the Child
Marilynn Reynolds
Don Kilby, illustrator

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The Story

Lloyd is afraid of coyotes, illness and independence. He does not want to leave his mother and travel to the country by train to escape the 1918 flu epidemic. Once at his aunt and uncle's, he finds himself bundled onto a wagon on a stormy night, a tiny nameless baby thrust into his arms. His aunt and uncle have come down with the flu. Lloyd must get the baby to safety, but to do so he must drive the wagon along a deserted, muddy road in rain, thunder and darkness. When the wagon slips sideways into a ditch, Lloyd faces an even greater test.

The Author

Marilynn Reynolds is the author of many beloved historical picture books, including *Belle's Journey*, *The Magnificent Piano Recital*, winner of the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award, and *A Present for Mrs. Kazinski*. A master storyteller, Marilynn researches the historical period for each story with great care. She divides her time between Edmonton, Alberta and Victoria, British Columbia.

The Illustrator

Don Kilby's unique vision of rural life stems partly from the time he spent on the prairies and partly from the myriad jobs he has held. His paintings capture the detail and shifting moods of the landscape and its inhabitants. Don also illustrated *The Prairie Fire*, also by Marilynn Reynolds, which was nominated for the CLA Book of the Year Award and chosen for the American Booksellers' Association's prestigious "Pick of the Lists." He lives in Elora, Ontario.

The Ideas

- Make a list of several of your fears. Now choose one and write a story or create a series of pictures in which you have an adventure where you must face that fear.

- *The Name of the Child* is set in 1918. Look closely at all the pictures and see how many details you can pick out that show the time in which the story is set.
- Nowhere in the story does it say where it is set. Again, look closely at the pictures. In what parts of Canada might it be set? Where do you think that it couldn't be set?
- Lloyd takes a nursery rhyme and changes it to suit himself. Pick a nursery rhyme that you particularly like and change it to suit yourself. You might replace the name in the rhyme with your own and see where it takes you.
- Look at the design of the book. Do you think that the color of the endpapers works with the book as a whole? What about the color of the back cover? Do you like the way that the text and illustrations are arranged? Why or why not? What about the illustration on the title page? What mood does it set? Compare this book's design with other books.
- Interview some family members or friends about their names. Were they named after someone else? Has a name been passed down through generations? If so, has it changed at all? Sometimes spellings change over time. Does the name have a special meaning? Would you like to pass a name down yourself if you have children?
- As a class, collect names. Each class member's favorite boy's name and favourite girl's name. Most unusual names. A list of names of all the pets in the class. A list of siblings' names, parents' and guardians' names. Favorite book, movie, comic strip and TV names. Post the lists for inspiration.

Here are some questions that Don Kilby likes to discuss with children when he shows them *The Name of the Child*.

I believe the element of fear and unknown that is key to the story should be high-lighted. I might ask the kids if they have ever been caught out in a serious storm. How hard was the rain falling? How long till the rain soaked right through their clothes? Was the wind blowing wildly also? Have they ever been caught out in a thunder and lightning storm? If so, what did they do, what was it like?

I myself have been stuck in a small tent a few times during some very powerful electrical storms. It was perhaps the most terrifying experience in my life. And I was a grown-up. Once when a deafening clap of thunder occurred seemingly right over head, I remember being momentarily elevated off the ground. It seems unbelievable when I recount the scene, but I have a strong memory of this happening.

Imagine being a young boy in a strange place in the dark of a stormy night, holding a new born in a terrible storm of the same ferocity as I experienced. I think having the readers try to imagine themselves facing such a demanding task in a truly bone chilling setting can really bring the story to life for children.

A Few Words from the Author

Dear boys and girls,

Ideas for stories and books come from everywhere. In some ways it's a lot like cooking a huge cauldron of soup – I take memories from my own life, stories that other people tell me and lots of imagination and let it cook together in my mind. After months of simmering, all the things come together in something that is better than what I started with.

The idea for *The Name of the Child* came from a story that a librarian told me when I was visiting schools and libraries in northern Alberta four years ago. She was driving me to a school in her van, and when we came to a place where the roads crossed she said, “This is where that Bezanson thing happened.”

I'm just like you; I love to hear stories. So I said, “What Bezanson thing?” and she told me a true story that happened in the middle of winter ninety years ago when a young woman had to rescue a newborn baby. The baby's mother became sick and her grown-up sister, who was from the city and didn't know anything about horses, had to take the new baby to a neighbour who had a milk cow. The frightened sister and the crying baby set out in a horse and wagon in the middle of the night, wrapped in furs to keep them warm. They made it safely to the neighbour's and the baby was saved.

When I heard that story, I thought, “A child could have saved that baby!”

In my imagination, I thought about a little boy—a little boy who is afraid of many things and who conquers his fears to save a baby's life. Then I remembered hearing a story about my grandfather being sick with influenza in 1918, and I decided that the mother in my book could have influenza. It was just like making that kettle of soup that I told you about. I put all these ideas and stories together in *The Name of the Child*.

You might be interested to know that my maiden name, the name I had before I was married, was “Marilynn Lloyd” and “Lloyd” was also the name of my husband's father whom I loved very much. I decided to name my hero Lloyd, and I think of him as being a lot like my husband's father when he was a little boy. My grandmother's maiden name was “Edwards” and she was a kind woman who helped many people. I imagine Mrs. Edwards in the book as a woman a lot like my grandmother.

When I was writing the book, I learned just how terrible the flu epidemic of 1918 was. Between twenty and forty million people around the world died of influenza. It killed more people than died in World War One. In 1919, the influenza unexpectedly stopped and it has never come back as an epidemic. A disease that makes people sick around the world is called a “pandemic.”

I told you that I put my own memories into my books, and I remember that I used to sing on mornings when I was unhappy about starting a new school. The song I used to sing was:

“Oh, what a beautiful morning!
Oh, what a beautiful day!
I've got a beautiful feeling
Everything's going my way!”

So I gave Lloyd a song to sing to make himself feel better and to frighten away any coyotes that might be skulking in the bushes. My mother, who is eighty-six years old, told me that when she was a little girl she used to lie in bed at night and hear the coyotes crying out on the prairie and was always very afraid of them. I put that into my book too.

Ideas for my books come from everywhere. I hope that this will help you when you write your own stories, and I hope that you enjoy reading *The Name of the Child*.

Your friend,
Marilynn Reynolds

A Few Words from the Illustrator

Dear Reader,

I am Don Kilby, the illustrator of the picture book *The Name of the Child*. As I read the manuscript for the first time I knew that I would HAVE to be the artist who illustrated this story. I am drawn to stories where real things happen, where kids have to deal with issues such as loneliness, fear of the unknown and taking a journey. The setting made the story very attractive to me too. I was thrilled to have the chance to illustrate dark stormy nights, lightning and coyotes!

When I began working on the book, I followed my usual procedure. I reread the story over and over and started sketching out possible ideas for the artwork. Some came to me quickly and others took a lot of hard thinking before I came up with just the right image. It is important to look at the sketches together to be sure they don't all look too much alike. For instance, after the close up of Lloyd's uncle on page ten/eleven, I chose to show the following page from a very different viewpoint.

Actually, page twelve/thirteen is one of my personal favourites in the book. I wanted to find a way to show Lloyd very alone in a place that was strange to him. He is shown looking out the window in a bored kind of pose, but not able or wanting to go outside despite his boredom. Maybe the scarecrow just over to the side is keeping him in the house...

Back to the process. After I have drawn up the first sketches and they look good to me, I send them off to Orca where they are carefully looked over by a number of people. It is always important to try to catch any problems early on because it is far easier to make a change at this stage than when the art is almost finished.

After receiving comments from Orca, I make some changes and then go to the next stage, pencil linears. These are carefully done drawings that will look just like the final pictures except that they are not in colour. In order to create these drawings I have to do a lot of research to make the story setting look correct. I had to research the type of clothes worn by Lloyd, find out what a wagon would look like, what the inside of a farmhouse in that time period might include, and what train stations were like both in the country and in the city. Because the story takes place back in time, it was important to be sure that everything looked authentic. I approached a number of museums and spoke with historians in order to insure the accuracy of the details.

An important element of every picture book is choosing the models. Luckily, I had a nephew named James who was glad to help me out and posed many times for the character of Lloyd. His father, my brother, posed for the character of Lloyd's uncle. To make Lloyd look more like a boy from the time period of the book, I rented a costume for him to wear from the Stratford Theatre Company.

Once the linears are completed, they are sent off to Orca for a careful look. Each drawing is carefully checked to make sure that I haven't made an error somewhere or left something out. Suggestions and ideas on how to improve the linears are sent back to me and I include them in the revised linears.

Finally, it was time to start on the paintings! For this book I chose to do the artwork with acrylic paint. This type of paint is fun to work with and dries very quickly, which helps speed up the painting time. If I made a mistake (it happens!), I could paint right over it and start again with acrylic paint. I always do the paintings a little larger than they appear in the book, mostly because it is easier to paint the small details when they are larger, and I always paint beyond the edges of the scene to make the printer's job a bit easier.

It takes a long time and a lot of work to paint all the pictures and by the time I'm finished I don't even want to think about them for a while!

However, it is always exciting to see the book when it arrives in its finished form. It has come a long, long way from those first sketches. For me, illustrating Marilyn's story was a real challenge that was also lots of fun!

Sincerely,
Don