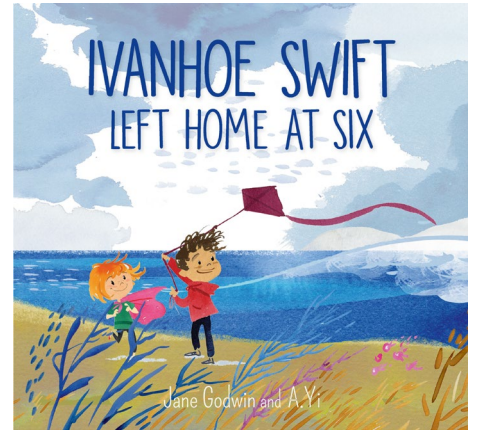


Ivanhoe Swift Left Home at Six

By Jane Godwin
Illustrated by A. Yi



March 2019 ISBN 9781760631864
Hardcover picture book
Recommended for 3-6-year-olds

Summary

*Ivanhoe Swift left home when he was six.
He had heard many songs about the world, and it was time to see it for himself.
'We won't know where you are!' cried his father.
'I'll know where you are,' said Ivanhoe. 'And you can look out for my kite in the sky.
Goodbye, parents!'*

A delightful story about setting off to see the world... and the joy in coming home again.



Ivanhoe Swift Left Home at Six is a beautiful, lyrical exploration of those moments when children first begin to explore the world for themselves. It might be starting kindergarten or school, it might be walking home from the park alone, it might be having a first sleepover at a friend's house. Jane Godwin's text captures the idea that it can be exciting for children, and bittersweet for parents. And A.Yi has captured the energy, exuberance and movement of the text, in a beautiful, warm and easily-accessible style.

The story has fairy or folk tale elements that children might recognise: the mother's song; the Tall Tree; the journey across a deep river and through a dark wood; the sea carrying Ivanhoe home. It also has elements of children's play and dreams: the red house that appears and which Maisie Jane decides to live in; cooking up a 'feast' from gathered wild plants; suddenly arriving home. The language mixes everyday English with more stylised folk tale English, integrating realistic elements of the story with more fantasized ones.

Themes

- exploration
- childhood
- bullying
- adventure
- family
- coming home

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Discussion questions

1. Show the cover of *Ivanhoe Swift Left Home at Six* to your students and ask them what they think this story might be about and what they saw in the cover that made them think that.
2. Now read the story to your class and when finished, start a discussion with the following questions.
 - How old is Ivanhoe Swift?
 - Why did he want to leave home?
 - How did his parents feel about him leaving?
 - What did Ivanhoe pack for his adventure?
 - Where did Ivanhoe go on his adventure?
 - How did Ivanhoe lose his kite?
 - Who found it for him?
 - How far do you think Ivanhoe really travelled on his adventure?
 - What things do you think Ivanhoe learned on his adventure?
 - Why do you think Ivanhoe thinks he has seen enough of the world for now?
3. Turn to the first image of Ivanhoe Swift in the story and ask students to study the illustration and come up with words to describe him. [*Hint: happy (smile on his face) determined (hands on his hips), relaxed (hair is a bit messy and wearing a tee-shirt).*]
4. Turn to the first double-page spread and read the page again. When finished count-up the things that Ivanhoe is packing in his bag to go exploring and ask students what they would want to take with them if they were leaving home.
5. The words of his mother's song are written in a lovely, swirly way, why do you think that might be the case?
6. Look at this double-page spread again and guess how windy it is when Ivanhoe sets out. The words don't tell us anything about wind so how did the image tell us? [*Hint, the kite, Ivanhoe's hair, the way the trees and grass are bending to one side.*]
7. Turn to the double-page spread showing the unfriendly town people. How has the artist shown us this is an unpleasant town, filled with unpleasant people? [*Hint: look at the colours used, the items depicted in the town, the way the people are standing.*] The words on the page don't tell us how Ivanhoe feels about this town, but can you guess? Look at the image of him and list the things in it that told you how he felt.
8. Look at the last double-page spread and see if you can find examples of every place Ivanhoe has visited on his journey. Are these the songs he is singing?
9. Do you want to see the world? If you could go anywhere, where would it be?
10. What did you like about the story? Was there anything you didn't like about it? How would you describe the book to your best friend?
11. **Extension Question:** Ivanhoe moves through the world and there's lots of other movement in the story, too. Can you find examples of where nature is shown moving? [*Hint: look at the images of the river, the sea, the kite. Is there even something in Ivanhoe's surname that suggests movement?*]

Author's inspiration

'I wrote the story a few months after our daughter left home. Our son had left home a few years before that, and I witnessed in each of them a need to both assert their independence and to recalibrate their relationship to us - their parents - and to the security of the family home.

'The main message of the story for me is the often life-long push and pull of independence/freedom/self-determination vs dependence/belonging/potential subjugation of self in the face of family. I see this tension in toddlers and young children and in adolescents and adults, too!

'I suppose a key theme or life lesson in the story is that you can be independent/develop your own sense of self and exist in loving, emotional relationships too. It's not a case of having one at the expense of the other.

'Ivanhoe will explore the world more in the future. He's taken the first vital steps.'

— Jane Godwin



The creators

Jane Godwin is the author of many award-winning stories for young people, including her bestselling picture books with Anna Walker, *What Do You Wish For?*, *Starting School*, *Today We Have No Plans*, *All Through the Year* and *Little Cat and the Big Red Bus*. Jane has also collaborated with Andrew Joyner on the delightful picture books *How Big Is Too Small?* and *Bear Make Den*, with Freya Blackwood on *Hattie Helps Out*, and with Freya and Davina Bell on *Birthday Baby*.

A. Yi is a Sydney-based illustrator who has illustrated the Alice-Miranda, Clementine Rose and Ghost Club series. She works as a storyboard artist and has one dog and six guppies.