

Yellow Bananas



Illustrated by Paul Dainton

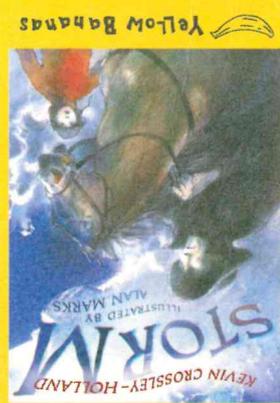
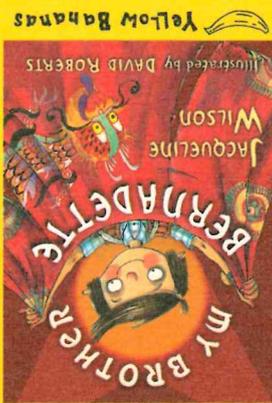
Amina's Blanket

Helen Dunmore

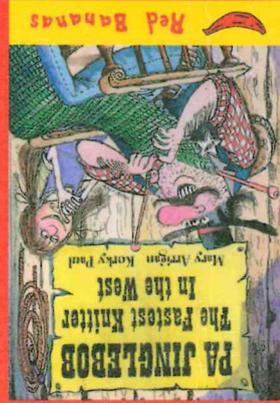


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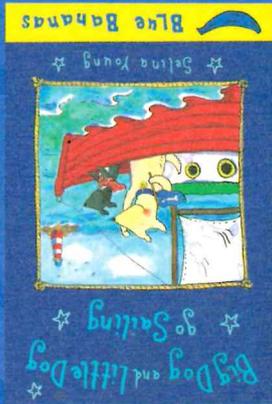
For newly fluent readers



For building confidence



For early readers





Amina's Blanket

CROSSHALL INFANT SCHOOL

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Helen Dunmore

Amina's Blanket

For my parents
P.D.

about? Josie stared across the table at Natasha.
 leaving the door open. What was she talking
 Then she went out with a mysterious smile,
 and I'll bring it in.'

'Right!' said Miss Heather. 'Wait two minutes
 a wet Monday morning in Miss Heather's class.
 exciting was going to happen at ten o'clock on

But Josie couldn't believe that anything

you nearly missed something very exciting.'

'Dreaming again!' scolded Miss Heather. 'Well,

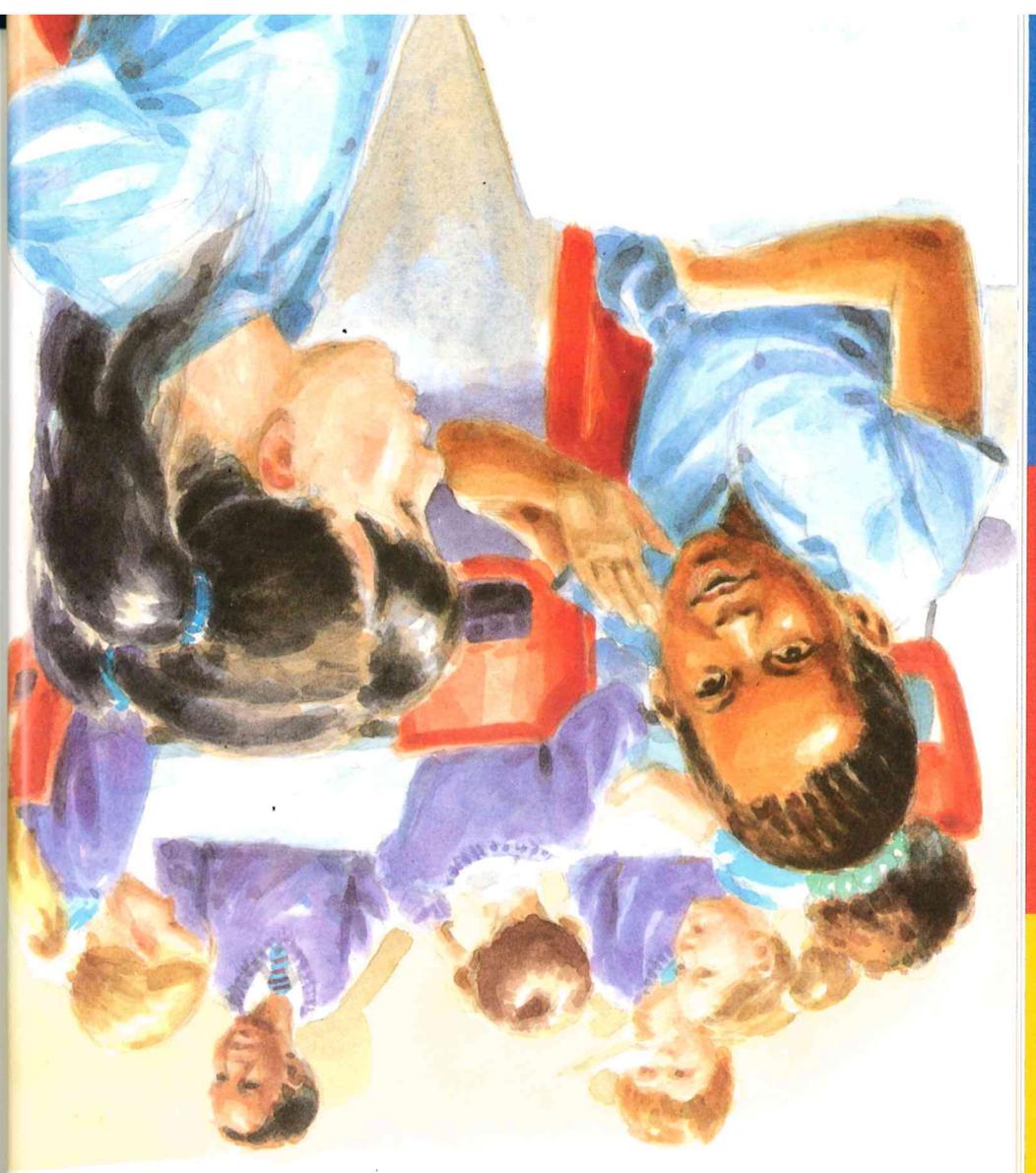
the classroom. Josie jumped.

'JOSIE!' MISS HEATHER'S voice cracked across

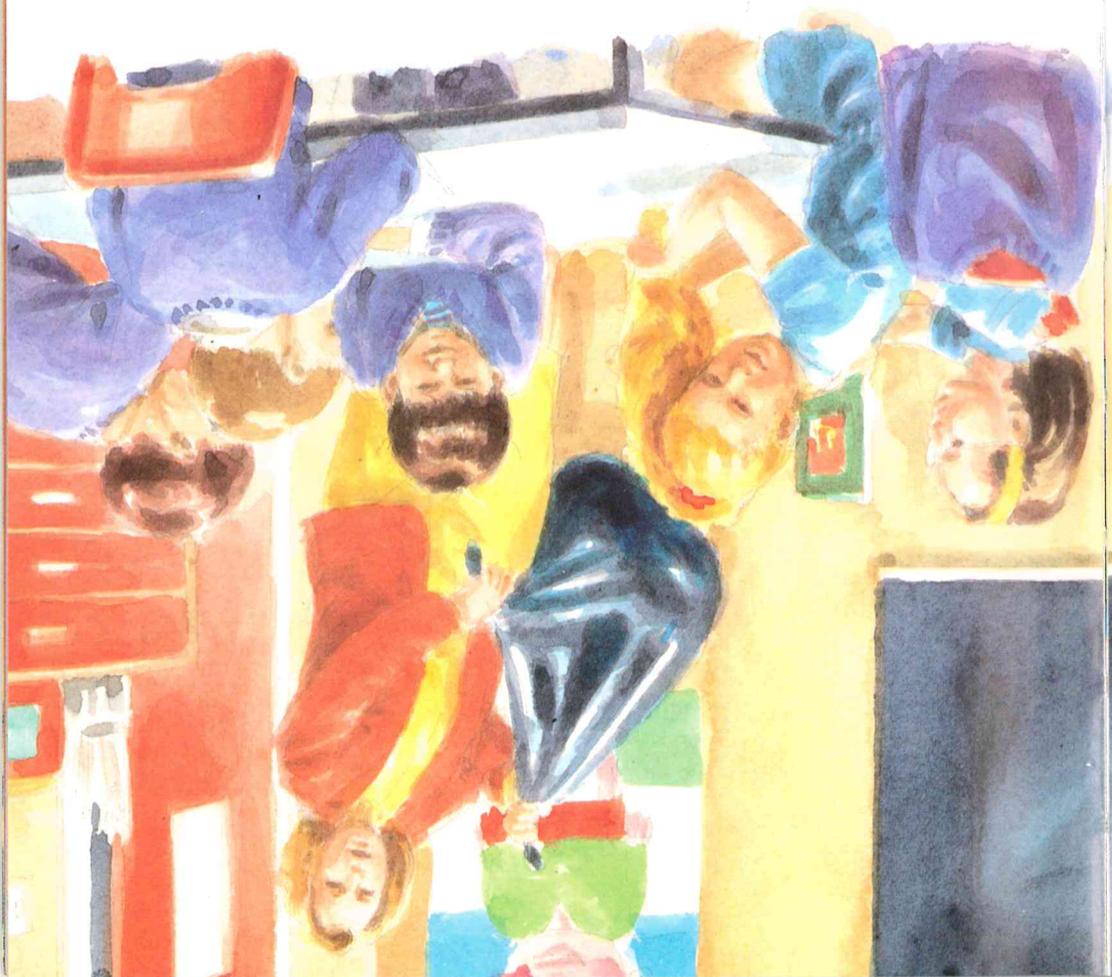
Chapter One



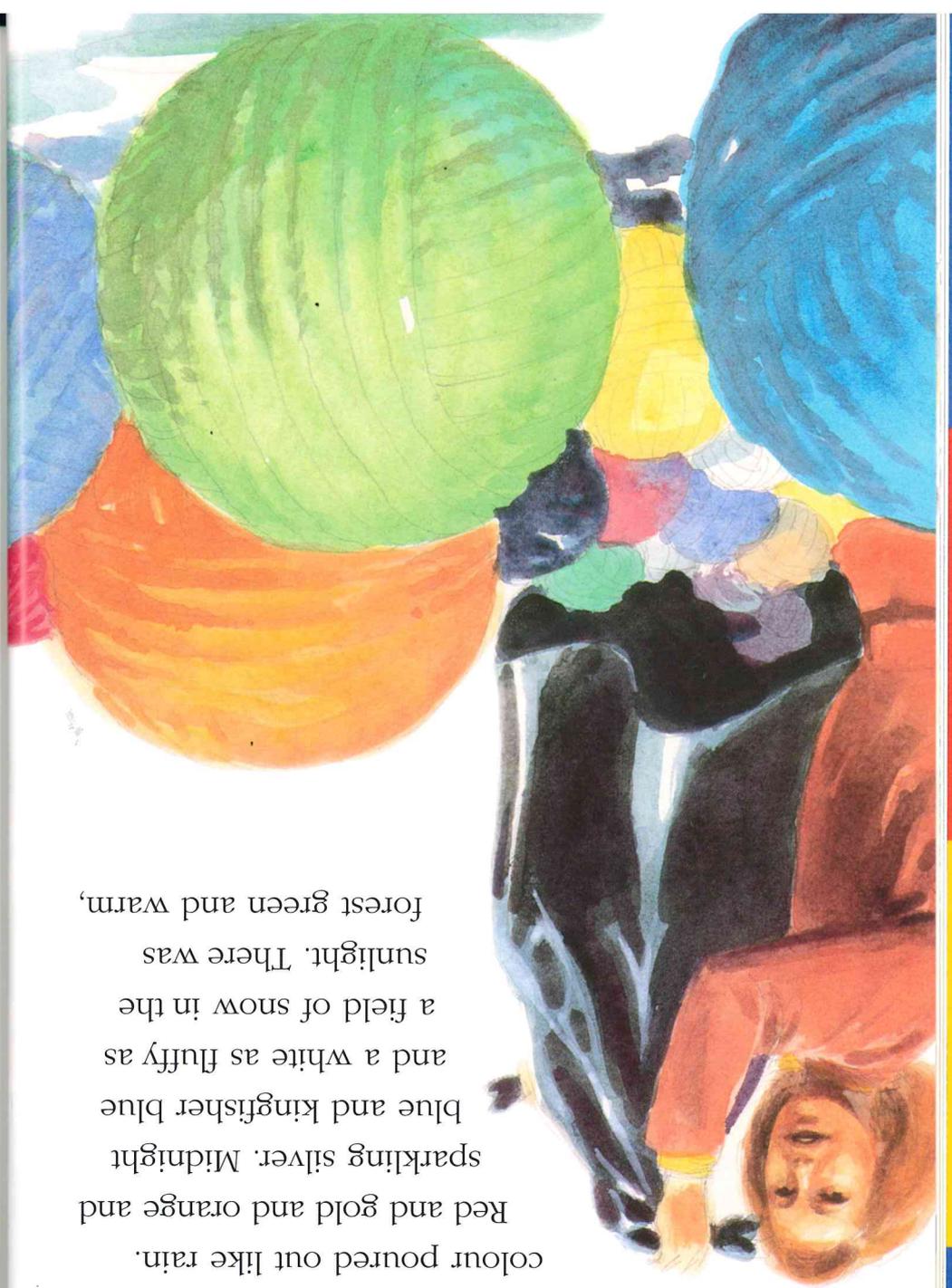
'Blankets!' mouthed Natasha. If she talked
out loud, Rosie Gold would tell on her.
'Blankets?' whispered Josie. 'What do you
mean?'



But just at that moment Miss Heather swished back into the classroom with a big, bulgy, black plastic rubbish bag. She put it down on the table next to Josie, and began to untie the string round the neck of the bag. Rosie Gold pushed forward to help her. The black bag wobbled on the table as if there was something alive inside it.



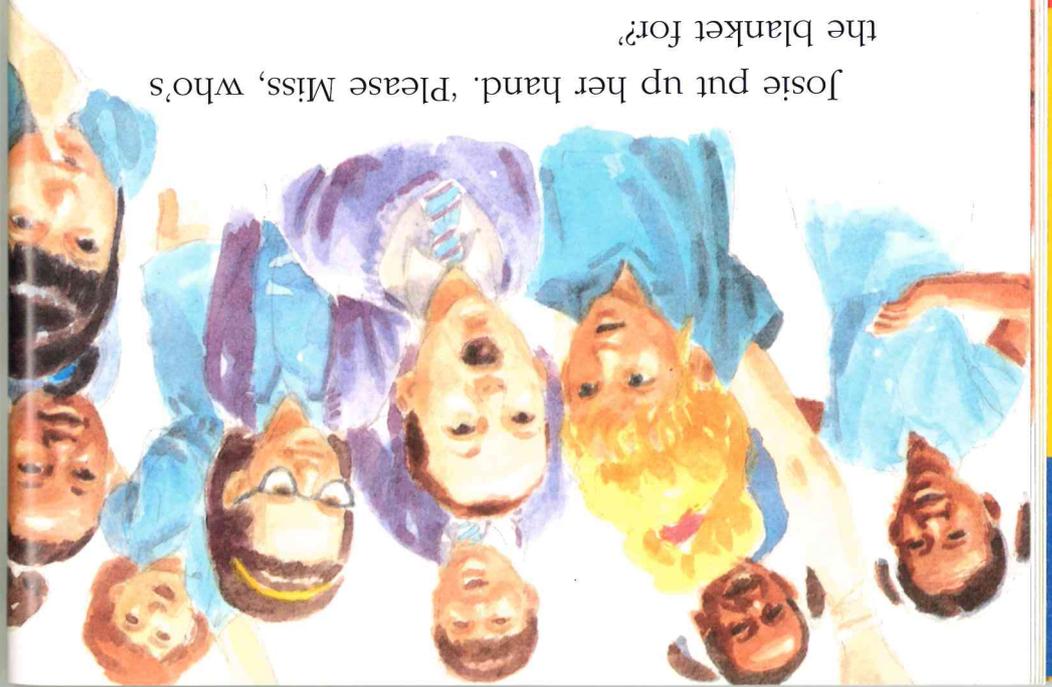
Then the string was undone and
colour poured out like rain.
Red and gold and orange and
sparkling silver. Midnight
blue and kingfisher blue
and a white as fluffy as
a field of snow in the
sunlight. There was
forest green and warm,



buttery yellow and a rainbow ball like a patch
of oil on the road after rain. The colours met
and danced as they rolled out over the table.
'There!' said Miss Heather. 'Look what Mr
Stassinopolous has given us for our blanket!
Isn't it kind of him? Now, if each of you takes
one ball of wool, and knits one square, we
can sew them all up and make a beautiful
warm blanket.'



Josie put up her hand. 'Please Miss, who's the blanket for?'
 'Josie, you weren't listening at all, were you? Now, can someone tell her?'
 Rosie Gold's hand wagged in the air, but for once Miss Heather did not choose her. She chose Jason Connolly.
 'It's a blanket for someone who lives in a city where there's war. For an old person who hasn't got any heating.'
 'Or a child,' chipped in Natasha.
 'That's right, Jason,' said Miss Heather. 'Our blanket is going to go far away to the country. I showed you on the map. It will go to help someone keep warm through the hard winter.'



Lots of houses and flats have been damaged by shells because of the war. People are homeless; 'Shells . . .'; whispered Josie dreamily, thinking of the glisten of sea-shells on the sand when the tide went out. 'How can shells

damage a house?'

'It's not that sort of shell.

These shells explode,

like bombs. They

break walls and

windows. They kill

people,' said Natasha,

who always listened when

Miss Heather was talking.

'Oh,' said Josie. Then she

put her hand up.

'Yes, Josie?' said Miss Heather.

'Is it snowing there, where the war is?'

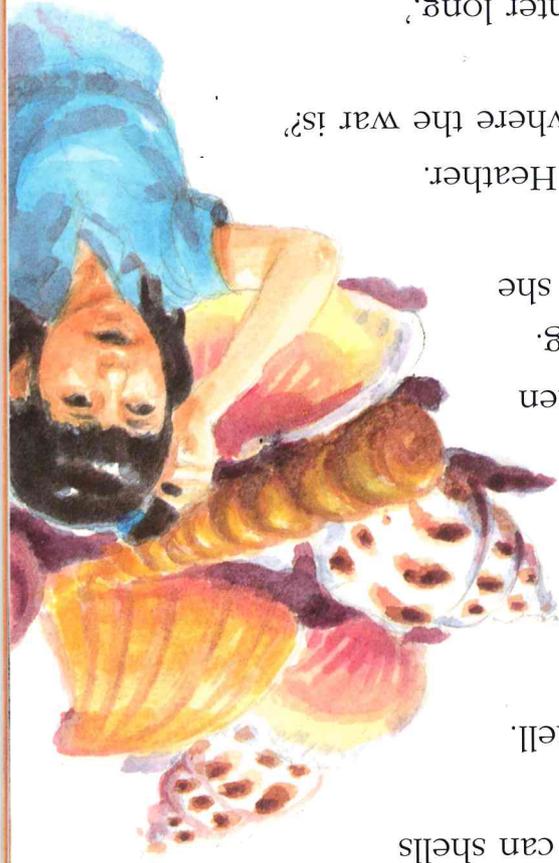
asked Josie.

'It snows there all winter long,'

said Miss Heather, 'and often it's too

dangerous for people to go out and gather

wood to light fires. They get very cold.'



'Why don't they turn on the central heating then?' sniggered Darren Fox.

'They don't have central heating there,

stupid!' Rosie Gold told him. Miss Heather

looked sad.

'Oh yes, they do,' she said. 'They used to

have nice flats with central heating, just like

you, before the war. But the bombs and shells

have destroyed them. Now, let's give these out.

One ball of wool each.'

'I ought to have the gold,' said Rosie Gold,

'like my name, Miss.' Everyone wanted the

gold, but Rosie got it. A crowd of hands

snatched and pulled at the balls of wool. Then,

suddenly, they were all gone except for a ball

of dark blue that was a bit smaller than the



others. Josie picked it up and squeezed its
warm softness.

'It's not fair. Yours is the smallest,' said

Natasha.

'I like it,' said Josie, and she did.



Miss Heather drew a square on the board

and showed them how many stitches they had
to do. They were allowed to take the wool

home to do their knitting.

'I want this blanket finished by the end of
the week!' said Miss Heather. 'Thirty beautiful

squares.'

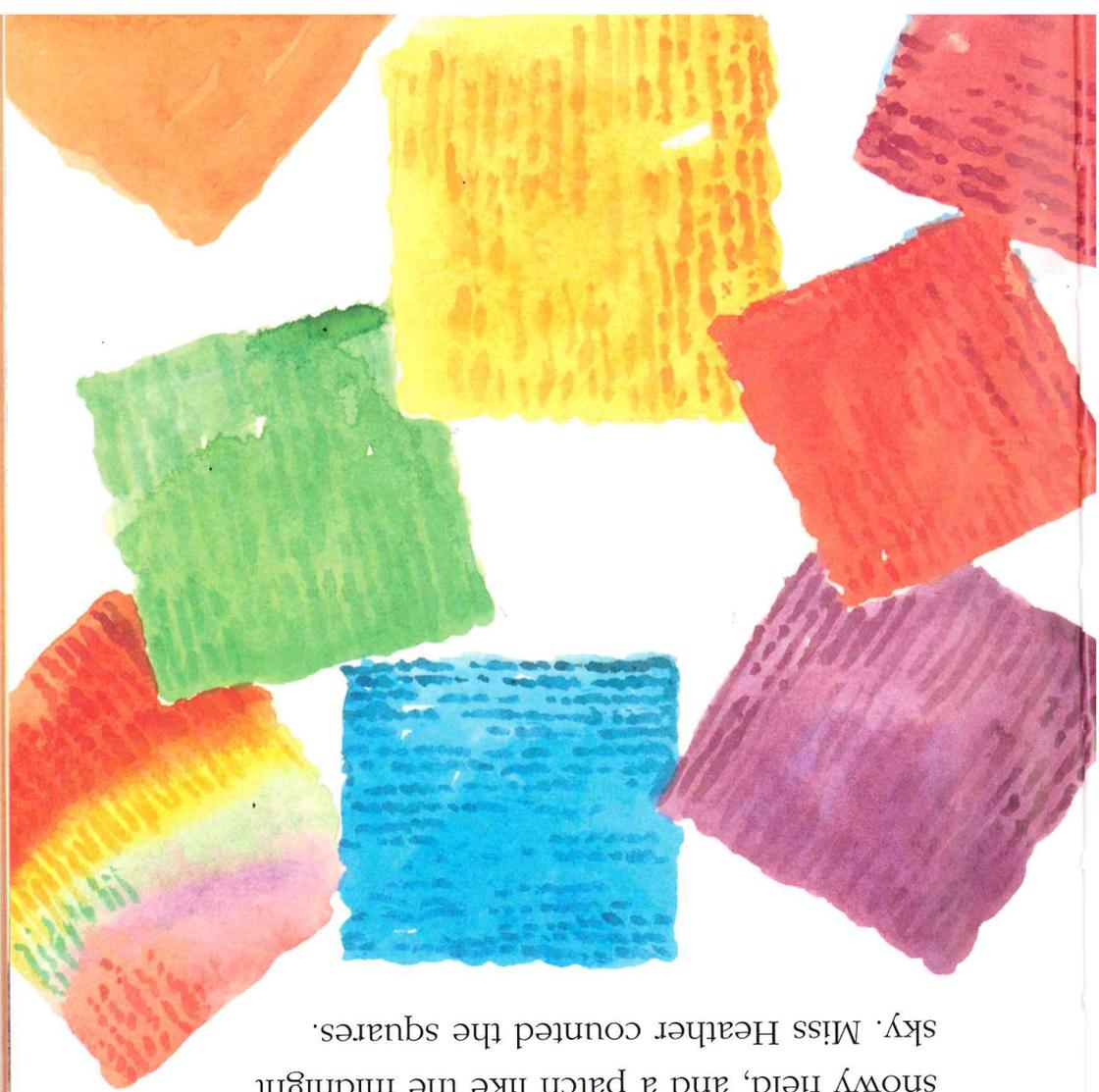
AT HOME JOSIE knitted and knitted. Sometimes a hole came in her square and Mum had to help her pick up the stitches she had dropped. For a long time there was only a little wiggly strip of knitting on her needles, then suddenly her square started to grow.

'If I do six more rows tonight, it'll be finished,' she said to Mum on Wednesday. Her square looked like a little patch of midnight sky. Josie stroked it and wondered who would get the blanket. Would they like her blue square as much as she did?

Chapter Two



That night Josie finished her square. She was not the only one. At school next morning the tables were covered with finished blanket squares. Red and gold and kingfisher blue and ebony black and green as bright as grass in summer. There was white like a corner of a snowy field, and a patch like the midnight sky. Miss Heather counted the squares.



'Thirty!' she said happily. 'Well done, Class
 Five. Now, all we've got to do is get the
 squares sewn up into a blanket.' She looked
 worried. 'But I don't know if I'll have the time
 to do it. There's a staff meeting this evening.'
 Josie's hand shot up before anyone else's.
 'My Mum'll do it!' she called out. 'She's really
 good at sewing.'
 'Are you sure, Josie? Well, that would be a
 great help. If we fold all the squares and put
 them back in the sack, can you manage to
 carry it home?'
 'Yes, of course,' said Josie.
 Mum looked surprised when Josie tipped the
 bundle of squares onto the living room carpet.
 For a moment Josie thought she was going to
 be cross, but she wasn't.
 'But you'll have to help, Josie. I can't do all
 this on my own,' she said.
 First Mum ironed the squares, then they took
 thin wool and fat needles and started to sew
 them together. Josie sewed one strip of five
 squares, and Mum sewed another. Josie sewed

and sewed until her fingers were sore from pushing the needle through the wool. All the time she thought about the person in the cold faraway city who would get the blanket. It was very late and all the colours of the rainbow were dancing in front of Josie's eyes. 'Thanks, Josie. You go to bed now. I'll finish this,' said Mum.



When Josie was nearly asleep, Mum brought
in the finished blanket. She spread it out on
top of Josie's duvet. It was the most beautiful
blanket in the world.
'Can I keep it here, just for tonight?' asked
Josie.

'Yes, just for tonight,' said Mum.



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Josie slept. Mum went to bed and the sky
was as dark as the square of midnight blue
Josie had knitted.

