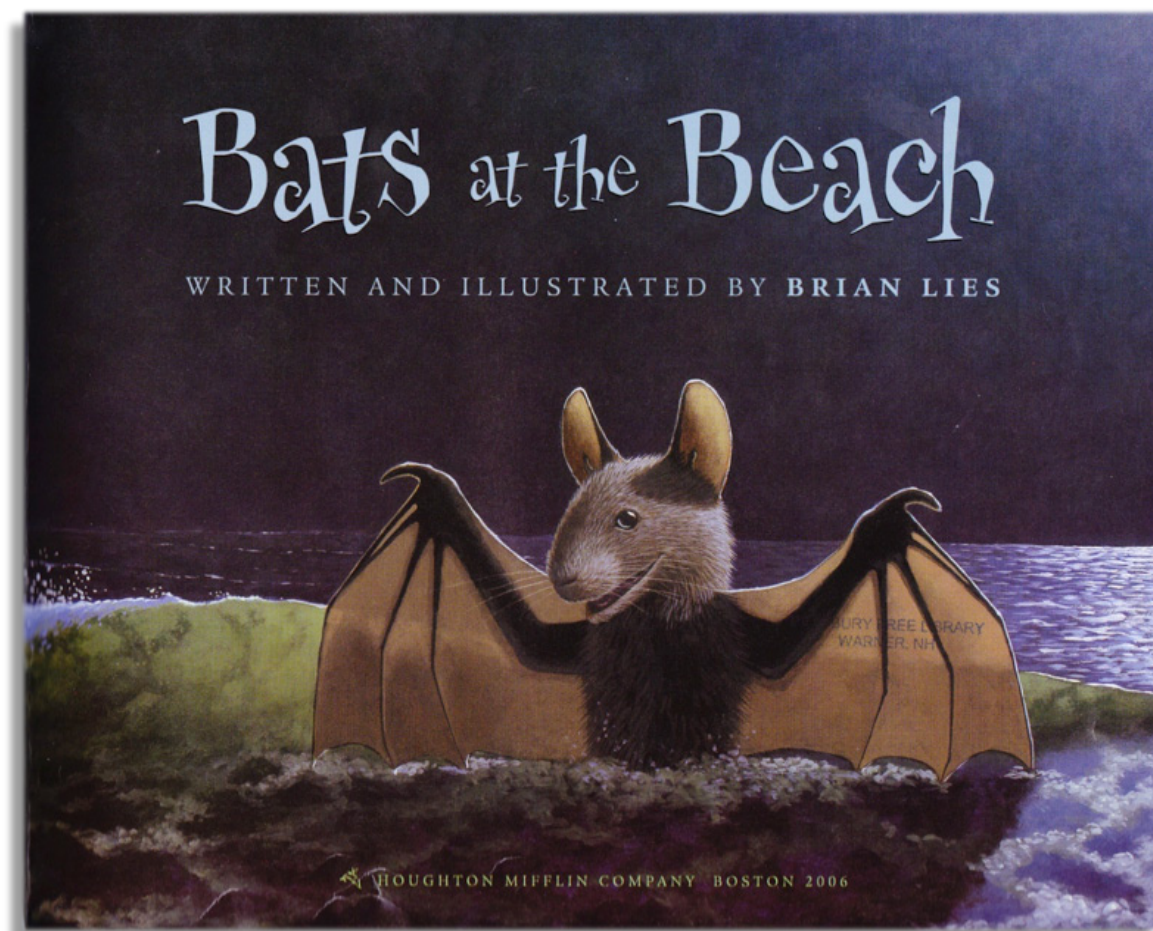


From the Opening of Brian Lies' *Bats at the Beach*



Sun slips down and all is still,
and soon we can't tell sky from hill.
Now from barn and cave and rafter,
bats pour out with shrieks of laughter.

The rising moon can grow no fatter
as sky lights up with gleeful chatter:
Quick, call out! Tell all you can reach—
The moon is just perfect for bats at the beach.

Text Dependent Questions about *Bats on the Beach* Excerpt

What follows are two different sets of text dependent questions about the excerpted text.

What time does the story begin? What clues are there from the words? From the pictures? *Starting with fairly easy text based questions is a good confidence builder for students. In this case, the opening image is very easy to interpret: the color of the sky and the lights on in the windows of the houses are good clues that it is nighttime, and can be used to help students grasp the figurative meaning of “Sun slips down”*

What time is it when the poem begins? Ask students if they can figure out what the second line of the poem means. This is a complicated way of saying it is getting dark.

Why is it “we” can’t tell? Who is the “we”? *These first two stanzas are by an observer. The 3rd stanza (and the remainder of the poem) is from the bats’ perspective.*

Where do the bats come from? *The text indicates three places (“barn and cave and rafter”) – the first two of which will likely be familiar locations to students. But the meaning of “rafter” will challenge many of them. Turn the page and ask them if there are any clues in the picture. The next page “zooms in” on the eve of the house, and students can tell that the bats are emerging from what they might conclude are the rafters of the house. Otherwise teachers should give students the definition of rafter as it is not academic vocabulary.*

What is the effect of using the phrase “pour our” instead of “come out”? *Teachers should point out here that “pour” tells us many bats are coming out and coming fast. You can compare it to, “It’s not raining but pouring” - an expression with which students may be familiar. Teachers should focus on academic vocabulary like “pour” and “shriek” rather than a word like “rafter,” which is a much more concrete word and would not need nearly as much discussion as the more abstract pour or shriek.*

What does “shrieks of laughter” mean? How is it connected to “gleeful chatter”? *Students should be asked to describe different kinds of laughter to see if they can gravitate to the right meaning hinted at by “gleeful chatter.” Teachers can also reverse the order of the questions and ask students to unpack “gleeful chatter” by reference to “shrieks of laughter.”*

What other words might be helpful in figuring out what “shrieks” means? *Teachers should explain that shrieks of laughter means loud laughter, and they can demonstrate how it is high pitched. Just as “pour” shows us how the bats came out of the cave, “shrieks” tells us how they laughed.*

What was the mood or feeling of the first stanza? What words did the author use to create this mood? *“Gleeful chatter” will need to be explained as students are not likely to know both words, and the context here does not provide much support. Both words are fairly concrete, and students would benefit from a quick explanation using the story’s context.*

What shape is the moon in the story? *Students are probably familiar with different shapes to the moon, and can reference those in determining what is mean by the moon being able to “grow no fatter”? (Getting at that concept might require spending some time having students figure out the difference between “grow fatter” and “grow **no** fatter”).*

What is meant by “The rising moon can grow no fatter”? *Some students will know about the stages of the moon, but this should be explained with the help of pictures from the story. This leads to the question of why “fatter” and not just “bigger”. Re-reading the stanza with exaggerated emphasis on “fatter” and “chatter” should seal the deal.*

What words are printed differently? What does that signal? *Students will be able to look at the page and notice the italics. Reading the words outloud will be helpful in having them distinguish that the voice has changed from the perspective of a narrator to the perspective of the bats themselves.*

Why did the print change? What is happening with these words? *Some students will see that the bats are speaking, and this is why the author changed the print. There is no reason not to explain that this kind of print is called italics.*

How does the phrase “sky lights up” connect to the story? *This is a lovely juxtaposition of sensory language: the image of rising moon sets the stage for the phrase, which is then applied not to the moon but rather the noise produced by the “gleeful chatter.”*