



**OMNIBUS BOOKS**

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Title	Zizzy
Author	Penny Matthews
Illustrator	Danny Snell
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# Teachers' Notes

## Zizzy

Written by Penny Matthews

Illustrated by Danny Snell

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## About the Story

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Zizzy is a sloth, and likes nothing better than to hang upside down in a tree all day and rest. Sometimes he will make his way down from his tree (very slowly), but he really prefers to doze and dream and to eat leaves, although he does wonder from time to time what the patch of blue is that he can sometimes see from his tree. One day a sharp-eyed bird appears on his branch in the forest. When Zizzy asks her about the patch of blue, the bird tells him that it is the sea, and the beginning of the rest of the world. She offers to show it to him, but Zizzy says that he is just a sloth and can't make that journey. The bird replies that you don't know what you can do until you try. So very slowly Zizzy makes his way down to the ground and sets off to see the sea, with the bird flying ahead to show him the way. The journey is slow and takes many days, and Zizzy feels tired and sometimes has to have a little nap on the way. The bird encourages him not to lose heart. Finally they arrive at a beach, and Zizzy just gazes at it until the sun sets, marvelling at the space and emptiness and the drama of seeing the beginning of the rest of the world. When he wakes on the beach from his sleep Zizzy is hungry and misses his tree. Slowly he makes his way back home at last, but his dreams will have a special quality, as now he can dream about the seemingly impossible – not so far-fetched or unachievable any more.

## About the Author

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**Penny Matthews** grew up on a farm near Eden Valley, South Australia. Her award-winning picture book, *A Year on Our Farm*, is based largely on her experience as a farm child. Her publications include *Something about Water*, *The Little Red Bear*, *Jump, Baby!*, *Jack's Owl*, and Solos *The Sea Dog* and *The Best Pet*. In 2010 she published her first young adult novel, *A Girl Like Me*. Penny lives in Adelaide and combines writing with editing books for various publishers.

## About the Illustrator

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**Danny Snell** grew up in Adelaide, and trained at the Central School of Art and the University of South Australia before graduating with a Bachelor of Design (Illustration) in 1992. His first major picture book *Whose Tail Is That?*, written by Christine Nicholls, was shortlisted the following year for the Children's Book Council's Crichton Award for first time children's book

illustrators. His second book, the best selling *Bilby Moon* written by Margaret Spurling, was nominated as a Notable Book for 2001 and shortlisted for the 2001 Kids Own Australian Literature Award (KOALA). Since then he has illustrated as well as *The Long Way Home* by Emily Rodda, *Scary Bear* by Tania Cox and *Seadragon Sea*, also written by Margaret Spurling. Danny has worked as a freelance illustrator for a little over 10 years and lives in Adelaide with his partner Louise and two young daughters, Leilani and Daisy.

## Study Notes for Teachers

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1. According to the author's note inside the book *Zizzy*, 'Sloths live in the rainforests of Central and South America. There are two families: two-toed sloths and three-toed sloths. Zizzy is a two-toed sloth, with two clawed toes on his forearms. Sloths spend their whole lives in trees, and eat only fruit, buds, new shoots and leaves. The sloth mother even gives birth to her baby in a tree – upside-down!'

Can you find out more about sloths from research on the Internet? Try Wikipedia first, and then search some other sites such as <[www.slothrescue.org](http://www.slothrescue.org)> and the National Geographic site. Find out how three-toed sloths are different from sloths like Zizzy and make a poster with illustrations.

2. 'These sloths are the lowest form of existence ...' wrote the great French naturalist, Georges Buffon, when he first described the sloth in 1772. 'One more defect,' he continued, 'would have made their existence impossible'. For the next two centuries the sloth – slow of movement, fond of sleep – was considered dim-witted, primitive, ill-adapted, and noteworthy only that it survived at all.

<<http://www.slothrescue.org/The%20slots/>> What did early explorers think of Australian animals when they saw them first? Older students could research this on the Internet.

3. We may know more about sloths now, but in popular culture, the slow-moving sloth stands for laziness and inactivity. It seems that many creatures of the natural world are associated with human qualities (busy like a bee, cunning like a fox, wise like an owl). Older students could discuss how the author has used the qualities of the sloth in this story to make a more general point about humans. Can we really go beyond

our own limitations to achieve something brave and heroic and life-enhancing, or should we stay in our comfort zone?

4. Older students could study the artwork of Zizzy and compare the rainforest settings and the contrasting 'sea' scenes. How does the artist create a different sense for each? How does this play on the thoughts/feelings of the viewer? Make a list of adjectives for each setting and write them on the whiteboard. How does the artist use different versions of similar page compositions to create a 'rhythm' the images in the book?
  
5. If you liked Zizzy, write and tell Penny Matthews or Danny Snell why. Or if someone in your class comes up with a question about the book that no one can answer, write and ask about it! Don't forget to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your reply. You can send your letter to the following address:  
Penny Matthews/Danny Snell c/- Omnibus Books, 335 Unley Rd, Malvern SA 5061
  
6. Ask your teacher if you can watch the following video clip showing David Attenborough saying hello to a sloth.  
<[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndMKTnSRsKM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndMKTnSRsKM)>