Allison White, "Entry on: Nitter Pitter by Stephen Cosgrove, Robin James", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/299. Entry version as of November 01, 2026.

Stephen Cosgrove , Robin James

Nitter Pitter

United States (1978)

TAGS: Echo Metamorphoses (Ovid's) Narcissus Ovid





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	Nitter Pitter
Country of the First Edition	United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1978
First Edition Details	Stephen Cosgrove, *Nitter Pitter*. Los Angeles: Price/Stern/Sloan, 1978, 32 pp.
ISBN	9780843105704
Genre	Alternative histories (Fiction), Didactic fiction, Picture books
Target Audience	Children (young children)
Author of the Entry	Allison White, University of New England, awhite55@une.edu.au
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Lisa Maurice, Bar-Ilan University, lisa.maurice@biu.ac.il

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Creators



Stephen Cosgrove , b. 1945
(Author)

Stephen Cosgrove grew up in the Northwest of the United States, graduating high school in Boise, Idaho. In 1973, looking to purchase a story for his daughter, he noticed that there were very few children's books to be found that were short, captivating and inexpensive. Cosgrove soon began writing to fill this gap, joined with illustrator Robin James. At a young age, Stephen Cosgrove was influenced by the Aesop fables and used them as inspiration for his stories. After being accepted by a publisher in 1974, he was told they would only print in hardcover and with altered illustrations. Consequently, Cosgrove resolved to create his own publishing company, Serendipity Press. In 1978, after selling over 3 million books, he merged with Price/Stern/Sloan publishing company, allowing him more time for his writing. He now lives in Austin, Texas and has branched out into multi-media. The Serendipity series include over 70 books, some of which have been translated into both Spanish and Italian. There have been two animated series based his stories, including *Serendipity the Pink Dragon* as well as the cartoon series *Little Mouse on the Prairie*.

Source:

Official website (accessed: July 4, 2018).

Bio prepared by Allison White, University of New England, awhite55@une.edu.au

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Robin James (Illustrator)

Robin James grew up in the Pacific Northwest of America. Her family were all artists and she began as a published illustrator in 1973, illustrating all the books in the Serendipity series. She has a love for animals which becomes evident in much of her artwork, and also paints fantasy creatures as created by Cosgrove. James paints and sells watercolour pet portraits as well as designs personalised copper-cuts. She currently lives in Washington and runs her own framing business.

Source:

Official website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

Bio prepared by Allison White, University of New England, awhite55@une.edu.au

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Additional information

Translation

Dutch: *Nitter Pitter*, trans. Joh van Wijk, Zeist: Dijkstra, 1980, 32 pp.

Spanish: *Pedro potrillo*, trans. Flora Fernández, María del Pilar Noriega, México: Fernández, 1989, 32 pp.

Chinese: □□□□□ [Jun ma ai piao liang], trans. Enhui Liu, Taibei Shi: Lu qiao wen hua gong si, 1994, 45 pp.

Braille: *Nitter Pitter*, Burwood: Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind Educational Centre, [19--].

Summary

A didactic picture book for young readers, based on the myth of Narcissus. The story of Nitter Pitter involves a stallion so beautiful that he refuses to play with the other horses. He loves to stare at his reflection in the pond, until one day he falls in. After this, he realises that he has become muddy and ugly. He refuses to look at himself again and hides himself under a tree. Soon after, a black raven encourages him to play with the other horses, because they do not mind that he is ugly. The other horses include him in their games, and even after he had been cleaned and was again beautiful, Nitter Pitter learned that he would rather have fun than be beautiful. He was never vain again.

Analysis

Nitter Pitter is a didactic picture book for young readers based on the myth of Narcissus (from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). It transfers the vanity of Narcissus onto a beautiful stallion, who eventually learns that friendship is more important than beauty. It is written in a similar manner to an Aesop fable, with a moral at the end of the story that teaches children the danger of vanity. In *Nitter Pitter*, it is a plain black raven who encourages the stallion to make friends with the other horses, a bird that commonly occurs in Aesop's fables. Narcissus is not mentioned by name but Cosgrove clearly uses the myth as a base as reflected in Nitter Pitter's constant admiration of himself in the pond. All the books in the Serendipity series are didactic in nature and each contains their own moral emphasis. The picture book format is appealing to young readers, particularly through its distinct and

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	colourful paintings.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Echo Metamorphoses (Ovid's) Narcissus Ovid
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Animals Appearances Character traits Friendship

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