

What Children Show Us Before They Can Explain It

The Story Behind Flufflin and the Shooting Star

Children often tell us who they are long before they have the words to explain themselves.

They tell us through attention. Through absorption. Through instinctive return. Through the things they choose again and again before anyone has explained value, usefulness, success, or talent.

Long before a child can say, "This is who I am," something in them is already speaking.

The question is whether we are listening.

Many of us grow up slowly losing trust in the things that once came naturally. What made time disappear begins to feel impractical. What arrived easily begins to feel insignificant. What once gave us joy becomes buried under the quiet authority of school, family, society and the world around us.

And yet

the things we loved before we learned to question them were rarely random.

They were clues.

The story of Flufflin and the Shooting Star began when my son was very small. He arrived with a nature that was not mine, and that forced me to really listen. I could open doors, offer worlds, introduce him to what I loved - but I also had to recognise what he was already showing me.

That realisation became the seed of the book.

Children are not blank canvases for our hopes. They arrive with their own signals,

their own orientation, their own way of meeting the world. Our task is not to invent them, but to notice them.

In Flufflin and the Shooting Star, Flufflin has a gift: he can see people's dreams. They appear to him like little films, full of images and feelings he does not yet know how to understand.

His journey is about recognising the meaning of what he already carries.

This matters because so much of growing up is described as becoming: becoming cleverer, stronger, more disciplined, more successful, more useful. But another movement is just as important: returning. Looking again at what was alive in us before we learned to hide it, diminish it, or translate it into something more acceptable.

Shooting Star helps Flufflin understand his gift by reflecting him back to himself.

This is one of the deepest forms of love: to see something true in another person before they can fully see it in themselves.

A child may not understand the significance of what absorbs them. They are simply inside the experience. But when that absorption is met with attention, something begins to form: a bridge between feeling and awareness. The child begins to understand that what calls them is worth listening to.

At the heart of Flufflin's discovery are three simple questions:

What makes you lose all sense of time?

What carries you away?

What makes you want to return again and again?

Adults might call this flow. Children know it from the inside.

I wanted Flufflin to plant this idea early, as a seed of self-knowledge. The earlier a child begins to recognise their own inner landscape, the more chance they have of trusting it.

And perhaps the more chance we have, as adults, of remembering our own.

In my own life, I eventually realised that the message of Flufflin was speaking to me too. I had spent years moving closer to creativity through interiors, styling, photography and design - all important bridges back to beauty and atmosphere. But the book asked me to look further back: to the child who sang, danced, performed, made costumes, created sets and built worlds for others to enter.

That child was an artist.

This is why the world of Flufflin has grown beyond the page - into theatre, costume, projection, shadow play, music, workshops and the Chandelier of Dreams: an installation made from children's drawings, writings and dreams suspended in space. Each form asks the same question in a different language:

What is already alive in you?

For me, beauty is a language of attention. A beautiful space can hold us differently. It can soften us, open us, and help us listen. Through a book, a stage, a costume, a handmade object, a workshop, or a room full of children looking up at their own dreams, beauty becomes an invitation to feel more clearly.

For many children, art is one of the first places where inner life finds form. It gives shape to what cannot yet be explained. It allows feeling, imagination, instinct and identity to become visible.

But the deeper subject of Flufflin is attention.

A good parent, teacher, friend or mentor notices something true and reflects it back with enough care that we begin to recognise it ourselves. This is how confidence begins. This is how connection deepens. This is how a person becomes more fully themselves.

That is why Flufflin matters to me.

Every child deserves to feel that what lights them up is worth noticing. Every adult deserves the chance to ask whether the thing they once loved is still waiting somewhere inside them.

At its heart, Flufflin and the Shooting Star is a story about dreams: the yearnings that live in our gestures, our fascinations, our private joys, our repeated longings, our instinctive ways of loving the world.

It is about learning to listen.

To children.

To ourselves.

To the people we love.

To the parts of us that knew something before the world told us otherwise.

Perhaps our dreams are asking us to remember who we were all along.

From Book to Installation

The world of Flufflin continues to grow beyond the page.

Following the Brighton Fringe stage adaptation of Flufflin and the Shooting Star, the next chapter is envisaged as an immersive installation centred around the Chandelier of Dreams - a suspended gathering of children's drawings, writings, questions and remembered dreams.

Part artwork, part listening device, part public archive of childhood imagination, the installation invites children and adults to reflect on what absorbs them, what they once loved, and what may still be waiting to be recognised.

Through book, theatre, workshops and installation, Flufflin continues to ask one essential question:

What is already alive in you?