

## Teacher companion: *Life lessons from Barnie and the Spider.*

| Lesson                                                | How it emerges in the novel                                                                                                                                                                                | Page number    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Knowledge reduces fear</b>                         | Solomon tells Barnie that things we don't understand can seem frightening, but knowledge is like bringing light into a dark corner.                                                                        | 10             |
| <b>Being afraid is not the same as being a coward</b> | One of the strongest recurring lessons. Barnie learns that courage exists alongside fear rather than replacing it. His actions during the human intrusion, magpie attack and later dangers reinforce this. | 13–18, 43–44   |
| <b>Fear can be useful</b>                             | Solomon teaches Barnie to recognise the physical sensations of fear and use the energy they create to act rather than freeze.                                                                              | 13–14, 18, 44  |
| <b>When panic takes over, do something</b>            | Barnie is trained not to remain frozen. An initial action can interrupt panic and create the mental space needed to decide what to do next.                                                                | 13–14, 128–129 |
| <b>Sometimes doing nothing is the bravest action</b>  | The magpie attack develops the earlier lesson. Barnie's instinct is to think he should have fought, but by curling into a ball and protecting himself he survives. Courage doesn't always mean attacking.  | 40, 43–44      |
| <b>Think before you act</b>                           | At the flooded stream, Solomon prevents Barnie simply rushing into the water. They define the problem, gather information, consider alternatives and then choose a solution.                               | 30–32          |
| <b>Problems become manageable when broken down</b>    | The stream becomes a practical lesson in problem-solving: investigate, identify the dangers, generate possible solutions and then select the safest.                                                       | 31–34          |
| <b>You often discover what you can do by trying</b>   | Barnie doesn't know whether he can swim until circumstances require him to try — and discovers that he can.                                                                                                | 33–36          |
| <b>Grief should not be fought or suppressed</b>       | Solomon encourages Barnie to allow thoughts of his mother to enter his mind rather than trying to force them away.                                                                                         | 25–26, 47–48   |
| <b>The people we lose remain part of us</b>           | Barnie loses his home and the objects carrying his mother's scent but learns that his memories and what she taught him cannot be destroyed.                                                                | 17–18, 25–26   |

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| <b>Talking helps emotional wounds heal</b>                     | Solomon allows Barnie to talk about his mother and later teaches him that the mind, like the body, can be wounded. Barnie eventually passes this lesson on to Jemma and Yip after the cat attack. | 25–26, 138–139 |
| <b>Sometimes simply being there for someone is enough</b>      | Solomon doesn't always try to solve Barnie's grief. He listens, walks beside him and allows him to cry. The book explicitly observes that sometimes words aren't needed.                          | 25–26          |
| <b>We are responsible for our own choices</b>                  | Billington challenges Barnie's assumptions about owls. Solomon explains that although creatures have natural characteristics, individuals can choose whom they love, hate, help or befriend.      | 23–24          |
| <b>Don't judge someone simply by what they are</b>             | An owl can be a mouse's friend; a spider can become a mouse's father figure; members of Barnie's own species can behave badly. Character matters more than labels.                                | 21–24, 80–81   |
| <b>Difference does not mean inferiority</b>                    | Solomon's missing leg becomes an important example. He has adapted and remains complete: not better or worse, simply different.                                                                   | 50–51, 55–56   |
| <b>Physical scars are part of our story</b>                    | Barnie worries about his scar after the magpie attack. Through Solomon's experience, he learns that bodily changes don't diminish a person and can become part of what makes someone unique.      | 51, 55–56      |
| <b>Some limitations exist in the mind rather than the body</b> | After Barnie's injury has healed, he remains afraid of jumping. Solomon recognises this from his own experience after losing his leg.                                                             | 56–57          |
| <b>Recovery happens gradually</b>                              | Barnie learns not to expect immediate recovery after injury. Rest, small movements, increasing difficulty and patience rebuild his strength and confidence.                                       | 49, 52, 54–56  |
| <b>Rest is not the same as doing nothing</b>                   | When Barnie becomes frustrated during his recovery, Solomon explains that allowing the body to heal is itself an important activity.                                                              | 49, 54         |
| <b>Be present in the moment</b>                                | During the snow, Solomon teaches Barnie mindfulness: reducing distractions, observing his surroundings and concentrating on the present rather than continually worrying about past or future.    | 63–64          |
| <b>We cannot control the future</b>                            | Solomon repeatedly brings Barnie back to what can be controlled now. Even when Barnie finally feels he has a purpose in the colony, Solomon reminds him that the future remains uncertain.        | 18, 104        |

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| <b>Belonging takes time</b>                                                    | Barnie expects immediate acceptance by the colony and worries about being an outsider. Solomon teaches him to continue behaving well towards others and allow relationships to develop naturally. | 84–89, 104–105, 117, 172–174 |
| <b>Friendship can cross apparently impossible boundaries</b>                   | Mouse, spider, owl and hedgehog cooperate despite being very different creatures. Barnie's relationship with Solomon is the clearest example.                                                     | 21–24, 80–81, 165–166        |
| <b>Working together makes the weak strong</b>                                  | A mouse cannot defeat a cat, but a colony acting collectively can achieve things no individual mouse could accomplish. This becomes central to the defence of the colony.                         | 119–120, 133–136             |
| <b>Preparation creates instinct</b>                                            | Solomon's training becomes automatic when real danger arrives. Barnie and Jemma learn that repeated practice enables them to react correctly when there isn't time for conscious thought.         | 114–120, 127–129, 138        |
| <b>After frightening events, questioning yourself is normal</b>                | Solomon prepares Barnie and Jemma for replaying traumatic events afterwards — wondering whether they should have acted differently. He explains that these thoughts don't signify weakness.       | 137–139                      |
| <b>Empathy means imagining another's experience</b>                            | Barnie eventually applies Solomon's teaching even to the enemy. When the colony considers killing the cat, Barnie asks how the cat's young would feel if their parent died.                       | 111                          |
| <b>Peace should be attempted before violence</b>                               | Solomon supports trying to frighten the cat away rather than killing it. Force becomes a last resort when the colony's survival is threatened.                                                    | 111–112                      |
| <b>Growing up means facing moral uncertainty</b>                               | Barnie discovers that there isn't always a simple right and wrong answer. Protecting the colony while feeling compassion for the cat forces him to wrestle with competing moral responsibilities. | 110–113                      |
| <b>Standing up for others matters</b>                                          | When the colony turns against Solomon because he is a spider and an outsider, Barnie stands beside him; Jemma then stands beside Barnie.                                                          | 95–97                        |
| <b>Purpose often comes from contributing to something larger than yourself</b> | Barnie begins the story concerned mainly with finding his mother and surviving. Within the colony, he discovers satisfaction from contributing to the welfare of others.                          | 103–105, 169–174             |
| <b>Experience should be passed on</b>                                          | This completes Barnie's development. The youngster who needed Solomon to teach him eventually becomes someone trusted to help train younger mice.                                                 | 173–174                      |