

Brave Volunteer,

This is a cute story about sharing and taking care of your things. I really enjoyed Bunky's adventure in the woods, and I appreciate his change of heart. I think it is funny when Mom hugs him and finds him smelly. It is sweet when Bunky shares with Clyde. I like the peaceful ending where he will be getting a warm bath after being out in the cold night.

One of my biggest concerns for the story is the long (335-word) setup and the word count. The beginning of the story takes up 38% of the 878 words in the story. Is there a way to demonstrate Bunky's problem that leads him to run away within the first two spreads or so?

I have suggested that much of the first paragraph be deleted to leave room for the illustrator to show us Bunky's play. Regarding the first paragraph, is it possible to come up with a stronger hook for the first line – something that will draw the reader in and make them want to turn the page?

The whole story is a bit long. With the deletions I have suggested, the word count dropped from 878 to 729, but I think it still needs some trimming.

Another big concern is focus. When considering narrowing down the beginning, think about the theme of this story. What do you want the story to focus on? I was obviously attracted to many of the various themes: sharing, taking care of your things, rules and there's no place like home. Also popping up in the story is sibling rivalry and charity. However, the changing problems made it difficult for me to connect to the story. Every time I started feeling Bunky's experience, the connection was lost when the focus of the story changed. Is it possible to narrow the theme down? What do you really want the take away to be? What is the thread that holds the theme together from the beginning to the end of the story?

When it comes to describing things, remember that this is a picture book – the illustrations will tell half the story. There are several places where I suggested deletions because illustrations could handle the showing.

In my mind, Mom comes across as mean when she makes Bunky give his fire truck away. Then with the forest animals being quite mean, I feel like there is a bit too much "mean" in the story. Can Mom be stern but nice?

I like Bunky's encounters with the various forest animals. I am wondering if there is a way to increase the story tension by making each encounter a little more dynamic than the last. It might be worth trying to reverse things and make the skunk Bunky's third encounter and then beef up that scene to elicit empathy for Bunky from the reader. It would also be stronger motivation for Bunky's decision that maybe home, rules, sharing (or whatever theme) isn't so bad after all. Also, since the animals that Bunky meet all live

in natural or typical animal homes, there seems to be a mismatch that Bunky lives in a house like a human. Just something to think about.

I have made many edit suggestions and comments below. Some of the words I deleted are because they don't really do anything to move the story forward, which means they are wasted words. Watch the use of the word "was" and words that end in "ly."

I appreciate that this story includes senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching/feeling and it could even touch on taste (if built into raspberry scene).

I really like the idea of a place where there is a "no sharing" rule. I think that will appeal to children in an engaging way while still showing them that rules can be a good thing. I am wondering how it might work to build on that idea. And of course the old "There's no place like home" message is always a good one when it has a satisfying ending (warm bath) like this story.

I look forward to seeing where you take this story next. Please let me know if you have any questions. Oh, and one more thing – I really like the name Bunky for a bear.

I hope my comments are helpful. I trust that you will take what works for your creative vision and let the rest go without a thought.

Alayne

Bunky left his toys scattered across the floor and went outside to play. When he came back inside, Momma called Bunky, come in here please." She stood in the middle of Bunky's mess, "This is your last warning. If you don't start taking care of your toys, we're going to give them to a less fortunate little bear."

"Err, errrrr, errrrrrrr," Bunky's younger brother, Clyde, pushed a fire truck around the playroom.

Bunky jerked the truck away. "This is my fire truck!" he shouted.

"That's it!" Momma said. "Tomorrow, we're taking that toy to a little bear that doesn't have many toys."

"I don't care!" Bunky shouted, stomping up the stairs to his bedroom and slamming the door.

The next morning, Bunky shuffled into the kitchen for breakfast. His shiny red fire truck glistened in the middle of the table between a cereal box and plate of pancakes.

"Why is my fire truck on the table?" he asked.

"I told you last night. We're going to give it away," Momma replied.

Comment: The illustrations can show us the character. If you think it is really important that Bunky be a little brown bear, then consider telling that in your cover letter.

Comment: This is lovely description and paints a nice picture, but it doesn't do anything to move the story forward. The illustrations can show us Bunky playing.

Deleted: , the little brown bear,

Deleted: He zigzagged across the yard kicking his soccer ball, zipped up and down the sidewalk on his skateboard, and chased butterflies with his net. Gurgle, grumble, gurgle, growled his stomach. He went in and slammed the door, "Momma! I'm hungry!"

Deleted: ¶

Comment: Is it important that she is in the playroom, or can the illustrations show us where she is?

Deleted: from the playroom,

Comment: This could be deleted, as the illustrations can show.

Deleted: , screamed as he

Comment: I added space because dialogue from different characters should be on a separate line.

Deleted: before he

Deleted: stomped

Deleted: slammed

Deleted: he

Comment: This could be shown via illustrations.

"But it's mine," Bunky whined.

Momma said, "I've warned you many times about taking care of your things. And throwing your toys is unacceptable."

After breakfast, they took the fire truck across town and gave it to another little bear.

That evening, Momma sent Bunky to his room to think about how fortunate he was to have so many nice things. "I wish I lived in a home without rules. I hate rules!" he grumbled. "I'm going to run away and find a new home."

Bunky spent a short time in his room before he sneaked into the bathroom. Standing on a chair, he raised the window and climbed out into the cold night.

Bunky shivered. Shadows and strange, creepy sounds followed him in the dark. Frightened, he walked until he grew tired.

He found a big oak tree, climbed to the top, and fell right to sleep. A loud WHOOSH, FLUTTER, SWOOSH, woke him. He jumped up, lost his balance, and fell out of the tree. I like this whole scene. It draws me into Bunky's experience. It has a lot of action, and I like the onomatopoeia.

An owl called, "Hoo, hoo, hoooo." And with a whoosh, flutter and a swoosh, he swooped down to greet Bunky. "What were you doing in my tree?" he asked.

"I'm looking for a new home - one without rules," Bunky responded.

"Well, you can't live in a tree," Owl said. "As you can see, it is not safe for a bear that can't fly. Now, move on. This is my home."

Bunky moved on, and soon came upon porch. Maybe I can make a home under this porch, he thought. He crawled through a hole in the lattice below the porch. Stones crunched beneath his paws. He heard something else stirring in the gravel and followed the sound. A skunk pounded its front feet on the ground. It growled. It hissed. It lifted its tail and sprayed its stinky perfume.

"This is my porch! Go away!" the skunk shouted.

Bunky scrambled out from under the porch. He coughed and sneezed. Tears spilled down his cheeks. With a runny nose and blurry eyes, he staggered into the woods.

He walked along until he spotted a raspberry bush and stopped for a snack. Red juice dribbled down his chin and over his paws as he munched.

Leaves rustled, wish, wish, wish. Bunky stopped eating. His eyes opened wider.

Comment: When did he throw his toys?

Comment: We already know his room is upstairs, so we know he is going up the stairs, and by deleting this information you can save five words.

Deleted: He grumbled as he climbed the stairs,

Deleted: runaway

Comment: Made space because this starts a new scene. What do you think about changing "sneaked" to "snuck"?

Deleted: He

Comment: I'm wondering if it might work to delete this section altogether and let the illustrations show how Bunky left the house.

Deleted: as s

Comment: I like the sounds following him in the dark and Bunky's shivering. However, I am wondering if it is possible to use some onomatopoeia here, so that the strange, creepy sounds are more specific. Also, can you "show" us that he is frightened instead of "tell" us?

Comment: Saves nine words and the deletion does not change the story.

Deleted: along

Deleted: and began searching for a safe place to rest.

Comment: Made space because of scene change.

Deleted: and

Deleted: . Just as he fell asleep

Deleted: , a

Comment: What if this scene has something similar to the Raccoon scene. This would help tie things up when at the end Bunky says to Owl "Who ever heard of a no sharing rule?" For example: "I'll be careful," Bunky said. "Can't w (... [1]

Comment: This can be shown if (... [2]

Comment: We learn by his thou (... [3]

Deleted: a white wooden

Deleted: vigorously

Deleted: and hissed loudly

Deleted: ,

Deleted: high,

Deleted:

Comment: Love the entire skun (... [4]

Comment: This could be shown (... [5]

Comment: I like the suspense.

"That's our raspberry bush," someone grumbled. A huge raccoon and his family stepped out of the woods.

Bunky said, "Can't we share? I'm hungry."

"Absolutely not," said Father Raccoon.

Bunky said, "That's not very nice. No one in these woods wants to share."

Father Raccoon said, "I'm just following the rules. Try the blackberry bush on the hill, and leave us to our dinner."

Bunky started up the hill mumbling, "What kind of rule is *no sharing*?" Too tired, cold, and hungry to keep going, he turned to go home.

Comment: I would like to see more motivation for his turning point.

"Hooooo's there?" called Owl.

Bunky slumped, "It's me again."

"Haven't you found a home yet?" Owl asked.

"I'm done looking," Bunky said. "I miss my things. I'm going home where it's safe and warm. I like Momma's rules better than your mean rules. Who ever heard of a *no sharing* rule?"

Comment: This only works if the first owl scene mentions a "no sharing" rule.

Owl pointed his wing toward the path, "Well then, be on your way."

Once home, Bunky climbed through the bathroom window and sneaked back into his room just in time to hear Momma call.

Comment: This could be deleted and handled by illustrations. It would save 8 words.

"Bunky, are you ready to come down?"

Comment: Snuck?

He flung open his bedroom door, dashed down the stairs, and went straight to his toys. He pushed his dump truck over to Clyde and said, "Do you want to play with my truck?"

Comment: Just an example to give a little better sense of time.

Deleted: .

Deleted: Soon, Momma called,

Bunky's pleasant behavior surprised Momma so much that she gave him a big hug. "I'm proud of you, Sweetheart." She scrunched up her nose. "P.U. you need a bath!"

Deleted: and said,

Deleted: and said,

Bunky happily picked up his toys while Momma ran a nice, warm bubble bath.

Page 3: [1] Comment **Alayne** **11/18/2013 11:50 AM**

What if this scene has something similar to the Raccoon scene. This would help tie things up when at the end Bunky says to Owl “Who ever heard of a no sharing rule?” For example: “I’ll be careful,” Bunky said. “Can’t we share the tree?”

“No. Sharing is against the rules in this forest. Besides, this is *my* home.” Owl said. Now, move along.” This is just an example to demonstrate what I mean.

Page 3: [2] Comment **Alayne** **11/10/2013 4:35 PM**

This can be shown in illustrations.

Page 3: [3] Comment **Alayne** **11/18/2013 7:30 AM**

We learn by his thoughts that he came upon a porch. No need to tell us twice. This could be deleted, save 8 words, and not really change the story.

Page 3: [4] Comment **Alayne** **11/18/2013 7:40 AM**

Love the entire skunk scene.

Page 3: [5] Comment **Alayne** **11/18/2013 7:41 AM**

This could be shown in illustrations and save 13 words. However this might be an opportunity to introduce the sense of smell again and the sense of taste.