

Oliver Jeffers

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When Oliver Jeffers and his wife brought home their new born son from hospital, they paused at the door to their apartment in Brooklyn, New York. The three of them stood on the threshold of family life. It was Jeffers who broke the silence. "Here we are," he said. "It's sort of a Northern Irish thing to say when you arrive somewhere or there's a group of people and a moment's silence," he says now. Nearly two years later, the words would become the title of his new book.

Here We Are is unlike any of Jeffers's previous books (16 as an internationally bestselling writer and illustrator, more as illustrator alone). To begin with, it didn't start life as a book at all.

Once through the door of their apartment, Jeffers held Harland and took him on a tour of his new home. They moved from room to room, Jeffers pointing out a tree visible through a window, a shoe. "Just kind of going, yeah, how lovely is it to explain what a saucepan is for or why we eat lunch," he says. Jeffers was hit by "this growing awareness that Harland knew" - he drops his voice - "absolutely nothing".

Over the coming days and weeks, Jeffers kept up the tour, pointing out more and more things. He started to write down his sayings. The sayings mounted. A letter to his son, he thought. Wouldn't that be nice for him when he is older? The tour extended to the neighbourhood. Jeffers would be wheeling the pushchair and find himself saying things such as: "People come in many shapes, sizes and colours ... But don't be fooled, we are all people!" He kept notes in his sketchbook or on his phone and added them to the lengthening letter. Then came the "eureka moment ... this should be a book".

Retrieval

1) How many books has Oliver Jeffers written as a writer and illustrator ?

Words in context

2) Find and copy a word which means 'going before in time or order'.

Inference

3) Why did Jeffers son know 'absolutely nothing' ?

4) Explain what 'then came the eureka moment' means.