

When the Stars Come Out - Behind the Scenes

What I was thinking...

When I was first reading through the text, I wanted to make sure that I fully understood all the science behind it. So I grabbed office supplies to use as props for the Sun, the Earth and various constellations, and I moved them around to depict a day and a year. I knew then that I wanted to draw Lily doing the same things, to encourage readers to act it out too.

A torch is the obvious sun stand-in, and once I'd introduced it for that purpose, its role quickly expanded into a central part of Lily's illustrated journey. While the entire story is from Lily's perspective, she spends the main arc somewhat mentally disconnected from her family, whose conversation forms a large part of the text. I wanted to depict that disconnection by giving Lily's attention to something else - the torch was perfect again, now symbolising her desire to cling to the Sun, and the daylight.

How I made the pictures...

I drew the illustrations digitally in Clip Studio Paint. I used separate layers for the shapes and the lines, and kept the characters separate from the backgrounds.

I painted Lily's imagination in monochrome watercolour, then scanned it in and edited the colours digitally. I did the same to make the sky textures.

Who my co-creators were...

Dr Tanya Hill is the fabulous author, as well as the Senior Curator of Astronomy at Museums Victoria. The story is inspired by her own childhood fear of the dark. She kept me on track when I accidentally drew the stars in the wrong orientation!

The team at Museums Victoria Publishing were the absolute best to work with, giving me heaps of creative freedom, paired with super useful feedback. Ella Meave, Sasha Beekman and Julia Donkersley - thank you!!!