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The Little Island

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Once upon a time there was a little farm where all the animals lived and worked together happily. Then one day, the geese who lived on a rather attractive island enjoyed by everyone, felt there too many crossing the bridge and making themselves at home. They decide this is not acceptable. They draw up the bridge. They do not need anyone else. Or do they?

Drawing inspiration from Orwell's **Animal Farm**, this modern fable is attractively presented for a much younger audience. The text by Smriti Prasad-Halls flows easily with a nice sprinkling of humorous asides adding character and life. Robert Starling's illustrations highlight these characteristics, neatly matching and extending the story. Bold colours, strong designs draw the eye bringing solidity and a realism to the whole ? just as the maps on the endpapers ensure the farm has a proper location. Though the characters are animals, this makes it easier to identify the issues the author is keen to introduce ? fear of others, exclusiveness, the building of barriers, looking back to an imagined past ? while also highlighting the importance of sharing, of cooperation, of friendships and hope. This bright, cheerful picture book ? an engaging story ? will certainly provide a basis for encouraging even very young children to think about the world we live in today as well as becoming a favourite at story times.

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