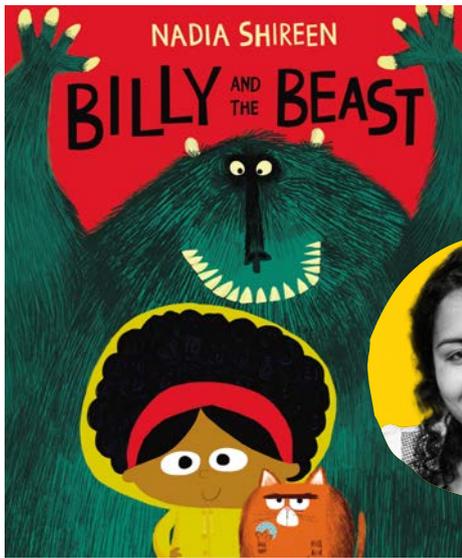


AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR MASTERCLASSES

NOTES FOR TEACHERS & LIBRARIANS

NADIA SHIREEN: BRINGING CHARACTERS TO LIFE



BEFORE WATCHING THE VIDEO AND READING THE EXTRACT:

GET IN THE ZONE!

In her video, Nadia says that all of her characters contain ‘a little bit of me’. Billy from *Billy and the Beast* is who she wishes she could’ve been when she was younger – she is a braver and bolder version of herself.

To get children into the right frame of mind for creating their own characters, encourage them to think about their own personality traits, for example: are they brave, bold, kind, funny, intelligent, positive, eccentric?

Ask pupils to choose one trait and to create their own freeze-frames representing how it would look and how it would act if it were human.

Choose a confident pupil to come to the front and share his or her freeze-frame with the class. All of the other pupils should create a quick portrait sketch of what they can see. How do the shapes and positions created by their classmate help to convey a particular personality trait?

AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO AND READING THE EXTRACT:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What can you tell about Billy and Fatcat from how Nadia has drawn their **facial expressions** in *Billy and the Beast*? Are they happy to be ‘walking through the forest’?
2. Read out all of page 2 of *Billy and the Beast* as a class. What do you notice about how the words **sound** together? Why do you think Nadia has chosen to write some of the words in different ways?
3. What types of animals do Billy and Fatcat bump into on their walk through the forest? List at least three.
4. Why do you think Billy says ‘Uh-oh’ to Fatcat on page 3?
5. What is ‘strange’ or ‘different’ about Billy and Fatcat’s walk back through the forest on page 5?
6. Why do you think everything is black on page 6? What does this make you feel?
7. How does Nadia Shireen make you want to read on and find out more? What do you **predict** has happened to Billy and Fatcat?

FUN ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: A LITTLE BIT OF YOURSELF

The fun of creating characters is making them do things you're not brave enough to do – so put a little bit of yourself in and make them even better!

- In pairs, write a list of each other's best **qualities**. What are your unique skills and abilities? Are you funny, helpful, kind, good at maths, brave, or sporty?
- For each of the qualities on your list, think about how you could make it even better. How could you **exaggerate** it? In what situations would your exaggerated qualities be useful?
- Turn your exaggerated quality into a superpower and create a superpower badge to show it off!

ACTIVITY 2: MOVE LIKE A BEAST

Nadia explains that when she's drawing a character, she starts moving like the character. For example, she does an impression of the beast hunched over – and when she's drawing or writing about him, she slouches over herself!

- Imagine yourself as a beast. Your beast can be good or bad, small or tall, grumpy or happy, gentle or aggressive – you could even use your exaggerated quality from Activity 1 to help you.
- Walk around the room for five minutes, moving in ways that you think represents the beast that you are imagining.
- After five minutes, come to the front of the class and show everyone the movements you have chosen for your beast. Film your movements and watch them together – which beasts do you like the best?

ACTIVITY 3: CREATING DIALOGUE

Nadia explains that dialogue 'gives characters life'. She uses dialogue to show characters doing something unexpected, e.g. a big scary beast getting excited about sparkles!

- In pairs, perform a meeting between the beasts that you brought to life in Activity 2. Think about how the two beasts are different and what they might say to each other.
- Have a conversation with your partner's beast. Don't forget to keep doing the movements of your characters while you are speaking. You can even use voice and tone to show their personalities.
- Finally, draw two big speech bubbles on a sheet of A3 paper. In each speech bubble, write the first things you said to each other in your conversation, including quotation marks. This is the beginning of your dialogue!

SHARE A STORY

Nadia Shireen brings characters to life in the stories she writes. Can you think of a story that you have recently read with a strong central character that you will never forget? Spend ten minutes sharing your chosen character with classmates, teachers, friends or family. Even better, share your impression of that character, showing how he or she looks, speaks and moves in your imagination!

SPARK YOUR IMAGINATION...

AN INSPIRING SHARE A STORY CHALLENGE FOR YOU:

Including a quick recap of the expert advice from Nadia:

Invent two characters – one hero and one villain – and put a little bit of yourself into each of them. Now write a story based on these two characters and see how putting yourself into a story can help bring your character to life.

DID YOU KNOW?

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