

The Bewilderbeast

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

Deep in the darkest, remote and most loneliest jungle, there lives quite the one and the only-est. Seen once in the wild, and then never again, all that's left are notes from a tracker's own pen. A nonsensical puzzle when seen piece by piece, but when viewed as a whole ... Behold! The Bewilderbeast!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Josh Pyke is a successful and much-loved Australian singer/songwriter, renowned for his unique and wonderful storytelling and lyricism. Josh has created many bestselling albums, won four ARIA awards, and has also written several books for children. He is a lifelong ambassador for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Binny Talib is an award-winning, Sydney-based illustrator and designer whose playful illustrations can be found widely across the US, UK, Japan and Australia, in major children's clothing brands, toys books and greeting cards. *Hark, It's Me*, *Ruby Lee*, illustrated by Binny, was a CBCA Honour book in 2018, and also shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Literary Award.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What can you see happening on the cover of the book?
 - Who do you think might be the main character of this story? Why do you think this?
 - What does the word 'bewilder' mean?
 - What do you think a Bewilderbeast might be? Why do you think this?
 - What do you think might happen in this story?
- Create an artwork of your own inspired by the cover artwork. Create a monochrome scene with oil pastels by layering, smearing and blending one colour, or various hues of the same colour, onto a large piece of white card to create your background imagery. Carefully, using a wooden skewer or toothpick scratch lines in the top layer of colour, to draw more details and figures on top of your background. Your linework should be a faded version of the background colour—but be careful not to scratch holes in your paper! Finally, use contrasting colours to add two or

three brightly coloured items or figures to your artwork.

- Create an illustrated map of your school, home or local area like the map in the book. Use bright colours and draw pictures of all the important places on the map. You can even create your map as a collage using torn and cut out paper shapes for the background and include photographs of local landmarks.
- What do you think monster cuisine might be? Why do you think this? Do you think that you would like to be monster cuisine? If you don't know what a word (like 'cuisine') means, how can you find out its meaning? As a class think of at least three different ways of finding out what the meaning of an unfamiliar word is.
- Why might the townsfolk all have had different descriptions of the various monsters? Imagine a big scary monster of your own and write a description of it. On a piece of A4 paper write your description carefully. Divide the remainder of the page into two equal rectangles, and ask a classmate to draw a picture of how they imagine your monster looks based on your description. While they are doing this, draw a picture of the monster your classmate has described on their piece of paper. Once you have finished your drawings, give each other your own pages back, and then in the second rectangle draw how you imagined your monster would look. How similar is your drawing to your classmate's? Are they different and in what way? How good do you think your description was, and how well did your classmate illustrate it?
- What is the funniest feature in the *Bewilderbeast*? Why do you think it is funny?
- What do you think the tracker was imagining all the different beasts looked like, based on each of the individual parts he saw?
- As a class, adapt the book into a stage play. In small groups work on creating a percussion piece to accompany the telling of the story as a play. Practise your play with accompanying percussion soundtrack, and perform it for a school assembly or as an end of year production.
- Go on a trek around your school or local area, and see how many different animals (and their parts) you can spot and identify. Can you also see any plants, buildings or other objects that you might be able to imagine as a part of a monster? When you get back to the classroom draw an imagined monster based on the different things you saw on your walk.
- Do you think a river monster might be different from a jungle monster or a monster that lives in the desert? Why and in what way? As a class discuss what you know about monsters from different mythologies. (You might like to start your discussion by talking about what you know of Bunyip and Taniwha.)
- Create a find-a-word using at least 12 different words from the story. Try to choose interesting words that you may not have heard before.
- Use an old shoebox, coloured card and plasticine to create a diorama of a scene from the story. Go for a walk in the playground or around the local area, and collect fallen leaves and twigs, pebbles and any other small objects that you think would work well, and bring them back to incorporate them in your diorama. You can leave your found objects in a natural state, or you can paint them with acrylic paint before using them.
- What animals live in the village? Carefully look at all the pictures and see how many different animals you can identify. As a class, discuss where you think this story might be set, and why you think this.
- What do you think you would do if you encountered a Bewilderbeast? In pairs or small groups, create a short dance performance showing someone meeting a Bewilderbeast.
- What do you think happened next? Write the story of what the villagers, the Bewilderbeast and the tracker did after the Bewilderbeast came out of the forest.