

# Berani

AUTHOR

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Mid Primary



## SYNOPSIS

Malia has had a privileged upbringing in Indonesia, but now her mother wants to return to her own family on the other side of the world. Malia is determined to stay in Indonesia, her home. Besides, if she leaves, how can she fight for her country's precious rainforests?

Ari knows he is lucky to be going to school and competing on the chess team, even if it means working long hours at his uncle's restaurant. And he's horribly worried about Ginger Juice, his uncle's orangutan. The too-small cage where she lives is clearly hurting her body and her mind, but where else can she go? The rainforest where she was born is a palm oil plantation now.

The choices Malia and Ari make will have consequences for themselves, Ginger Juice and others, if they are courageous enough to choose.

A powerful story about standing up for what you believe no matter what the cost.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle Kadarusman is an internationally acclaimed, award-winning children's author. Her novels include *The Theory of Hummingbirds*, *Girl of the Southern Sea* and *Music for Tigers*. She grew up in Melbourne, and has also lived in Indonesia and Canada. Her novels have earned many nominations and honours, including the Canadian Governor General's Literary Awards, Green Earth Books Awards, White Raven Selection and USBBY Outstanding International Books. Her first picture book, *Room for More*, was published in 2022. She lives in Toronto, Canada, and Byron Bay, NSW.

## STUDY NOTES

- Before reading, examine the front cover of the book and ask the following:
  - What animal can you see?
  - Does it look threatening?
  - What is its natural habitat?
- Divide students into two groups: the first group will research each of the following topics related to orangutans:
  - Where are they found living in the wild?
  - How large can they grow?
  - What is their lifespan?
  - How close are they genetically to humans?

- How many are alive today?
- What threats face orangutans living in Indonesia today?
- The second group will find out about each of the following topics related to Indonesia:
  - Population and religion
  - Capital cities (old and new one currently being constructed)
  - Environmental impact of building the new capital city on Borneo
  - Language spoken
  - Importance of the palm oil industry to the economy
  - Environmental impact of the palm oil industry.

Once completed, encourage both groups to share what they have learned with the entire class.

- ‘It’s a complicated problem, sweetheart. In Indonesia, especially, it is an explosive subject. Likely some of the children at your own school have families who rely on palm oil agriculture. There is a lot more to the issue. It’s not black and white.’ (p 3)
  - What do you think Malia’s mother means when she describes palm oil agriculture as ‘not black and white’?
  - Why might some of Malia’s classmates be ‘conflicted’ about her presentation?
  - Why might Malia’s presentation get her in trouble?
  - Who do you think might complain about Malia’s presentation?
- Divide a page in your workbook into two columns, one with the heading EXPLICIT (when the author tells us something directly) and the other with the heading IMPLICIT (leaves the reader to form an opinion about a character based on the things that the character says and does). Now, read the chapter introducing Ari and make a list of information about him that fits in one or other of the columns.
- ‘One website challenges the reader to imagine how a human would react to living their entire life in a cage. The DNA of humans and orangutans is so close, it states that the same level of mental suffering is highly likely.’ (p 138) Why do you think the author chose to give Ginger Juice a ‘voice’ in the story? Did giving her a voice make her more sympathetic and make her plight even more dramatic? Did the voice seem authentic to you? Why / why not?
- According to Wikipedia, a character arc is ‘the transformation or inner journey of a character over the course of a story. If a story has a character arc, the character begins as one sort of person and gradually transforms into a different sort of person in response to changing developments in the story. Since the change is often substantive and leading from one personality trait to a diametrically opposite trait (for example, from greed to benevolence), the geometric term arc is often used to describe the sweeping change.’ Do Malia and Ari change over the course of *Berani*?
  - Choose either character and describe in detail the sort of person they are when we first meet them and the sort of person they become by the end of the story.
  - What happened to them to cause the transformation?
  - Is there a particular scene at the end of the story that illustrates their change?
- As a class, debate the following topics:
  - Do humans have the right to breed, capture and confine endangered species, such as orangutans?
  - Are zoos acceptable places to keep animals in the 21st century?
- Write a book review for *Berani*. Include a summary of the plot, a brief description of the main characters, a personal comment about if you enjoyed reading the story and a rating out of five.