

Shiny Misfits

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

Bay Ann wants to shine. No matter what.

When Bay Ann wobbles at the end of her Halloween tap dance performance, the moment goes viral! Not because of her amazing tap routine (she crushed it), but because it's an 'inspirational' moment when Alyee Maq, her crush and classmate, catches her. The world sees Bay Ann's cerebral palsy—not her talent. (For the record, she was swooning a little bit from the strength of her crush, not falling because of her palsy!) Then, the video of him catching her goes viral, making Alyee an overnight sensation for 'helping her.' Bay Ann is reduced to her disability and her talent is ignored.

Bay Ann doesn't want her classmate to get all the fame, and she is NOT satisfied being anything but the best. She'll do everything in her power to beat Alyee at his own attention-seeking game. With the help of her two best friends, Michelle and Davey Matt, she'll go up against Alyee and his crew to prove she's number one.

But as Bay Ann tries to find the thing that really makes her stand out, everything she tries goes disastrously wrong. What if the only way to beat her enemy . . . is to join him?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maysoun Zayid is a comedian, actress, writer and disability advocate. She is a graduate of Arizona State University and a Princeton Fellow. Maysoun is the co-founder/co-executive producer of the New York Arab American Comedy Festival and The Muslim Funny Fest. As a professional comedian, Maysoun has sold out top New York clubs and has toured extensively at home and abroad. She was a headliner on the Arabs Gone Wild Comedy Tour and The Together Live Tour. Maysoun has also appeared alongside Adam Sandler in *You Don't Mess With the Zohan* and has written for *Glamour* magazine. And she is the author of the best-selling memoir *Find Another Dream*.

To learn more about Maysoun, visit <http://www.Maysoun.com>.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Shadia Amin is a Colombian cartoonist and illustrator based in Savannah, Georgia. She graduated from Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) with a bachelor's degree in sequential art, minoring in illustration. She later earned her master's degree in sequential art, also from SCAD. Her art aims to capture the fun of superheroes, fantasy, and life itself, and her works include *Shiny Misfits*, *Spider-Ham*, *Aggretsuko*, and *Olive & Popeye*. She has also contributed to

anthologies like *Alloy: Electrum* and *Votes for Women: The Battle for the 19th Amendment*. Shadia is also a teacher, and when she is not working, she can be found cooking, playing video games, or spending time with her husband, dog and cat.

Find her online at shadiaminart.com.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What can you see happening on the cover?
 - Where is the action in the cover artwork taking place?
 - What can you tell about the characters from the cover artwork?
 - What do you think the flowers on the cover might represent?
 - Who do you predict will be the main character (protagonist) of this story?
 - Read the writing above the title. What does this tell you about the possible plot of the story?
 - What do you hypothesise is likely to happen in this story? Why do you think this?
 - Read the back cover. Having read the text on the back of the book, do you want to adjust your hypotheses about the story? Why/why not, and in what ways?
 - What questions do you have about the story, that the text on the back cover, has created? What do you predict some of the answers might be?
- Having read the first chapter, write a one-paragraph summary of what you now know about where and when the story is set.
- Who are the main characters in this novel? Having read the first two chapters, create a character summary document, setting out the names of each character in bold text, and then writing at least three dot points below each of them sharing more details about who they are, how they behave and anything else you think might be relevant about them and their story.
 - In pairs, compare your character pages with each other. Is there anything that one of you has that the other doesn't?
 - As a class, discuss why different people might note different things as being important for the various characters.
- Bay Ann's mother refuses to let her 'play the disability card', but agrees to allowing her double time to bake a cake as a reasonable accommodation. As a class, discuss the difference between a reasonable accommodation and playing a disability card.
- Why does Bay Ann want to beat Alyee Maq so badly? What is the one thing about the viral clip that has upset her the most?
- Why does Dennis film himself throwing Bay Ann's lunch away?
- Alyee Maq says that Bay Ann has an illness—but Bay Ann is not ill, she has Cerebral Palsy which is a disability. What is the difference between an illness and a disability, and why does it matter so much that people understand the difference and don't mislabel someone?
- Michelle has learnt how to do Zombie makeup from watching online video tutorials. What is a craft or skill that you have learnt, or would like to learn, from watching video tutorials? What is a skill that you think you could teach others?
 - In pairs or small groups, create your own video tutorial that teaches people how to do something. You can choose a craft, such as crochet, origami, or macrame; a useful life-skill such as how to make a pizza; or a sports or hobby related skill such as learning to ride a skateboard, trick soccer kicks or painting figurines. Share your video with the class, and discuss what was good about each of them, and what topics you would now like to learn more about.
- Bay Ann is challenged by both the physical constraints of her disability (eg. struggling to climb stairs), and by having to deal with the perceptions and preconceptions of other people (eg. Alyee saying she is ill, and the school principal assuming she has difficulty with emotional regulation as part of her disability). Which of these do you think she finds the most difficult to handle at the end of the day, and why do you think this? Write a brief argument in favour of one

or the other, and use at least three pieces of evidence from the text to support your assertions.

- If people understood more about Cerebral Palsy and how it affects Bay Ann, her life would be a lot easier and others would be less likely to misjudge her and what is happening in her life. In small groups, research some basic facts about Cerebral Palsy, and use your research to help you create a fact sheet sharing some of the key information you have learnt.
- Davey Matt and Michelle are Bay Ann's best friends, and their presence and support have a huge impact on her and her daily life. Write a short piece outlining the value of friends and friendship as showcased in this story, and include at least three examples from the text of Bay Ann's friends making a real difference in her life.
- Bay Ann's mother says 'this obsession with going viral is not healthy. That's why it's called "viral." We grow viruses in labs and it's not pretty.' (p 80). Do you agree with this statement? Why/why not?
 - As a class, discuss some of the problems that surround videos being posted to the web and going viral, and some of the behaviours that people find themselves practicing as a result of trying to go viral. Think about some of the extreme examples you have seen: what are some of the most problematic behaviours, and why do people think that it is acceptable to do dangerous or damaging things as part of their quest for short-lived viral fame?
- Before the debate, Bay Ann practises arguing both sides of the debate, even though she personally prefers cats to dogs. Why is it so important in a debate that you be able to argue for either side regardless of your personal opinion or belief? What is it that is being judged in a debate if you remove personal belief from the situation?
 - As a class, hold a series of short debates, where people have to argue against their actual point of view. Your topics could be focused around such things as one food being better than another, whether or not fish make good pets, or if sedentary hobbies are better than sports. The actual topic is less important than every participant having to argue in favour of a point with which they actually disagree.
 - After the series of debates, discuss what was difficult about the task, what was easy, what you learnt from the exercise, and what you found to be the most valuable part of the experience.
- Do you think voting for who won the debate was reasonable? Why/why not? Whose argument would you have voted for if you had been there, and why?
- Is Bay Ann a good friend to Michelle? Why/why not and in what ways? Find three specific examples from the story that support your assertions.
- Did you expect the story to end the way it did? What did you find most surprising in the whole book?
- By the end of the story, Bay Ann has learnt that friendship is more important than fame. Do you think she would have learnt this if she hadn't called Michelle names, and found herself having to cope without her best friend? What about the situation helped her realise what is truly important to her?
- Read the Author's Note at the end of the novel, discuss what you have learnt about the author by reading this note, and what you have learnt from this story. Do you think that the author has succeeded in her stated goals when writing this book?
- If you were going to write a new catchphrase or tagline to go with this novel, what would it be? In small groups, discuss your ideas, then individually, create an illustrated poster advertising this novel, making sure to feature your chosen catchphrase.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

RAE CARLYLE