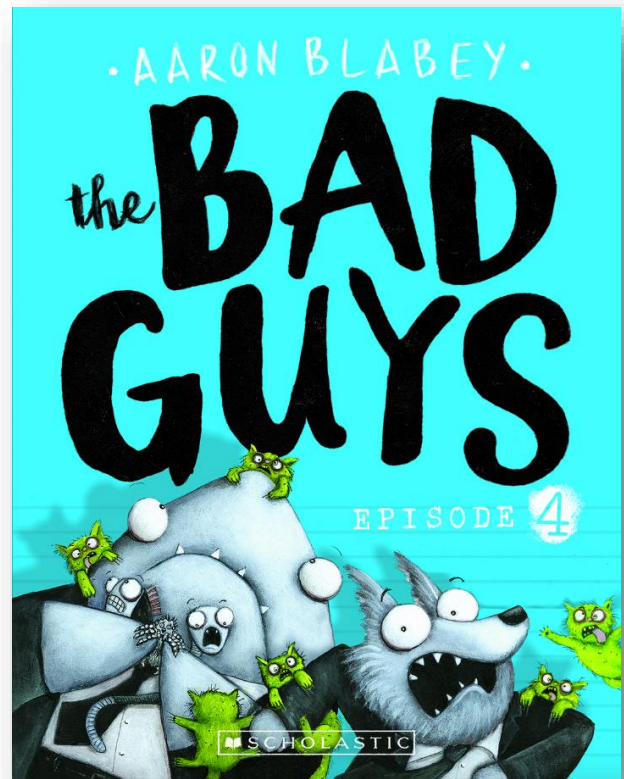


The Bad Guys Episode 4: Attack of the Zittens

Author/Illustrator
Aaron Blabey



It's a ZOMBIE KITTEN APOCALYPSE!

Should you panic? Should you cry? Should you poop your pants?

NO! Just sit back and watch the fur fly as the world's baddest good guys take on Mad Marmalade's meowing monsters! Here comes *The Bad Guys Episode 4!*

TEACHER NOTES

- Discuss the layout of *Attack of the Zittens*. What sort of a book would you classify it as? Is it a graphic novel/comic book? Is it illustrated fiction? Is it a long picture book? As a class, talk about the categories we generally organise books into. What are the pros and cons of categorising books? Can the definitions of each category be seen as fluid or static?
- What genre/s do you think *The Bad Guys* series falls into? Is it a thriller? An action-adventure? A pastiche? Explain your answer.

- Why do you think the book is called 'Episode 4' instead of 'Book 4'? What does the word 'episode' bring to mind? Is The Bad Guys series told like a television cartoon episode or short film? Why do you think this is?
 - For advanced students: Consider filming a section of *Attack of the Zittens*, either using live-action or animation software. Some factors you will need to consider include editing techniques and soundtrack. Does the book easily lend itself to a filmed medium?
- Look at Tiffany Fluffit's special report in the prelude to *Attack of the Zittens*, before the beginning of Chapter 1. The situation for Tiffany is quite dire, as the zittens are about to attack her studio. How does Aaron Blabey still keep a humorous tone in this sequence? How does he build on this humorous tone as the book progresses into Chapter 1, where the Bad Guys are in a situation that seems impossible to escape from? Consider things like the captions in Tiffany's report and the facial expressions of each of the Bad Guys as they try to cope with the danger that they are facing.
- What is a zombie? They play a very recognisable role in contemporary popular culture, but what is their cultural history? Where did zombies first appear? Why do you think they are so popular in contemporary fiction? What might a zombie outbreak culturally symbolise (eg obsession with technology)?
- Agent Fox plays into the archetype of the 'strong female character'. Discuss this archetype as a class. What are some of the traits of the archetype? What purpose does it serve? Can you think of any notable examples from popular culture? What might be the antithesis of this archetype? Divide the class into two teams to debate the following statement: Strong female characters provide important role models in popular culture.
- Look at the way Granny Gumbo's speech is typeset throughout the book. What effect does the movement added to her words have? Why do you think this effect is used?
- As a class, talk about the anatomy of humour. What makes something funny? What different styles of humour are there (eg slapstick, irony, puns, tragicomedy)? Have you ever found something really funny but people around you have not? Why do you think this happens? How can an author like Aaron Blabey create

humour that is broad enough to appeal to a wide range of readers but still specific to his own style of humour?

- Pick one spread from *Attack of the Zittens* that you find funny. In a short paragraph, list the reasons why you think this spread is funny. What techniques are used in the illustrations and text to convey the humour? Once you have finished, present your argument to the class with your chosen spread displayed on the board, breaking down all the components that work together to create humour.
- *The Bad Guys* series uses a lot of onomatopoeia. What is onomatopoeia? How does the series use different fonts and colours to convey different tones and sounds?
- Mr Wolf uses Mr Snake as a kind of slingshot to distribute as many balls of treated yarn to the zittens as he can. Discuss the physics of this sort of slingshot (centrifugal force). Can you create a similar sort of slinging mechanism? Design and create your own centrifugal sling and try it safely out in the playground (make sure to use soft projectiles!).
- Kittens, dolphins, ponies and bunnies are cute and cuddly animals, while the Bad Guys are all animals that people generally fear. How does Aaron Blabey subvert our expectations of these creatures throughout *The Bad Guys* series? What does this suggest about judging people based on their appearance and the importance of looking past the surface of things?
- The title of Chapter 8 is 'The Bad Penny'. What idiom does this refer to? Who is the bad penny in this instance? Where do you think this idiom originated from? For example, the idiom 'in for a penny, in for a pound' originally referenced the fact that if one owed a penny, one might as well owe a pound (as the penalties for non-payment of a financial debt were virtually identical in severity. Can you think of any other idioms? Select three and investigate their origins.
- How would you describe the relationship between Mr Snake and the other Bad Guys? What narrative purpose does Mr Snake serve in *The Bad Guys* series as a whole, and in *Apocalypse*
- Meow in particular? What do you make of his character? Is he still likeable? If so, how does Aaron Blabey maintain Mr Snake's likeability even when he is being the negative member of the Bad Guys?

- The very last page of *Attack of the Zittens* is a written teaser of sorts for Episode 5 of the series. What do you think will happen in the next book based on the clues given on this page? For advanced students: Try creating a film trailer for Episode 5 based on the information given on this page.

About the author

Multi-award-winning Aaron Blabey is one of Australia's best-selling creators of children's books. *Pig the Pug* was awarded Picture Book of the Year 2015 in the KOALA and YABBA Awards, and was shortlisted in the CBCA Awards, the Nielsen BookData Booksellers Choice Awards, the INDIE Awards and the ABDA Awards. *The Bad Guys* was the Children's Book of the Year in the 2016 INDIE Awards. Aaron lives with his two children and his wife in Sydney.