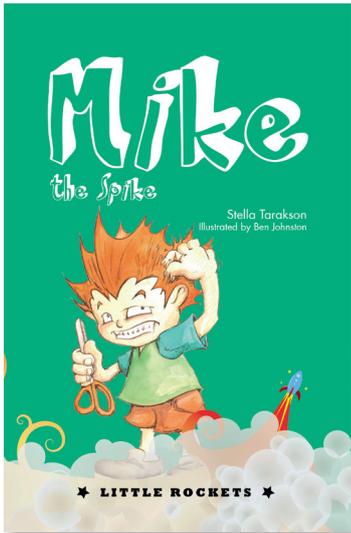


TEACHERS' NOTES

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Mike the Spike

Written by Stella Tarakson
Illustrated by Benjamin Johnston

Synopsis

Mike is proud of his spikey hair. Small for his age, his spikes make him look taller and very grown up. To his horror, he discovers he has lice. Nobody must know! Mike tries everything he can think of to remove the nits ... short of asking for help. And if that wasn't bad enough, the great hat parade is only two days away. Mike longs to win a prize for best hat. But how can he, when he can't stop scratching long enough to make one? Mike learns that while he sometimes needs to ask for help, there are some things he can do well all by himself!

Author Motivation

The author's motivation in writing this book was to explore the concepts of trust and self-reliance in a lighthearted and entertaining way.

Author Background Information

Stella is a lawyer-turned-author, who has written more than thirty books. She started off writing law books for adults before moving into the educational market. As a lifetime lover of novels, she has always wanted to write fiction. A few awards for her children's stories gave her the courage to take the plunge. Mike the Spike is her first junior novel.

Illustrator Background Information

Benjamin Johnston is an architect, illustrator, husband, father of two, and generally a very busy person. His greatest love is illustrating for children, where he can forget everything else and become a child again himself.

For *Mike the Spike*, Ben found it fun to continue the general style of the Little Rockets series. This style



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combines little pencil drawings with watercolour, to create scenes depicting a few days in the life of a boy with a problem ... nits.

As far as he can recall, Ben has never had nits. However, as the grandson of an entomologist, Ben spent many hours peering at his grandfather's bug collection.

Educational Applicability

Mike the Spike works on two levels. First it dispels a few myths about nits and helps children deal with their own lice infestations where applicable. On a deeper level, it teaches them about self-reliance, trust and making the judgement call as to when to seek help.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

Before and during reading the book:

1. Have you ever had nits or lice?
2. Do you know how lice spread and how to get rid of them?
3. Have you ever won a prize at school? How did it make you feel?
4. Who do you go to when you have a problem? Can you trust them to help you?

After reading the book:

1. Why did Mike want to win the hat parade prize? Have you ever really wanted to win something but were afraid you couldn't?
2. Why didn't Mike want anyone to know about his head lice? Do you think he was right to keep it a secret?
3. Who should Mike have asked to help him?
4. Do you think Mike was happy with his hat parade prize? Why or why not?

ACTIVITIES

Design

Make Mike the Spike's hat. See instructions at www.littlerockets.com.au.

Ask the class to design and make their own unique hats, perhaps those described in the book. Hold a class hat parade.

Language

Look through the book for describing words and doing words. Discuss the difference between verbs, nouns, adverbs, and adjectives.

Emotions

Mike goes through a range of emotions throughout the book. Ask the children to look at the illustrations and to identify where Mike looks surprised, worried, sad, happy and triumphant.



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Creative Writing

Students pretend they have an important secret. What problems can arise from keeping quiet? What happens if they tell someone they trust? Have them write a story exploring these issues.

MARKETING AND SELLING POINTS

- Fast-paced, action packed adventure for the 7+ market
- *Mike the Spike* won first prize in the 2013 Children's and Young Adult Writers and Illustrators Conference Competition, chapter books category
- Stella has been awarded first prize in the Charlotte Duncan Award (2009), third prize in the Brisbane Writers' Festival CYA Competition (2009) and had a book selected by the Children's Book Council of Australia as a Notable Book in 2008
- There are eight other books in the Little Rockets series



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