

Bravo!

by Philip Waechter; illustrated by Moni Port (Gecko Press)

Teaching Notes by Raymond Huber

Synopsis

Helena's musical life is almost perfect except for one thing: her father is a shouter. She gets sick of it and decides she doesn't want to grow up like that too. She leaves home and lives with a neighbour. Her parents search for her and her father regrets his shouting. Helena gives her first concert and her father is the only one to shout 'bravo'. They are reunited.

Themes

This is a kind of fairy tale about a girl's relationship with her father and the importance of praise and recognition. He is an angry, depressed man who has pushed Helena away with his tantrums. She has a gift her father does not even recognise. Helena takes control and sets off to make her own life. She finds that others appreciate her gift. Only when her father gives praise for the first time Helena realises she is loved.

Activities

1. Character:

Describe the father on pages 4 to 6. Why do you think her father shouts so much? Why are angry people frightening? What makes him realise he was wrong to be so angry? Does he stop shouting in the end? What has changed about him at the end? What does Helena think of her father? Is she scared of him? Is it his loudness she hates or something else? (Remember she plays the trumpet).

2. What does bravo mean to you? When do people use it? One meaning of bravo is 'well done'. Why does praise feel so good? Praise something about a friend or family member.

3. Another meaning of bravo is 'brave'. What does Helena do that is so brave? Do you think she knew the woman on the hill? Why does she take Helena in to live with her? Will Helena go home at the end? What is the bravest thing you have done? Write a poem about it.

4. Do you like loud sounds? Make a list of the most annoying or painful sounds. Research the safe levels of sound for the human ear. Create a poster warning about dangerous sounds.

5. Story Structure:

This story is presented as a traditional fairy tale. Find the following traditional story elements: a fairy tale beginning; a small hero; a gift; an ogre; leaving home; seeking your fortune; solving a problem; a castle on a hill; a search; a happy ending.

Write your own fairy tale using these elements. You could include: an animal character; a hero with a special talent; or a giant.

6. Illustrations:

Think about the pictures. What attracts your attention in each scene? What colours and lines have been used to do this? (Such as the spotlight at the end).

Do the pictures mirror the text – or go beyond what the writer has described?

The illustrator has used warm coloured backgrounds at the start and end of the book to show when Helena is happy. What are these colours? What background is given to the shouting scenes? Why?

Many of the scenes are shown from a distance to make Helena look small. Why is the father drawn as the biggest character (eg. page 6)?

Look at the landscapes. Paint a scene of a large, scary landscape and insert yourself (maybe a photo) as a small character in the picture.

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