

BECOMING BRAVE

by Jennie Cashman Wilson and Tomekah George

Suitable for: Ages 4+

Explore themes of: • The power of courage and facing fears • Love, grief and the strength to overcome • The journey of self-discovery and finding one's own bravery • Nurturing resilience and perseverance • Believing in oneself and finding inner strength • Following your heart and living boldly • Pursuing your passions • The importance of individuality and embracing uniqueness • The joy and magic of music • Starting meaningful conversations and inspiring young readers

Subject checklist: Literacy • Music • Art and Design • PSHE

ABOUT THE BOOK

An inspirational true story about love, loss and how to be brave.

*If you want to try new things,
you have to be brave.
But you can't be brave
without also being scared.*

When Jennie meets Abram, she falls in love with his fearlessness.
But when Abram is no longer by her side, can she find her own courage?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR – JENNIE CASHMAN WILSON

Jennie's background is in arts fundraising and working with young people, which is how she met her late husband, the acclaimed jazz trumpeter Abram Wilson. The pair worked on numerous projects together up until Abram's passing in 2012, after which Jennie set up the Abram Wilson charity – an organisation which opens doors to the music industry for minoritised young talent. The organisation has grown to work with over 200 performing artists and Jennie has gone on to win a WACL Future Leader Award. This is Jennie's first children's book.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR – TOMEKAH GEORGE

Tomekah's delicately hand-crafted illustrations have featured in newspapers, on food packaging and pottery, in classrooms, books and digital campaigns across the US, UK & Europe. Her work is constructed from early memories and love for Afrofuturist themes expressed through a blend of colourful and textural layers. Her handmade process continually fuels a bold style, creating unique pieces that sit somewhere between a print, a collage and a painting.

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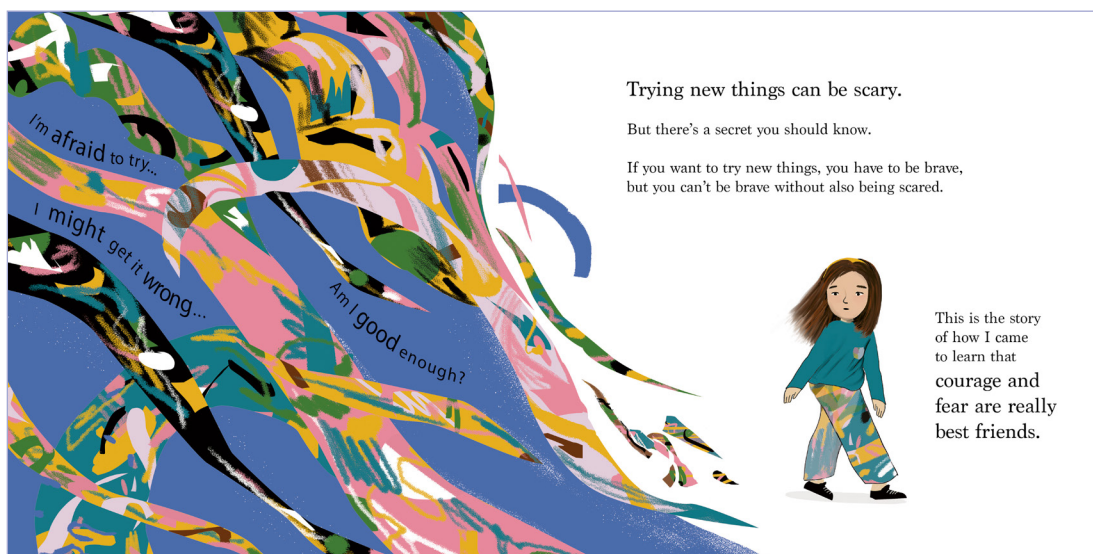
- **Objectives:** Explore and research different charity organisations that support various creative passions; cultivate a sense of social responsibility and community engagement by organising mini-fundraisers in school or the local community.

Extract 1: The secret of feeling scared

(pages 4-5)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever felt afraid to try something new? What was it and why did it make you feel scared?
2. How do you think the person in the picture feels about trying new things? What do you think the different colours on one side and the white background on the other side of the illustration mean?
3. Do you think it's important to be brave and try new things, even if we feel scared? Why or why not? What good things can happen when we try things that are outside of our comfort zones?
4. What are some new things you want to try but feel afraid to do? How do you think you can overcome your fears and give them a try?
5. What are some things we can do to be brave and build courage when we want to try new things? How can we get ready to take that first step?
6. Can you think of a time when you tried something new and felt proud of yourself, even if it didn't go perfectly? What did you learn from that experience?
7. What can we do to feel more confident and overcome self-doubt or negative thoughts like: 'I'm afraid to try...', 'Am I good enough?', 'I might get it wrong...' when we want to try new things?
8. Why do you think trying new things can be scary for some people? What are some things that might make people afraid when they want to try something new? Why do you think some people are more willing to try new things than others? How do you feel when you see someone else trying new things, even if they're scared? How can we support others to be brave?
9. According to these pages, what is the secret to trying new things? Why do you think courage and fear are called best friends? Can you feel both of these feelings at the same time?
10. How can we learn from our mistakes or setbacks and see them as valuable experiences when we try new things?



Activity 7: Emotion exploration

- Begin the lesson by asking the children if they have ever felt a little scared or nervous when trying something new or different, like learning a skill or making friends. Create a safe and supportive atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings. As the children share their experiences, record their responses on the board to create a list of challenging things to try for the first time.
- Share the extract from the story with the class and, after reading it together, ask the children what they think the author means when she says, 'courage and fear are really best friends'.
- Explain that today's lesson is all about understanding the relationship between courage and fear.
- To start, define the two terms: courage and fear. Courage is when we feel a little scared, but we still try our best and do something brave. Fear, on the other hand, is the emotion we experience when confronted with something perceived as threatening or unfamiliar.
- Emphasise that both courage and fear are natural and important emotions that can coexist and work together to help us grow and achieve our goals. Sometimes, feeling a little scared can actually show that we are about to do something very brave!
- Now, explain that we are going to explore our emotions further. Emotions are feelings we cannot see, but we can understand them better by using our imagination.
- Ask the children to close their eyes and think about what courage and fear might look like if they were characters we could draw on paper. What do they look like? How do they appear to you? How do they stand? What kind of expression do they have on their faces?
- After the children have had a moment to imagine what courage and fear might look like as characters, invite them to open their eyes and get ready to express their ideas through art.
- Explain that they are going to draw three depictions: one of courage on its own, one of fear on its own, and one of courage and fear as best friends. Encourage them to be creative and think about how these two emotions might interact together. How can they show that courage and fear support each other?
- Distribute the activity sheet and colouring materials to each child. Remind them that there are no right or wrong answers in this activity; it's all about expressing their feelings and ideas.
- Allow the children sufficient time to work on their drawings. Walk around the classroom to offer assistance, praise their creativity, and provide encouragement.
- After completing the drawings, gather the children to share their artwork with the class. Allow each child to explain their representations by expressing the emotions and ideas behind them.
- Display their artwork in the classroom as a visual reminder of the lesson's message about courage, fear and their special friendship.

Activity sheet 1: Best friends

Let's explore our understanding of courage, fear and their special friendship through the art in *Becoming Brave*. Close your eyes and visualise what courage and fear might look like as characters. What does courage look like to you? How might fear appear as a character? Imagine their expressions and postures.

Courage

Fear

Courage and fear as
best friends

Remember: this is about creative expression and there are no right or wrong answers. Use the colours, shapes and details you feel express your emotions and ideas.

Supporting quotes

'So many exciting things seemed to happen when she followed her heart.'

'We can be scared and brave, happy and sad, all at the same time.'

'We can face our fears and try new things because, in the end, that's where all the magic happens.'

Encouraging statements

'You never get stronger if you only do easy things.'

'Not all storms come to disrupt your life. Some come to clear your path.'

'Life is bigger than the boxes we tick along the way.'

'Keep going, keep growing!'

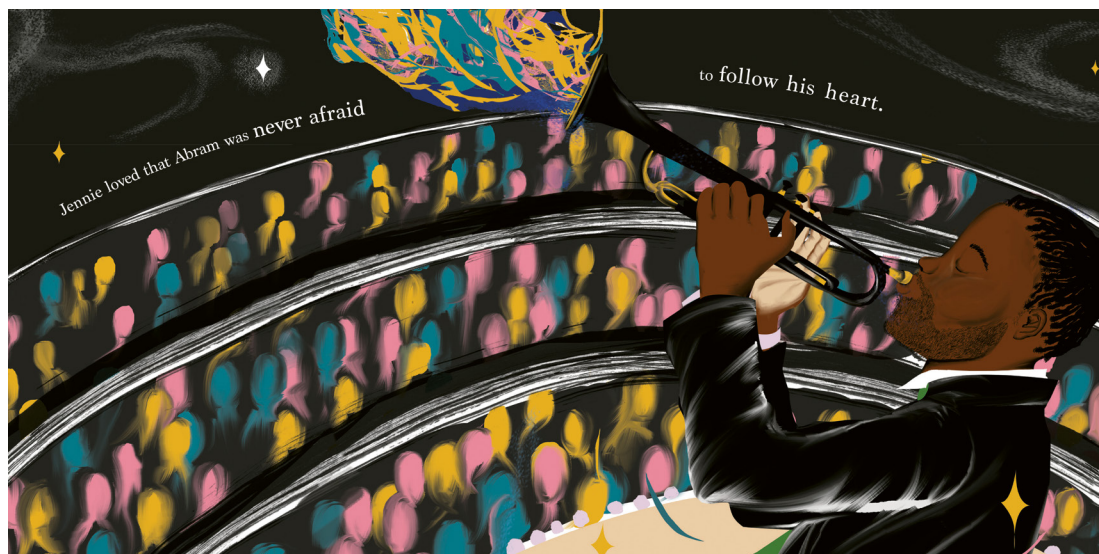
Tell us about your drawings here...

Extract 2: Trumpeting trailblazer

(pages 14-15)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think it means to 'follow your heart'? Can you give an example of a time when you followed your heart?
2. Look closely at Abram's facial expression while he plays the trumpet. What emotions do you see on his face? How do you think he feels about playing music in front of a crowd?
3. Do you have a special talent or hobby that you love just as much as Abram loves playing the trumpet? How does it make you feel when you get to do what you love?
4. In what ways do you think Abram's passion for playing the trumpet inspires others in the crowd? Have you ever seen someone else do something that inspired you to be brave or try something new?
5. Sometimes, people are afraid to do things they love because they worry about what others might think. Why do you think Abram isn't afraid to play the trumpet in front of the crowd? How can we learn to be confident in doing what we love?
6. Do you think Abram ever faced any obstacles or challenges to get to where he is now, playing in front of a crowd? What do you think he did to overcome those challenges?
7. Jennie admires Abram for his fearlessness. Is there someone in your life who you look up to for their courage or passion? What qualities do they possess that make them inspiring to you?
8. If you could play any musical instrument, which one would you choose and why?
9. Do you think it's essential for everyone to follow their heart and pursue their passions? Why or why not? How can we encourage each other to do so?
10. The image shows a public performance, but sometimes we can follow our passions in private. Is there something you love doing that you prefer to do on your own? Why?

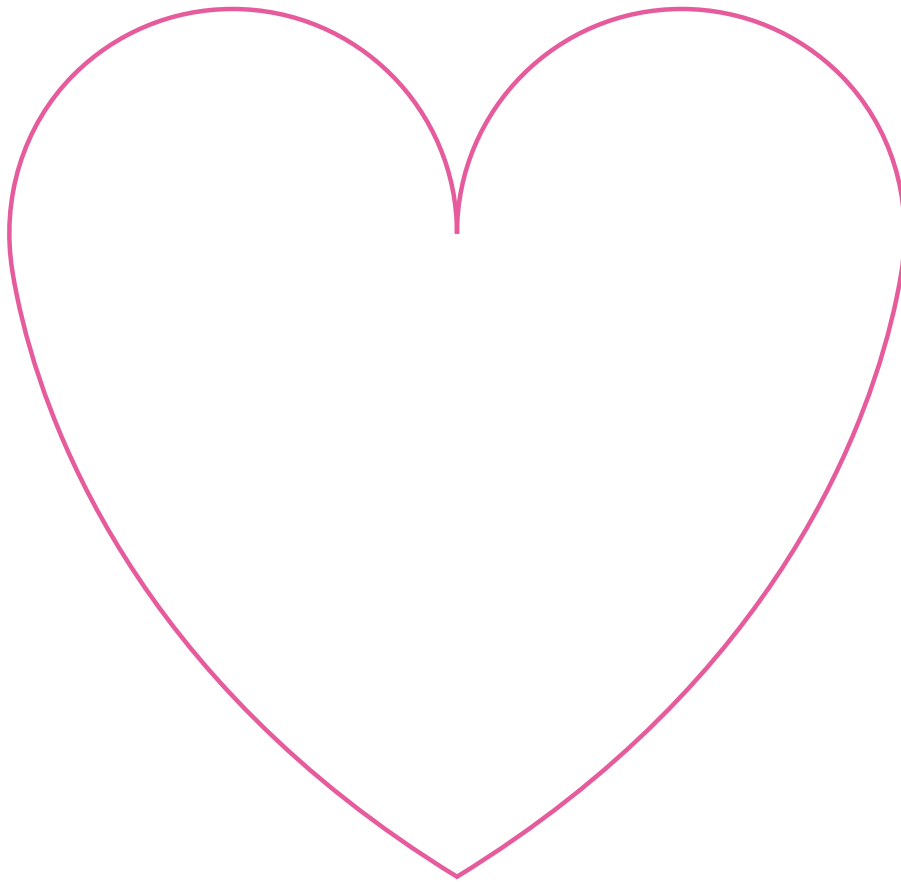


Activity 2: Following your heart

- Display the image of Abram playing the trumpet in front of a crowd on the board, capturing the children's attention.
- Engage them with thought-provoking questions about the image, such as: 'What do you notice about Abram in the picture?' and 'How do you think Abram feels while playing the trumpet?'
- Encourage them to closely observe his facial expressions and body language, prompting them to identify the emotions they see on Abram's face and discuss how his passion for music might be influencing those emotions.
- Guide the children to consider the crowd's reaction to Abram's performance, to help them to develop empathy and understanding. Encourage the children to imagine the atmosphere in the audience and what emotions might be present while watching Abram play the trumpet, even though they can't see the faces of the crowd in the illustration.
- Ask if any of the children have ever seen someone play a musical instrument before and, if they have, how it made them feel.
- Direct the children's attention to the phrase 'follow his heart' in the text. Engage them in a short discussion about the meaning of following one's heart and pursuing one's passions. Explain that following your heart involves doing what makes you happy and staying true to yourself, even if it feels scary or different from what others expect.
- Take a moment to recap Abram's journey of following his heart, highlighting the pivotal moments where he practised the trumpet and showcased his talent in front of crowds. Discuss how his commitment to practising the trumpet played a crucial role in his progress. Address the challenges Abram might have faced, such as self-doubt or stage fright, and emphasise how his unwavering love for music allowed him to overcome these fears and obstacles.
- To reinforce the theme of following one's heart, invite the children to share their own creative passions or hobbies. Allow them to express themselves through drawings and reflections using the activity sheet or performances if they feel comfortable. Encourage each child to briefly talk about what they love doing and why it brings them joy, fostering a sense of pride in their interests.
- Summarise Abram's journey once more, emphasising the power of dedication and following one's heart. Reiterate the message that pursuing passions can lead to personal growth and success, even in the face of challenges.
- Conclude the lesson by encouraging the children to continue nurturing their interests, staying true to themselves and believing in their ability to overcome obstacles and achieve their dreams. Remind them that each of them is unique and has something special to offer the world, just like Abram did with his love for playing the trumpet.

Activity sheet 2: My personal passion

Let's explore what it means to follow your heart and embrace personal passions.
Take a moment to reflect on your interests here.



Share your passion project and explain why it brings you joy...

'Every great dream begins with a dreamer.' – Harriet Tubman

'Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you.' – Oprah

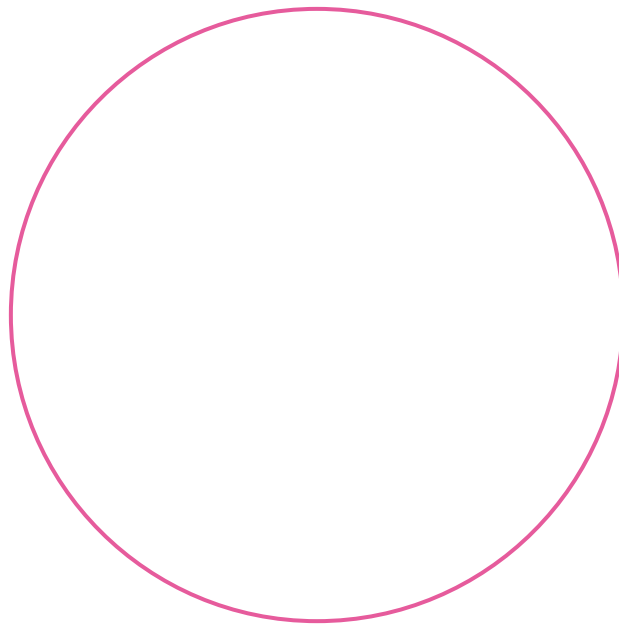
*'There is no passion to be found playing small – in settling
for a life that is less than the one you are capable
of living.'* – Nelson Mandela

Activity sheet 2: My personal passion

What challenges might you face in pursuing your passion? Write or draw about how you might overcome these challenges with determination...

List some different ways you could explore and nurture your passion outside of the classroom.
Can you find some books, websites, workshops or clubs related to your interest?

Inside this passion-sharing circle, write the names of classmates you would like to share your passion project with.



Remember: life is not just about doing what others expect of you, it's important to follow your passions, just like Abram does in *Becoming Brave*.

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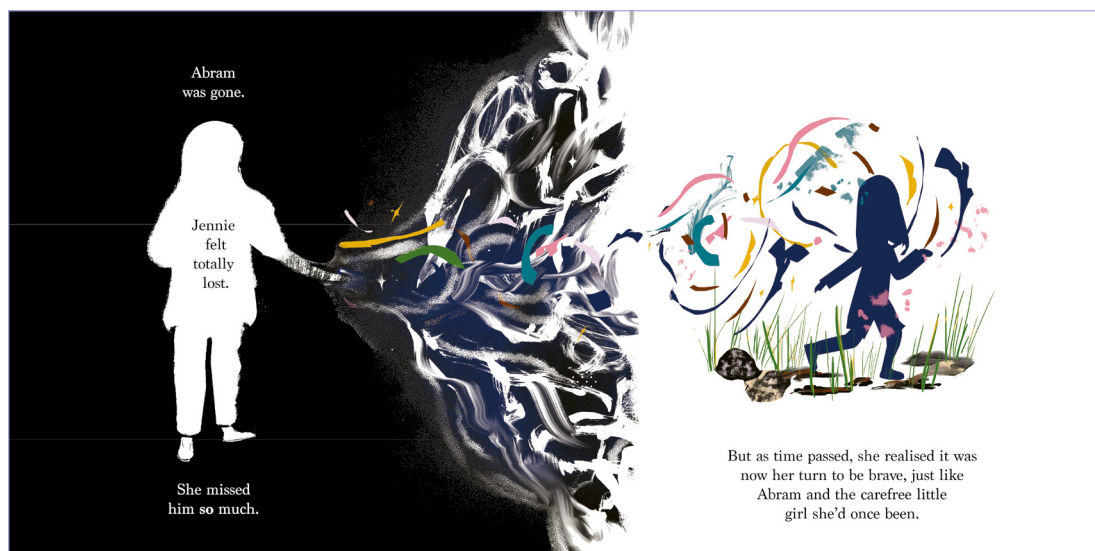


Extract 3: Jennie's journey

(pages 20-21)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you think Jennie felt when Abram was gone?
2. Have you ever missed someone a lot? How did you deal with that feeling?
3. What are some things that make you feel better when you are missing someone?
4. Jennie says she felt 'totally lost'. Can you think of any ways to help someone who is feeling lost or sad in this situation?
5. Why is it important to remember the good times we had with someone who is no longer with us? How can those memories make us feel better?
6. Why do you think the colours on the previous pages were bright, but suddenly changed to a black background with a white silhouette on the left side? How do you feel when you see this change in the illustrations?
7. What do you notice about the effect of the colours mixing in the middle of these two pages?
8. The story says that Jennie was once a 'carefree little girl'. How can someone be carefree, and why might they become less carefree as they grow older?
9. Jennie mentions that time passed before she realised it was her turn to be brave. Why do you think time is important in helping us deal with difficult situations?
10. Do you think bravery is something that comes naturally to people, or is it something we can learn?



Activity 3: Challenges of change

- Start the session by reading the extract aloud, encouraging the class to closely observe the illustrations' colours. Discuss how the colours help convey the mood of the story. For instance, highlight the significance of the black background and white silhouette symbolising the feeling of loss and emptiness experienced by Jennie after Abram has gone.
- Engage the children by asking them to identify and name the emotions Jennie experiences after she loses Abram (e.g., feeling lost, missing him, grief). Write these emotions on the whiteboard and consider using pictures or simple emojis to visually represent each emotion.
- Initiate an open discussion about the challenges of change. Invite the children to share their personal experiences, such as moving to new homes, starting new schools or dealing with the loss of a loved one like Jennie did. Encourage them to express what they felt during those times, fostering an environment of empathy and understanding.
- Introduce the concept of resilience, emphasising its connection to bravery. Help the children to understand that being brave doesn't mean being without fear, but rather having the courage to confront challenging situations head-on and not giving up in the face of adversity.
- Explore the key qualities of resilient individuals, including their willingness to embrace new experiences, persevere in tough times, stand up for what is right and approach change with a positive mindset. Discuss inspiring examples of resilience from real-life or fictional characters.
- Engage the children in a practical exercise by guiding them in brainstorming various ways they can incorporate resilience into their daily lives. Encourage creative thinking about overcoming obstacles and bouncing back from setbacks. Encourage them to explore categories like 'Embrace Challenges', 'Learn from Mistakes', 'Stay Positive', 'Ask for Help', 'Be Brave' and 'Take Care of Yourself', and list actionable approaches beneath each heading.
- Next, empower the children to apply what they've learned by creating their own personalised mind maps on the provided activity sheet. Encourage them to explore their unique perspectives on resilience and incorporate the strategies discussed in the class modelling.
- After the individual mind-mapping activity, you could conclude with some of the following steps:
 - Allow each child to share their mind map with the class (optional, depending on the comfort level of the children). Encourage them to explain their chosen strategies and how they relate to their own lives or experiences.
 - Facilitate a group discussion about the various strategies and approaches to resilience that the children have shared. Highlight common themes and unique perspectives, fostering a supportive and collaborative atmosphere.
 - Invite the children to make a personal resilience pledge, where they commit to incorporating specific strategies from their mind maps into their daily lives. Emphasise the importance of perseverance and determination.
 - Share inspiring stories of individuals who have demonstrated resilience in the face of challenges. These could be famous figures, community members or even personal anecdotes, illustrating how resilience has made a positive impact.

Activity sheet 3: My mind map to becoming brave

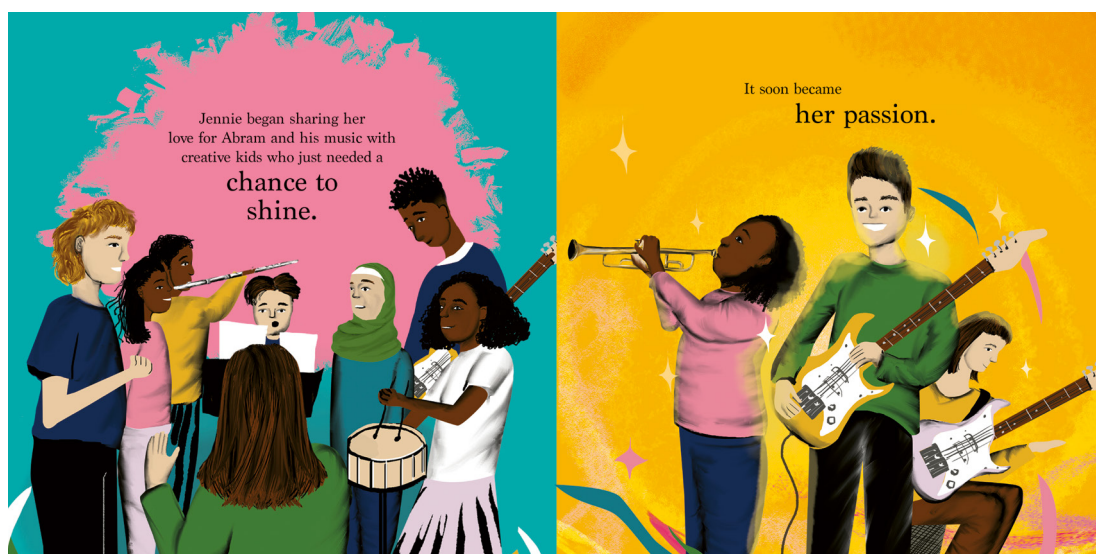


Extract 4: A chance to shine

(pages 22-23)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does Jennie's newfound passion for music tell us about the impact Abram had on her life and interests?
2. After being inspired by Abram's love of music, how has Jennie continued his legacy? What has she set up in his name to share this passion with others?
3. How do you think Jennie feels when she sees other kids succeeding in their creative pursuits with her help? Have you ever experienced a similar feeling when assisting a friend or someone else?
4. Put yourself in the shoes of one of the kids who received help from Jennie. How do you think her support and encouragement would make you feel?
5. In what positive ways do you think Jennie is impacting her community by sharing her love for music with young people? How might sharing her passion for Abram's music have changed Jennie's life?
6. What types of creative activities do you enjoy doing the most? How do they make you feel while you are engaged in them?
7. Why do you think some kids might need a 'chance to shine' when expressing their creativity? How can we create more opportunities for this to happen in our school or community?
8. What do you believe makes music such a powerful means of expressing emotions and connecting with others? Can you share a favourite piece of music or a song that evokes a particular feeling for you?
9. If you were to start a club or group to help others pursue their passions, what would it focus on, and how would you support and encourage the group's members?
10. Can music bring people in the community closer together? How do you think we could use music to create a happier atmosphere in our school or neighbourhood?



Activity 4: Creative charities

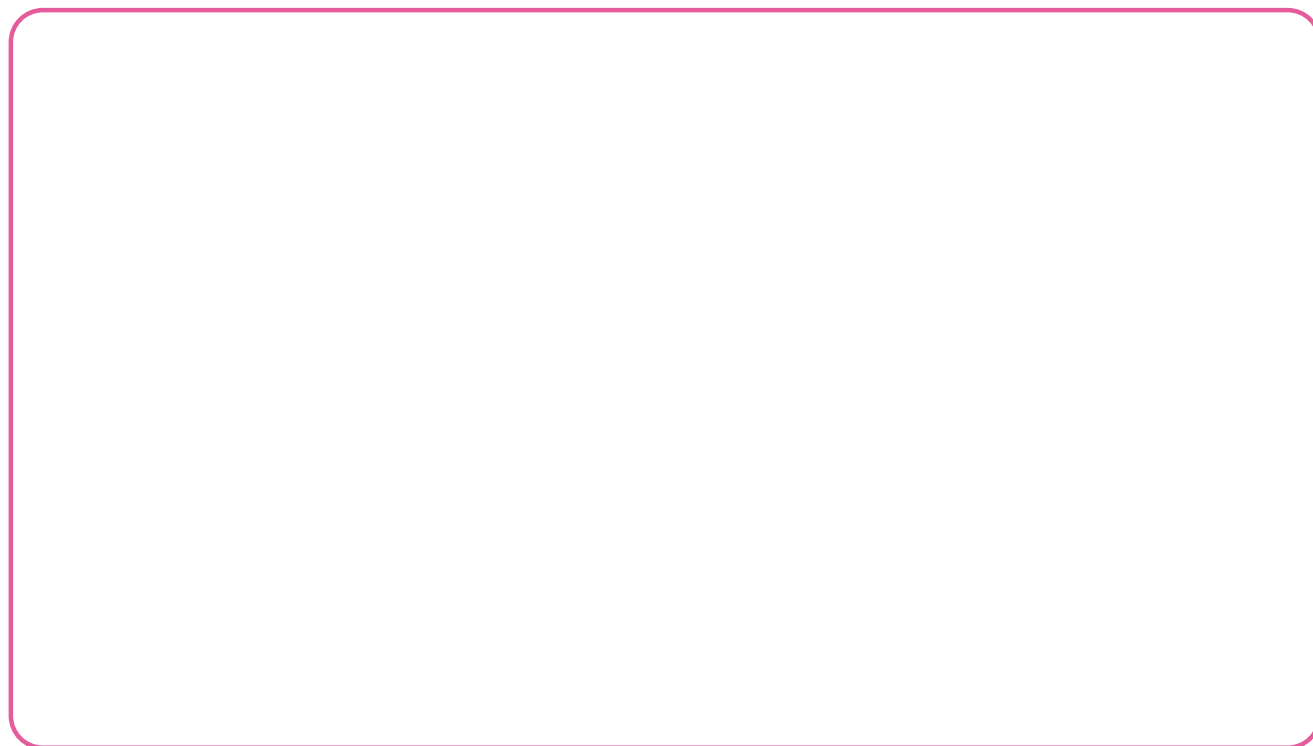
- Start by reading the extract aloud to the class, focusing on Jennie's inspirational journey of sharing her love for music with creative kids who needed a chance to shine. Discover the heartwarming tale behind the charity she established in Abram's name, detailed in the final double-page spread at the back of the book.
- After introducing Jennie's inspirational journey and charity, initiate a discussion about the importance of arts and creative expression in education. Discuss how music, along with other forms of creativity like art and dance, can positively impact children's lives and nurture their talents.
- Talk about how they can offer numerous benefits to children's overall development including boosting self-confidence, cultivating critical thinking, enhancing communication skills, fostering empathy and emotional intelligence, encouraging collaboration, promoting diversity and culture, providing stress relief and well-being, improving academic performance and instilling a lifelong appreciation for the arts.
- Guide the class to analyse the potential impact of Jennie's charity on the creative kids it supports. Discuss the possible long-term benefits of such initiatives on individuals and communities. Discuss the challenges that creative kids might face in expressing themselves and finding opportunities to shine. Encourage empathy and understanding among students for those who may struggle to find their voice.
- Introduce the concept of charity organisations to the class, explaining that these are groups that help people in need and support various causes, including creativity. Encourage children to relate the story to their own experiences or instances where they've seen individuals or organisations making a positive difference in the lives of others through creative projects or charitable acts.
- Divide the class into small groups and have them research other real-life examples of individuals or organisations making a positive impact on their communities through art-based initiatives using the provided activity sheet. Each group can present their findings to the class.
- After this, discuss ways the class or school can support or contribute to similar charitable efforts in their own community, either through volunteering, fundraising or raising awareness about such initiatives.
- At the end of the discussion, summarise the key takeaways from the story and the class activities. Emphasise the importance of kindness, generosity and using one's talents to uplift others and create a positive impact.
- Extend the learning experience by organising a mini-fundraiser in your school or the local community, with the approval and assistance of teachers and parents. Proceeds from the fundraiser can be donated to a real charity organisation that supports young creatives, providing them with further opportunities to shine and make a difference.

Activity sheet 4: My chosen charity

Name of the charity: _____

Contact information: _____

Draw the charity's logo here:



Mission: Write a short and simple description of what the charity wants to do:

Beneficiaries: Describe who the charity wants to help with its creative ideas:

Notable projects:

Project 1: _____

Project 2: _____

Project 3: _____

Activity sheet 4: My chosen charity

Inspiring stories: Share real-life stories that show how the charity has helped people:

Fundraising events: Detail any special events or regular fundraisers the charity organises:

How you can help: Give ideas for how people can support the charity:
