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Recommended for: 7–10 years

Themes: Pet monsters, science, magic, step-siblings, blended families, cooperation

Applicable to learning areas: English language, literacy and literature, visual literacy

Summary

Have you ever wanted a pet monster?

I definitely did NOT. Monsters sound DANGEROUS.

But then Willow and I found the BIGGE BOKE OF FETCHING MONSTERS and we accidentally made Hodgepodge. He is my best friend.

Then we made Flummox, but she went to live with our neighbour. So now Willow wants to try again.

I think this is a BAD IDEA. What if we've pushed our luck too far?

Author's motivation

'As a child I was fascinated by magical creatures. On my first plane ride, I searched the clouds for Care Bears. I positioned crystals and beads to refract the light in the hope I might catch a fairy in a rainbow. I mixed weird ingredients together in the hope that they might turn into a monster. I love the idea of substituting arcane ingredients with round-the-house ones and ending up with a round-the-house monster. But it wasn't until I started reading chapter books with my son Banjo that I felt really ready to write one!'

– Lili Wilkinson

Suggestions for Classroom Discussion and Application

Before Reading

- Before reading *Smidgen: How to Make a Pet Monster 3*, examine the book's front cover. What sort of story do you think this is going to be? Happy or sad? Funny or serious? Do you think the story will be based in a real or fantasy world? What on the cover helped you answer these questions? Take a moment to look at four important elements that make up the book's cover and write a sentence about each.
 - The TITLE makes me think the book will be... (fill in here) because... (fill in here).
 - The title's FONT makes me think the book will be... (fill in here) because... (fill in here).
 - The ILLUSTRATIONS of the monsters make me think that they will be (fill in adjectives here) monsters because they look... (fill in here).
 - The COLOURS used on the cover make me feel that the book will be... (fill in here) because... (fill in here).

Example:

The title's FONT makes me think the book will be *fun* because *the letters in Pet Monster have been changed to include little bits of a monster, like the horn on the letter e and strange toes on the letter I.*

Comprehension Questions

- What sort of TV show is *Whole Lotta Loaf*?
- What does Willow HATE more than anything?
- Arabella-Rose can't find snake oil so what does she bring instead?
- What final ingredient do Artie, Willow and Arabella-Rose need from Zayn?
- How did Zayn enter the Monster Room?
- Why doesn't Willow's monster turn out quite like the dragon in *The Bigge Boke of Fetching Monsters*?
- How can Willow tell her special egg from all the others?
- Why are Rosemary Bao and Basil Cobb good names for cooking show hosts?
- How does Artie 'save' the day and Willow's monster?
- Why do you think everyone agreed that David Cole's best soufflé was Nutella and raspberry?

True or False:

- Hodgepodge can mimic any sound.
- Eggs are a vital ingredient in soufflés.
- Willow never loses her egg during the taping of *Whole Lotta Loaf*.
- Zayn becomes a nicer person because of Smidgen.
- Arabella-Rose is afraid of cows.

Telling stories with images

Look at the illustration of Artie on page 14.

- Describe how you think he is feeling when he pictures himself as a drummer in a band.
- What in the illustration helped you understand how he is feeling?
- Why do you think Artie feels this way?

Visual literacy

- Sometimes the way words are shown on a page help tell the story. Turn to Chapter 6 and find examples of where text is sometimes shown:
 - in upper case
 - in bold
 - on an angle
 - with graphics around it
 - underlined
 - larger than the rest of the words in the sentence
- Explain why you think these changes were made and how they affected the way you read the story.

Puns and double meanings

- Arabella-Rose makes a pun when she says, 'I'm sure he will be EGGcellent.' (p 73) and again in the next chapter, 'It probably will be quite eggsciting!' (p 74). Can you think of more egg-words to make your own puns?
- Sometimes words can have two meanings. For instance, when Rosemary Bao asks Willow how she feels after tumbling to the floor and Willow replies, 'I feel...like I want to go to the pantry and get my egg.' (p 115). What does Rosemary think Willow means and what does Willow actually mean?

Characterisation

- Like Hodgepodge, Flummox and Smidgen, each of the children has a talent for something that helps them save the egg. Divide a page into four boxes in your workbook and label each box with a character's name: Artie, Willow, Arabella-Rose and Zayn. List in each box that character's talents, as well as their special fears.
- Why do you think Willow wants to call her newly hatched monster Smite but everyone else thinks Smidgen is a better name.
- Why do you think David Cole's cooking is often quite revolting? Can you see any link between how he puts ingredients together and the way Artie, Willow and Arabella-Rose make monsters?
- Draw a picture of the monster you would like to create.

About the Author



Lili Wilkinson is the award-winning author of two picture books, *That Christmas Feeling* and *Clancy the Quokka*, and eleven YA novels including *The Boundless Sublime*. Lili established insideadog.com.au and the Inky Awards at the Centre for Youth Literature, State Library of Victoria. She has a PhD in Creative Writing, and lives in Melbourne with her husband, son, dog and three chickens.

About the Illustrator

Alex Patrick was born in the Kentish town of Dartford in the South-East of England and has been drawing for as long as he can remember. His lifelong love for cartoons, picture books and comics has shaped him into the passionate children's illustrator he is today. Alex loves creating original characters - he brings an element of fun and humour to each of his illustrations and is often found laughing to himself as he draws.

