

TEACHING NOTES

The Spectacular Suit

Title The Spectacular Suit

Author Kat Patrick

Illustrator Hayley Wells

Publication 3 August 2021

Category Picture book

ISBN 9781922310873

PLOT

A buoyant and heartwarming celebration of individuality, identity, and dressing to suit yourself!

It's almost Frankie's birthday and everything is ready – except for something to wear. All of her party dresses feel wrong. Her mum, brother, and sister try to help, but it's no good.

What Frankie longs for is a suit. A spectacular suit ...

Can Frankie find the outfit of her dreams?



THEMES

Fashion

Self-expression

Gender nonconforming

Self-expression

Clothes have no gender!

Craft #ownvoices
storytelling

Single-parent families

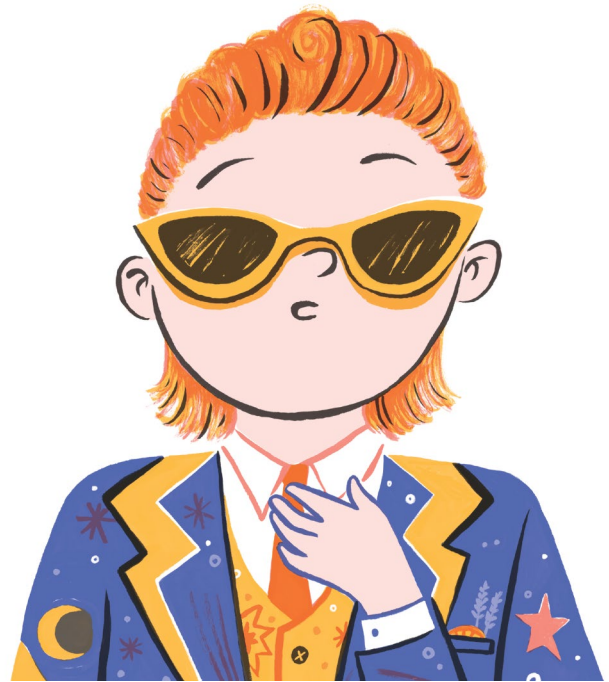
Birthday parties

* DISCUSSION TOPICS

Some people choose their clothes simply because they're comfy. Other people really want to express themselves through their outfits. Some people want to blend in, while others want to stand out. All these reasons for choosing the clothes we wear are really good and understandable! What's your favourite outfit? Why do you love it?

* Trashion parade!

This project is all about expressing your creative style by re-using old clothes – and then having a spectacular fashion show! In *The Spectacular Suit*, Frankie's mum and siblings stay up all night creating the suit of her dreams. They cut star-and-planet shapes out of old clothes and stick them on to a jacket and pants. They even make a waistcoat out of old T-shirts! Can you make a fun, comfy, silly, or spectacular outfit out of old clothes and accessories?



Materials

A big pile of old clothes: Ask your teacher to contact the local op shop and ask them for all the clothes they can't sell. You'll be amazed to see all the clothes that op shops send to the rubbish tip! Some of them are really cool. If going to an op shop is too tricky, then everyone can bring a bag of old clothes from home. Make a big pile out of all the old clothes for the class to rummage through.

Craft materials: Glue, scissors, lots of safety pins, gemstone stickers, ribbon, buttons, textas ... what else might help you to make a fun outfit?

Method

Pull out a few things from the pile that you like the look of. Think about how you might decorate them or turn them into a brand-new fashion piece. A dress made out of a big T-shirt might need the sleeves cut off, a belt for the waist, or some decorations glued to it. A bag might become a fabulous hat. Who says a bathmat can't be a cape, or a baby shoe a brooch? Maybe a frilly bed sheet could be turned into a fancy gown!

Once everyone has made an outfit, it's time for a fashion parade! Put on some music and take it in turns to parade your style for everyone. Don't want to be in the parade? No big deal – hang out on the sidelines and cheer everyone else on.



Meet Kat Patrick

Kat Patrick recently realised they never actually grew up, and so they've been trying to make a living as a writer ever since. Originally

from the UK, they have written their way around the world, and after stints in New Zealand, Australia, Iceland, Paris, and Patagonia, are now based in Glasgow.

Hi, Kat. We love all your books, like the *Doodle Cat* series and *Howl*, and *The Spectacular Suit*. Can you tell us, what was your inspiration for writing *The Spectacular Suit*?

I was inspired by all the kids that, like me, needed to find ways to safely wear on the outside whatever they were feeling on the inside. I think a book like this would have made a real difference to me growing up. There are so many wonderful and infinite ways to be a person in the world, but it isn't always easy to figure out how to make yourself known. For Frankie, in this all-important birthday chapter of their life, a particular outfit was one way of properly introducing themselves.

What are some of your favourite picture books?

The Thinking Book by Sandol Stoddard and Ivan Chermayeff
All and any of the *Frog and Toad* books by Arnold Lobel

Do you have some tips for young writers?

Practice! Write down loads and loads of anything, or nothing. Don't think about anybody else. Leave it for a few days, then take another look. Now you edit! I find that this is when I really find whatever it was I was trying to say. Weirdly, it also helps to copy out sentences from writers you really admire. Whenever I do this, I learn a little more about all the many ways in which words can work.



Meet Hayley Wells

Hayley Wells is an illustrator based in the UK. They enjoy making stories that are joyful and gritty in equal measure, often taking

inspiration from nature, politics, and cats.

Hi, Hayley. We love your illustrations for *The Spectacular Suit* so much! Can you tell us how you first became an illustrator?

I knew I wanted to be an illustrator when I was very young because I love books and I love drawing! I studied art and design at school, illustration at university, and finally children's book illustration as a master's degree. However, there are lots of great illustrators who don't go to university and lots of other ways to become an illustrator.

What are some of your favourite picture books?

I like books that help you look at the world a little differently – some of my favourites are *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love, *Zoo* by Anthony Browne, *I am Henry Finch* by Alexis Deacon and Viviane Schwarz, and *Louis I King of the Sheep* by Olivier Tallec.

Do you have some tips for young artists?

Draw, paint, and be creative as often as you possibly can – like other skills, drawing takes practice but it should be fun too. Keep playing with different materials and techniques and never be afraid to try something new – eventually you'll find ways of drawing that feel unique to you. Most importantly, don't be discouraged and don't give up!