

Classroom Resources



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Millie Mak the Maker Alice Pung and Sher Rill Ng

BOOK SUMMARY

Nine-year-old Millie Mak has discovered she has a superpower!

Using everyday objects, Millie turns them into something new, beautiful and useful. Who would ever think that a sunhat could be made from an old bedsheet, a skirt from a tea-towel, or some hair scrunchies from a scarf?

Through her creativity and clever thinking, Millie also deals with different friendships, tricky family challenges, and contributes to the school fete.

You can make the special objects Millie creates from the detailed yet easy-to-follow instructions included in the book. And, best of all, nothing needs to be bought!

From award-winning author-illustrator team, Alice Pung and Sher Rill Ng, comes the first book in an inspiring new series for young and old makers.

KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ACELT1596
- ACELT1791
- ACELY1675
- ACELY1682

THEMES

- Families
- Identity
- Sustainability
- STEM

Recommended Reading Ages: 8+

Resources Created For: Middle Primary

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Story 1 – ‘Gelati Party’

Before Reading

1. Look at the book’s front cover and discuss:
 - a) What do you think the story will be about?
 - b) What did you see on the cover that made you think this?
2. Now read the blurb on the back cover and discuss:
 - a) Were your predictions about the plot correct?
 - b) What questions are still left unanswered after reading the blurb?

During Reading

About the text

1. ‘Gelati Party’ is about seeing that everything old can be new again and that someone’s trash can be another person’s treasure.
 - a) List all of the examples of reusing, recycling or repurposing that happen in the story.
 - b) Which example do you think was the best at making the reader think about things in their own homes that could have another life? Explain your answer.
2. What did Millie mean when she said, ‘She had an embarrassment of riches, and none of them could ever be bought, because they were all found right in her family’? (End of Chapter 9) Write the sentence in your own words.
 - a) In what ways does Millie value her family more than things?
 - b) Has there ever been a time when you have really wanted something badly? What was it?
 - (i) Did you end up getting it?
 - (ii) If not, how did you let it go? If you did get it, was it what you hoped it would be?

Within the text

1. Ask students to create a glossary of unusual or unfamiliar words they encounter in the story.
 - a) For each word, come up with two alternatives or synonyms.
 - b) For each word write a sentence using the word.
2. Look for three verbs written in past tense in the text. Change these verbs from past to present tense. E.g. Floated – float
3. Shanelle makes up a mean rhyme about Millie at the start of the book. Note all the rhyming words you might find in this story, and make up a collection of your own.

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Beyond the text

1. In pairs, ask students to find the original lyrics to 'Miss Mary Mack'.
 - a) Ask them to research when 'Miss Mary Mack' was first sung by children and what games the children played as they sang the song.
2. At the start of Chapter 4 the word WOMINJEKA (Welcome to All) is spelled out on a sign at the community centre in black, red and yellow. There is no explanation about which language the word is written in but the colours they are presented in give us a clue.
 - a) Who uses *wominjeka* to say welcome? What language is it and where do the people who speak that language live?
 - b) Ask students to find out how to say welcome (both the word/s and the correct pronunciation) in the language/s of the First Nations custodians of the land your school is on.
3. In pairs, ask students to find out more about Queen Mary's dollhouse by researching when it was made, who it was made by and why it was so special. Ask them to use the information Granny gives Millie (Chapter 1 and Chapter 3) as the starting point for knowing which words to use in their Internet search.

After Reading

Comprehension

1. As a class discuss:
 - a) What surprised you about this story?
 - b) What was your favourite part of the story and why?
 - c) Were your predictions before reading correct?
2. Ask students to write responses to:
 - a) Even though Shanelle is never nice to her, Millie gives Shanelle's sister a treasured gift. Why do you think she did this?
 - b) Ahma says to Millie '...you don't have to like someone to be kind to them.' What do you think Ahma meant?
 - c) Millie really regretted giving away her dollhouse. But what do you think she learned about being truly kind?
 - d) Have you ever been kind to someone who did not thank you for your kindness?
 - (i) How did you feel?
 - (ii) How do you think the person you were kind to felt?

Writing

1. We only get to understand the story from one person's point of view in this book – Millie's. Put yourself in Shanelle's place and write The Tip Op Shop scene (Chapter 8) from her point of view. Or, write the scene where Ahma and Millie disagree (Chapter 5) from Ahma's point of view.

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2. The song that Shanelle sings to Millie to tease her (Chapter 1) features words that have a similar sound at their end to create a rhyming pattern and is based on the old rhyme 'Miss Mary Mack' (see also Chapter 7). Ask students to write a rhyme of their own.
 - a) It could be about reusing/recycling/repurposing, or in praise of being kind.
 - b) Students may like to use the same starting line, 'Miss Millie Mak, Mak, Mak' or one of their own.
 - c) Remind them that they have collected suitable rhyming words to help them in the Within the Text activities.

Visual Literacy

1. Notice the illustrations of the dollhouse, compared to all the pictures of Millie's own home and Granny's house. How does a modern, working home compare to the dream house that Millie and Granny have created?
2. Pay attention to the way the illustrator Sher Rill Ng has drawn Millie: the way Millie stands, sits, lies down and expresses her emotions without speaking. Can you find examples of where she conveys that Millie is shy, or embarrassed about her height?
 - a) What are the wordless ways you convey feeling or character through your own body language?
 - b) Find two examples in 'Gelati Party' where the illustrations clearly communicate how Millie is feeling.
 - c) For each example, identify the techniques that have been used to communicate Millie's emotions.
3. Direct students to look at the instructions in the 'Be the Maker!' section.
 - a) Choose one set of instructions. What are the different elements of these instructions?
 - b) Why are there illustrations as well as words?
 - c) Share a skill! Write and illustrate your own instructions on how to play a game (basketball), develop a technique (dance), make something (jelly, oat porridge) or learn something (coding).

Extension

1. Ahma is Millie's Chinese grandmother – her father's mother – and Granny is Millie's Scottish grandmother – her mother's mother. Many Australians have parents and grandparents who weren't born in Australia. Ask students to think about their own families and:
 - a) Write down the full names of their grandparents.
 - b) Do they live near you? Do you get to see them very often?
 - c) Were they born in the same city, town or country as you, or elsewhere?
 - d) For each of your grandparents, do some research about the place where they were born. If your grandparent/s were born in the same place as you, research what that place was like WHEN they were born.
 - e) For each grandparent, find three fun or interesting facts and three fun or interesting images showing the place or time they were born.
 - f) Create a collage of your family's background using these facts and images.

Some students may need the help of their parents or caregivers to answer these questions. Students may wish to write about another person or people who are special to them if their grandparents are not part of their lives.

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2. What happens to your rubbish when it goes to the tip?
 - a) Research how your local council deals with the rubbish collected in your area.
 - b) What happens to recyclables?
 - c) What is the history of the Tip Op Shop and how does it work?

Story 2 – ‘Rita the Brave’

During Reading

About the text

1. Rita asks her friends and teachers to call her ‘Rita’ instead of ‘Amrita’ – can you think of a reason why she might make this request?
 - a) Why do you think Mrs Muscat keeps calling her Amrita?
2. Rita explains that ‘Singh’ means Lion and ‘Kaur’ means Princess. These are common Sikh surnames. Are there common surnames in your culture?
 - a) Do you know the origin of your own name?
 - b) Do you have a nickname, and why was it chosen?
 - c) Have you ever hated a nickname that someone has given you?
3. What does Millie assume about Rita that turns out to be untrue?
 - a) What do the other children assume about Sarwan?
 - b) And what assumptions does Ahma make about Millie’s father?
 - c) Can you think of a time when you might have misjudged someone?

Within the text

Think about how dialogue is used in ‘Rita the Brave’ to convey:

1. Action – think about moments in the story where the narrator allows the characters to tell the story. For example, the urgency of Millie’s dad’s accident is told through the nurse from the hospital, Millie’s dad and through Ahma’s panicked responses.
 - a) Can you find other instances where Rita, Sarwan or Millie’s mother explain what is happening or has happened, in their own words?
 - b) What techniques are used to convey how the speaker is feeling about what happened?
2. Emotion – some characters are able to express their feelings more easily than others. Do all the characters talk about how they feel equally?
 - a) Which characters are most successful at making others understand how they feel?
 - b) Why do you think these characters are able to communicate their emotions so well? Provide examples from the story in your response.

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3. Character – Think about Geri, Ahma, Dr Singh and Rita.
 - a) For each character, collect examples (at least three) of:
 - (i) what they say
 - (ii) what they do
 - b) Do the characters' words match their actions or behaviours?
 - c) In what ways do the characters' words align with, or depart from, their actions?

Beyond the text

1. Ask students if they've ever participated in or witnessed an Acknowledgement of Country (Chapter 5).
 - a) What is the difference between an Acknowledgement of Country and a Welcome to Country?
 - b) Find out more about how different countries around the world acknowledge their First Nations peoples.
 - c) Select one of these countries, and research how an Acknowledgement of Country (or this country's equivalent) is conducted.
 - d) Think about the words in the Acknowledgement of Country example you have chosen. What is it asking you to do or honour?
2. What are ways in which you can demonstrate a respect for elders?
 - a) Is this the same across all cultures?

After Reading

Comprehension

1. As a class discuss:
 - a) What surprised you about this story and why?
 - b) In what way did the illustrations reveal unexpected things about Millie's character, family or life?
 - c) How did the characters deal with disappointment and difficulty in their lives?
 - (i) Think particularly about Millie's dad, Ahma, Sarwan, Millie and Rita.
2. Ask students to write responses to:
 - a) At first Rita appears to not care what the other kids call her, but she also makes fun of herself in front of her whole class. What do you think about her reasons and explanation for doing so?
 - b) Who do you think was the real hero of this story? Explain why.
 - c) What did Millie and Rita learn about their fathers at the end of the book?

Writing

1. Write a letter from Rita to her friend Sidney in Darwin, explaining what happened when she got sent to Principal O'Shea's office (Chapter 5).
2. Put yourself in Sarwan's shoes and write about what might have motivated him to bring his dad's kirpan to school.

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3. Millie and Rita create a much-loved product that sells out.
 - a) If you invented a product, what would it be? Describe what the product would do and how it would work.
 - b) What catchy name would you give it?
 - c) Think about the language Millie and Rita use to sell their headbands and scrunchies. Using their example as a starting point, how would you convince people to buy your product?

Visual Literacy

1. Millie's dad was a delivery driver, and food features heavily in this story. Pay attention to the illustrations of food in this story.
 - a) Choose two illustrations and describe how the illustrator conveys the texture, temperature, freshness or appeal of food.
2. Sometimes, people can show their character without speaking. Examine the illustrations of Dr Singh, Ahma, Millie's mum and dad, Rita and Sarwan.
 - a) Do they have a particular sense of movement, way of standing, way of looking at people?
 - b) How would you choose to illustrate these characters to show their strengths and weaknesses?
 - (i) Select one of these characters and create your own illustration of how you think they should look.
 - (ii) Write an explanation of why you have chosen to illustrate the character this way, particularly the similarities between and differences with Sher Rill Ng's depiction of the character.

Extension

1. Rita is Sikh. Sikhism is the world's fifth-largest religion. The word 'Sikh' means 'learner' or 'seeker of truth'. Do some research about the Sikh faith and traditions.
 - a) What are the five 'K's of Sikhism?
 - b) Sikh communities gather at a *gurdwara* both to pray together and for community events.
 - (i) If you were to attend a Sukh prayer gathering, what would be required of you to enter this sacred space?
 - (ii) What rituals would take place at the prayer gathering?
 - c) Do you know someone Sikh in your life? If so, perhaps interview them about their culture and the things they celebrate.
2. 'Animals, plants and minerals' (Chapter 6 – 'Blue Jeans'): our everyday clothes can be made of all of these things – wool, cotton, silk, viscose, nylon, polyester. Select one of these fabrics to research.
 - a) What is this fabric made of? For example, cotton comes from the cotton flower.
 - b) What processes are required to make these raw materials into fabric (harvesting, shearing, dying, weaving or knitting)?
 - c) What is the environmental impact of producing this fabric?

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About the Author and Illustrator

Alice Pung is the bestselling author of the memoirs *Unpolished Gem* and *Her Father's Daughter* (winner of the 2011 WA Premier's Award) and the essay collection *Close to Home*, as well as the editor of the anthologies *Growing Up Asian in Australia* and *My First Lesson*. Her debut novel *Laurinda* won the Ethel Turner Prize at the 2016 NSW Premier's Literary Awards and has been adapted into a successful play. Her second novel, *One Hundred Days*, was shortlisted for the 2022 Miles Franklin Award and has been optioned for a film. She is the author of children's books including *Be Careful, Xiao Xin!* (ill. Sher Rill Ng), which was a CBCA 2023 Notable book and shortlisted for the ABIA and Australian Book Designers Awards, *When Granny Came to Stay* (ill. Sally Soweol Han) and the Meet Marly books (ill. Lucia Masciullo). Alice was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for services to literature in 2022.

Sher Rill Ng is a Melbourne-based author and illustrator. She designed and illustrated for software companies before releasing her debut picture book, *Our Little Inventor*, which was adapted for the stage by the West Australian Opera. Her work also includes contributing Thumbelina's illustrations to the anthology *Fairytales for Feisty Girls* by Susannah McFarlane, illustrating Emma Allen's *The Night of the Hiding Moon* and co-creating *Be Careful, Xiao Xin!* with Alice Pung, which was a CBCA 2023 Notable book and shortlisted in the 2023 Australian Book Designers Awards – Best Designed Children's Book, and the 2023 ABIA awards.

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