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 Recommended for 7-10-year-olds

Summary

*I'm Artie. I'm eleven years old.
 I do not believe in ghosts, or monsters.
 I do believe in science.
 I also believe that my stepsister Willow is kinda terrifying.*

Willow and I found a weird old book in the attic of our new house. It's called the *Bigge Boke of Fetching Monsters*.

And it tells you how to make your own monster.

But that's impossible.

You DEFINITELY can't make a monster, because MONSTERS DO NOT EXIST.

Hodgepodge: How to Make a Pet Monster will delight young readers on many levels. Firstly, there's the humorous tension between the two main characters: uber-rational 11-year-old *Junior Scientist*-reading Artie, and his new stepsister Willow, who is messy, impulsive and equally smart. Next is the way the book is written in a "How to..." style, although of course the narrator (Artie) is discovering "How to..." at the same time as the reader. Then there is the adorable Hodgepodge, a cute and mischievous monster that any child would love to have around their house, and the super arch-villain Wesley Crankshaw, collector of mysterious (or not) extra-rare creatures. And finally, there's Dustin Spence's hilarious retro comic style illustrations that capture and extend the craziness of the story.

Themes

- Monsters • Science • Magic • Stepsiblings • Blended families • Cooperation •

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In the classroom...



Use in the curriculum

This is the first book in Lili Wilkinson's new How to Make a Pet Monster series.

The story suits the middle primary curriculum for reading, where students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment in which:

- The primary purpose is to entertain, and also inform and persuade
- Children can use comprehension strategies to build literal and inferred meaning
- They begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features

Hodgepodge: How to Make A Pet Monster opens up the topics of an author's influences (see 'The author's motivation', below), genre analysis and humour, graphic storytelling and the use of varied font sizes.



Discussion questions and classroom activities

Before reading *Hodgepodge: How to Make a Pet Monster*, 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 the real world or some kind of fantasy world? What was it on the cover that helped you answer these questions? Take a moment to look at four important elements that make up this book's cover and write a sentence about each.

1. The TITLE makes me think the book will be... (fill in here) because... (fill in here).
2. The title's FONT makes me think the book will be... (fill in here) because... (fill in here).
3. The IMAGE of the monster makes me think that it will be a... (fill in here) monster because... (fill in here).
4. The COLOURS 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 silly and 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 'T'.

Comprehension Questions: Chapter 1

1. Why does Artie think his new house is SPOOKY?
2. Who lives with him in the SPOOKY house?
3. What does Artie's magazine suggest he is interested in?
4. Where does Artie go to read his magazine?
5. What does he find there in a dirty old chest?



In the classroom...



Comprehension Questions: Chapter 2

1. The cover of *The Bigge Boke of Fetching Monsters* describes it is a guide to what?
2. According to Step 4 in the Boke what must you do when the monster you create appears?
3. Why should you beware of making a Zombie, according to the Boke?
4. How many reasons does Artie come up with to try to convince Willow not to make a monster?
5. Why does Artie finally agree to help Willow make a monster?

True or False: Chapter 3

1. Artie wants to rush in and make a monster straight away.
 2. A Hobgoblin monster is gentle and sweet natured.
 3. Artie finds a witch's cauldron in his junk room/parlour.
 4. Instead of a witch's slipper Willow uses one of her own socks.
 5. Artie is worried when Willow turns on the kettle.
- Have you heard of the saying 'a picture tells a thousand words'? That is a way of saying that one picture can tell us the same thing that it might otherwise take lots of words to explain. Look at the last double-page spread in Chapter 3 (pp 46-47) and explain, in your own words, what is going on here. Hint: don't just focus on what is coming out of the kettle. Describe how Artie and Willow feel about what they are seeing.
 - Sometimes the way words are shown on a page help tell the story. Turn to Chapter 4 and find examples of text:
 - in upper case
 - in bold
 - on an angle
 - in a different font to the rest of the words in the sentence
 - larger than the rest of the words in the sentence
 - starting large but getting smaller across the page
 - where words are underlined



Explain why you think these changes were made and how they affected the way you read the story.

- If Artie's mum Indira created Hodgepodge, what task do you think she would give him?
- If Willow's dad David created Hodgepodge, what task do you think he would give him?
- If you created Hodgepodge, what task would you give him?
- What does Artie mean when he sees an excellent opportunity to do Science and Observation in Chapter 6? What sort of things does he observe about Hodgepodge? What do the words Habitat and Species mean? Based on his observations, what Experiment does Artie devise and how does this experiment prove that Hodgepodge has a very unusual superpower?
- Find another very unusual animal that might be worthy of Wesley Crankshaw's menagerie. Create a small plaque for it with information about its habitat, species, appearance, weight, height and food.
- Did you find Wesley Crankshaw's 'Extra-Rare Specimens' suspicious? Why?
- Artie and Willow each write a Rescue Plan in Chapter 10. How do the plans differ and what do these differences say about each character's personality?
- Will Willow make a second fetchling? What will it be and what sort of trouble do you think it might cause? What will happen to Artie, Willow and Hodgepodge in the next story in the series?



A word from the author

'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

A word from the illustrator

'My main inspiration for creating the work is usually things that I have experienced in my own life such as our cats getting up to naughty things or my wife and I cooking dinner together. I find this is the best way to create a genuine experience for readers and viewers because it is something then that we can all relate to in some way or form. My process is typically to read through the script and do tiny little thumbnail drawings of ideas and inspiration for each illustration. Then I do a more refined sketch and will send it to our editor, and we see how it's looking in the book or if we need to change it or redo it. After that I do the final illustrations which are cleaned up and either have some tone and shadow applied to them or have some colour on them such as the cover!'



Dustin Spence



About the creators

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.

Dustin Spence is an illustrator with a background in animation and games. He loves creating playful, whimsical and colourful illustrations that explore the depths of his imagination.