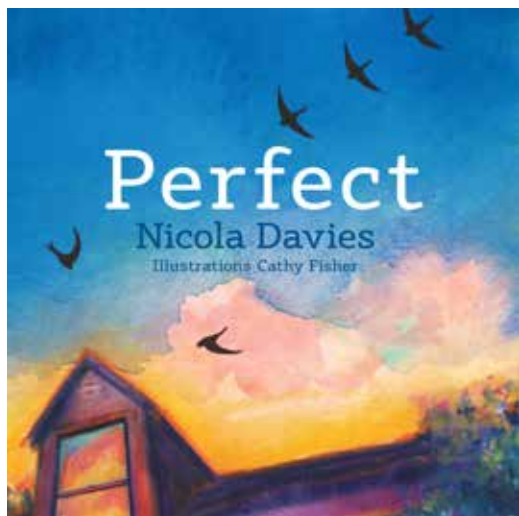


Perfect by Nicola Davies illustrated by Cathy Fisher



- Author Nicola Davies
- Illustrator Cathy Fisher
- 32 pages
- Size 250 x 250mm
- For readers aged 5 +
- Recommended for teaching Year 3+
- Hardback 9781910862469 £9.99
- Paperback 9781912213498 £6.99

Author and illustrator's websites:

www.nicola-davies.com

www.cathyfisher.co.uk

There are wonderful opportunities to develop empathy and understanding and to explore difficult issues in this book.

Discussion in pairs, small groups and in the whole class are an important element of developing these qualities and it is important to gently encourage the children to go beyond superficial answers and really explore human responses, motivation and capacity to adapt and change.



Title

Keeping the book hidden in a bag, box, or wrapping paper, discuss the title, 'Perfect.'

Think/pair/share

What might this picture book be about? Give reasons for your opinion.

Vocabulary

- What does the word 'perfect' mean? Discuss, then check in a dictionary.
- Is there more than one meaning? If so, which do you think the author is using?
- Perfect can be used as an adjective and a verb, but the emphasis is on the second syllable when you use it as a verb.

Think/pair/share

Create a sentence where perfect is used as an adjective and one where it is used as a verb. Read to each other to find out who has composed the most interesting sentence.

Spelling spells

Take the root *perfect* (from the Latin *perfectus*, meaning finished/complete/excellent) and create a spelling grid to reveal how many words have this word within them:

im		ible	
	perfect	ness	
		ion	s
		ly	
		ed	

Then see how many sentences you can compose, using these words in the correct context.

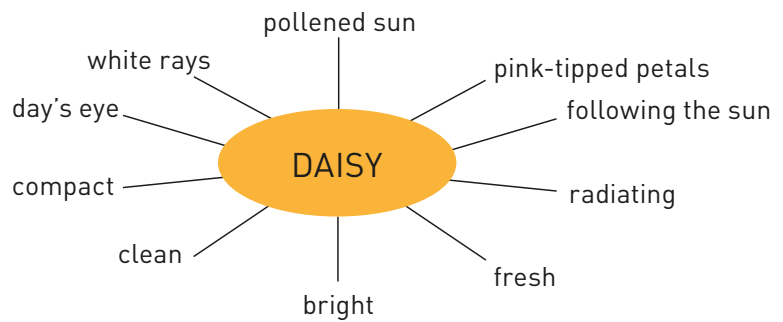
Thesaurus race

Find other words that mean perfect. In pairs, make sentences using the different synonyms.

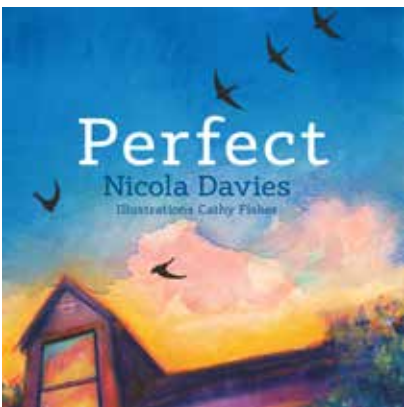
Writing challenge

Create a poem about something perfect, brainstorming and discussing your ideas first.

Model example:



The day's eye, small, compact,
 Bright rays, white, with pink-tipped delicacy
 Radiating from the gold-pollened sun,
 Following the warmth of the day,
 Closing tight at night.



Cover

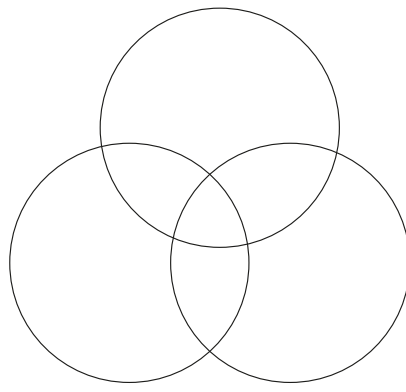
Discussion

- Look carefully at the cover.
- Does this give you any clues as to what the story is about? DO NOT READ THE BLURB at this point!
- What time of the year do you think the cover illustration depicts? Give reasons to support your answer. (Hint: the word 'because' is very useful!)
- What sort of art materials do you think the illustrator has used to create this picture?



Front end paper

- Looking at the front end paper, and the title page, can you identify the type of birds? If you are not sure, use a bird identification book, the website <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-identifier/> or an app to try and identify them. Which features will help you?
- Which other birds are easily confused with these birds? Examine photographs and drawings of them and identify the different features under a picture of each bird that you have drawn.
- Using a Venn diagram. Transfer the information to show individual and shared features, adding clear labels and a title.



I loved the little bedroom

Discussion

- How do you think the young boy in the picture is feeling?
- What has been happening recently in the rooftop room?
- Why do you think the boy 'loved the little bedroom'?

Vocabulary

- What is the definition of fledgling? Create your own sentence, using the word.

Author technique

- Spot the alliteration. Why do you think the author uses it? What other words beginning with 'f' and 's' can you think of/discover relating to birds?
- Create a word web of bird words.

Writing challenge

- Choose a favourite place you have. Brainstorm words you would associate with it, or use to describe it, using a thesaurus to enrich your word bank. Write a short, descriptive paragraph about your special place. If you don't have a favourite place, imagine one!

Creative challenge

- Either:

Make a class bird mobile. Choose a bird that you particularly like, find out about it and make a design for a template to create a bird. Think about the best materials to use, trying different types out to see how effective they are and how best to hang them. Write bullet point instructions for constructing your mobile.

- Or:

Follow the instructions to make a swift mobile.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3YAfjezSBliYWUwYjJkYzMtZTk3Ny00ZmViLTg5YmMtNjZlZWY30TRkMzMy/view>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3YAfjezSBliYWUwYjJkYzMtZTk3Ny00ZmViLTg5YmMtNjZlZWY30TRkMzMy/view>



The day she came

Discussion

- What do you think the significance is of the baby coming home at the same time as the swifts coming back?
- Where do you think the swifts have been?

Rapid research

- Find out whether your suggestions about the swifts were correct?
- E.g. <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/s/swift/>
- You could map out the migration routes of swifts and find out how many miles/kilometres they cover in one year/a lifetime.

Discussion

- Looking at the illustration and reading ‘They raced and chased each other, screaming over rooftops, with the joy of being home’ how could you describe the swifts’ movements in your own words. Which elements in the illustration help you?
- How does Cathy Fisher create a sense of distance?
- Listen to a swift’s call on the internet. E.g <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-and-wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/s/swift/>



I watched them

Prediction

‘That’s how it will be, I thought, me and my sister, racing and chasing, screaming with laughter and delight.’ Do you think the boy is right? Give reasons for your opinion.



But when my sister came home

Discussion

- What does the boy mean, when he says ‘I could see that she would never race or chase...’?
- Look closely at the illustrations. What do you notice? How is this picture different from the earlier illustrations?
- How does it make you feel?



I didn’t want to hold her

Discussion

- Why are the colours so dark, if the boy is in the garden?
- Why doesn’t he want anyone to see him cry?

Writing/art challenge

- Think of a time when you have been upset. Think about how you dealt with the emotion.

Either:

Create a picture depicting this.

Or:

Write a descriptive paragraph or poem about this. Think about where you are, what you can see, what you are touching, what you can hear, what is being said (if anything), how you feel inside.

Model example – recount:

I need somewhere dark and quiet – private, away from them all. Making a tent with my stripy blue duvet between my bed and desk, I stuff pillows and cushions inside so that I can curl up with my back to the door and breathe slowly, deeply.

Model example - poem:

Quiet:
 Dark and private,
 Away from their eyes,
 The hard, cross stares.
 My stomach clenching,
 Veins throbbing.
 I stare at the scuffs on the wall, making pictures
 from the shapes,
 Focusing hard in an effort to forget.



All summer long

- What is unusual about this picture?
- Why do you think the illustrator chose to compose the picture in this way?

- How do you think the mother feels?

Drama

In threes: prepare questions and answers before taking turns to hot seat:

- The boy
- The mother
- A visitor

Writing challenge

In threes: write a short play script featuring the boy, the mother and a visitor. Remember, stage directions are important. Rehearse, discuss and tweak your script where necessary. Act it out to the class. You could record your presentation and decide whether it needs further amendments.



Every Night

Discussion

- What effect do you think watching the swifts had on the boy?
- How does the illustration influence the way you think?
- Why do you think the illustrator chose the different colours?
- What materials do you think have been used to create the picture?
- Why do you think the boy sometimes 'wished to vanish' with the swifts?

Vocabulary

- What does the word dusk mean?

Writing challenge

Either:

Write about what you think about when you are going to sleep.

Or:

If you had one wish, what would it be?



Every morning

Author technique

- Re-read this page aloud carefully. Practise reading, thinking about rhythm and tone. Spot the simile and metaphor, explaining why they are effective in creating a vivid picture.
- How does the writer use contrast?

Discussion

- Why do you think the mood of this illustration has changed?

Rapid research

- Find out about the nesting habits of swifts.
- Find out what types of nesting boxes are suited to swifts. Which would you choose and why?
- http://www.magikbirds.com/image.asp?title_id=1117

Then one August dawn

Author technique

- Why do you think the writer chose the simile 'like a sooty piece of half-burned paper from a garden bonfire'?

Discussion

- The layout changes at this point from double page layouts to single pages. Why do you think this is?
- How do you think the boy feels about the bird? You might want to use a thesaurus to extend your choice of words.





Perhaps

Discussion

- What effect does this picture have on you?
- Why is there only one line of text?
- What would you do if you found a fledgling?

Rapid Research

- Find out how to look after a grounded swift.
- <http://actionforswifts.blogspot.co.uk/p/if-you-find-grounded-swift.html>
- http://britishwildlifehelpline.com/swift_rearing.html
- <http://www.swift-conservation.org/SwiftFirstAid.htm>
- Discuss the different options and then write a simple set of instructions.



I went inside

Discussion

- Why do you think the boy took the swift up to the little bedroom?
- How does the boy help the bird?
- Why is the focus in the picture on the hand and the bird?

Author technique

- Read the last sentence. How does the author make this work so well?

Writing challenge

- Quick write:
Innovate on the final sentence by choosing a different animal that you are releasing. Think carefully about how this particular animal will move. You might want to do observations – live or on the internet.
- Longer write:
Imagine you are the swift and write from his point of view. You could start from the point when he is picked up in the garden, or even earlier. Decide whether you will finish with his release from the top of the house, or perhaps go further, in which case, you might need to do further research.

Creative challenge

- Make a swift finger puppet which you can use when telling the story. If you need help, this website is useful: http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/swiftfingerpuppet_tcm9-211226.pdf



I turned around

Discussion

- Compare the text and picture with the text and picture on the previous page. How are they similar? Why do you think this is?
- Why do you think the word 'perfect' is used three times?

Drama

- Hot seat the boy to find out how he is feeling at this particular point.



Perhaps

Discussion

- Which other illustration does this one remind you of?
- Re-read the text on the page. What do you notice?
- How do you feel when you look at this page?

- How has the boy's attitude changed?



I picked her up

Author technique

- Why do you think the author chose the word inside rather than in?
- What is the effect of the repetition?
- What does the boy mean when he says 'the two of us together, racing, chasing, screaming with delight and laughter'?

Art challenge

- Wax resist pictures: choose a subject such as wild flowers, grasses, night sky, sea, trees. Work out a design in rough and test out the technique, using white wax crayons and watercolour paints. Then create your picture.
- Look at the final double spread. Look at different images of the sky or, better still, take your own photographs. Decide what materials you would like to use: e.g. watercolour, pastels, inks, charcoal, pencil crayons, collage.

Conclusions

Emotions graph

- Create a graph to chart the boy's feelings as the story progresses. Decide on labels for the axes, showing time on one axis and feelings on the other. Decide on a title for the graph. Select words you think most suited to indicate how he is feeling at different points. These might include: *joyful, happy, contented, unhappy, angry, miserable*. You may have others which you prefer. Compare and discuss your graphs. Are you in general agreement? Whose graph is easiest to read? Has anyone used colour as an indicator of mood?

Discussion

- Looking back through the whole book, decide which is your favourite illustration and favourite piece of text. Explain why you like them.
- Thinking about what you have discovered in the story, do you think imperfections matter?
- How do people about you react to imperfections? Does this have an effect on other people?
- What do you think the boy understands by the term perfect at the end?
- What are the important qualities that people need to develop, if they are to have good relationships and feel contentment?

Quick research

- Bullet point the information you have on Nicola Davies and Cathy Fisher. Can you find out any further information?
www.nicola-davies.com
www.cathyfisher.co.uk

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