

Not So Busy Bee Teachers notes

A note from the author

The inspiration behind the story

Not So Busy Bee is my third book in the Not So series. Similarly to the previous two (Not So Scary Bear and Not So Quiet Mouse), the story is about defying stereotypes and being true to yourself.

I came up with the title first - Not So Busy Bee – and this helped inspire the actual content of the story – a tale about a bee that was not like the other busy bees. Instead of exhausting himself by buzzing around all day, Not So Busy Bee takes his time and enjoys the smaller moments in life (“smelling the flowers and counting the clouds”). And, as the story developed, the more I realised I wanted this book to carry a positive message about slowing down and being more mindful of your feelings and others.

It’s also a book about friendship and that helping your friends is worth its weight in gold (or honey!)

I’m hoping that when I read this book to my kids they’ll grasp the spirit of Not So Busy Bee – to be more aware and connected. Although, I hate to admit it, I suspect it’s me really who should be taking this message on board (is that my phone buzzing?!)

The Illustration Process

I knew from the start I would be making A LOT of collage bees so it was important to make the star of the show - Not So Busy Bee - look a bit different and let his personality shine! So, I spent quite a bit of time drawing eyes and eyebrows so I could get his expressions just right.

I then began working out what text would sit on what page. This then allowed me to start thinking about and sketching the illustrations. As well as figuring out how the illustrations could add something additional to the story, I also needed to take into consideration how the pictures would work together: one busy page (i.e. lots of bees and flowers), followed by one not so busy (one or two bees) in order to create a naturally pleasing visual flow. Overall, it takes 2 to 3 months to get it to the point where I and Windy Hollow are happy.

I then decided on the colour palette – bright with lots of yellow and black, of course! The next step was to create sheets of coloured paper, using acrylic paint rolled on to a variety of textured paper. And then the fun part – cutting and sticking the paper. I made this book entirely by hand in collage and to exact scale. It’s so fiddly but enormously fun and satisfying.

Before Reading

Take a look at the cover. This book is obviously about a bee.

What do you already know about bees?

Why do you think the title is Not So Busy Bee?

What does the title tell you about the bee in this book?

After Reading

Why do you think Not So Busy Bee felt different?

What so you think is the most important thing to Not So Busy Bee?

In what way does the story challenge the stereotype of bees?

What do you think Not So Busy Bee's best qualities are?

What would be a better name for him than Not So Busy Bee?

Art

Ruth Waters has used collage to illustrate this book.

Try using collage to build your own scene from the book

Writing

Not So Busy Bee is part of a series of three books which includes *Not So Scary Bear* and *Not So Quiet Mouse*. In this particular book we also have the character Not So Wise Owl. Try to write a story using Not So Wise Owl as the main character.

What are some other character that you can think of to write a story about in the same style? Think of some of the sayings or stereotypes we use when referring to an animal and come up with a story around one of those. For example, Not So Lazy Sloth or Not So Greedy Pig.

General

Did you learn anything new about bees in this story?

Can you make a class poster about the different type of bees and their jobs?

Why are bees so important to our environment?

Find out more about what you can do to protect bees.