



Billie B. Brown: The Bad Butterfly

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Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Engage with the characters and the story.
- Discuss gender stereotyping.
- Discuss friendship.
- Develop letter-writing and advice-giving skills.

About the Story:

Billie B. Brown and her best friend, Jack, have started ballet classes. At ballet class, the girls dance like butterflies, and the boys dance like trolls. Billie tries her very best to dance like a beautiful, floaty butterfly, but she can't quite get the hang of it. Jack offers to help Billie practice at home. As the two friends practice, they have an idea that helps Billie become the great dancer she wants to be ...

Before You Read the Story:

Read the back-cover blurb aloud to the class and show them the picture on the back cover. Invite students to discuss what they think will happen in the story.

Do they think Billie will be a good dancer or a clumsy dancer?

Now look at the front cover. Ask the class to look carefully at what Billie's wearing. Is there anything unusual about it? Ask again for predictions about the story.

Questions and Activities:

Chapter One

- In Billie B. Brown stories, the "B" in Billie's name always stands for something different. What do you think the "B" stands for in this book? Think about the first sentence in this book to help you.
- Do you have a best friend? What do you do together? Do you sometimes disagree on things, like Billie and Jack do about their favorite sandwiches?
- Were you surprised to find out Jack was doing ballet with Billie? Do you know boys who do ballet? Do you think that's OK?
- Why do you think Miss Dainty asks the girls to dance like butterflies and the boys to dance like trolls? Would you prefer to dance like a butterfly or a troll?
- Read pages 10 and 11. Do you think Billie is dancing like a dainty butterfly?

Activity: Write an acrostic poem of your name, or your friend's name. To write an acrostic poem, you take each letter in the name and choose a word beginning with that letter that describes the person that the poem is about.

For example:

Sweet

Adventurous

Lucky

Lovely

Youthful



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Chapter Two

- Look carefully at the picture on page 17. Does Billie look the way she imagines she looks? Does she look like a butterfly?
- Why does Billie crash into the mirror? Have you ever done something like that?
- How do you think Billie is feeling on page 24, when “she scrunches up her face and stares at the ground”?

Activity: Think about a time when you tried to do something new. Were you good at it right away? Write down three things that you did to help you get good at your new activity.

Chapter Three

- Billie is so excited about practicing ballet that she doesn't even want to eat dessert first. Is there anything you like to do that much?
- How does Billie get into Jack's garden?
- Jack's dad says that Jack has been telling him what good dancers Billie and Jack are. Do you think Billie and Jack are good dancers yet?
- Are you surprised that Jack can dance like a butterfly very easily, when Billie finds it so hard?
- What do you think Billie's idea at the end of the chapter is?

Activity: Imagine you are Billie's friend. What advice would you give her about ballet? Write her a letter telling her what you think she should do.

Chapter Four

- Read page 36. Do you think it sounds like Billie and Jack are doing ballet?
- Why do you think Billie puts on her big red boots instead of her ballet slippers? Do you have any more predictions about Billie's idea at the end of chapter three?
- Billie solves her problem of not being a very good butterfly ballerina by looking at what she is good at, and making the most of that. Have you ever had a problem like Billie's? How did you solve it? Do you think Billie's solution is a good one?

Activity: At the end of the story, Billie imagines herself as a soccer player and Jack as a ballerina. What do you want to be when you grow up? Draw a picture of yourself as a grown-up.

Teacher Tips adapted from Hardie Grant Egmont.