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AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR MASTERCLASSES

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CRESSIDA COWELL: THE MAGIC OF EMPATHY



BEFORE WATCHING THE VIDEO AND READING THE EXTRACT:

GET IN THE ZONE!

In her film, Cressida Cowell talks about how books are *particularly* good for creating empathy. She says that books have a ‘very special kind of magic’ – so it’s important to READ as well as to watch films and television!

Get students thinking about what it means to have ‘empathy’ for someone else. Ask volunteers to come out one by one to read or act out one of the following scenarios: a mother can’t afford to do the weekly shopping for her children; a child lashes out at his friend because he feels like he isn’t as clever as him; an old lady watches television alone on Christmas Day; a teenager starts to cry in her exam because she doesn’t know the answers to the questions in front of her.

Once students have discussed each scenario, ask them to choose one of them. What do they think the main character in the scenario is feeling? What physical cues help them to get to this conclusion? Why is it important to know someone else’s perspective? What would you do or say to help the person?

Ask students to write a bullet pointed list of advice for the character in the scenario they have chosen.

AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO AND READING THE EXTRACT:

Taken from the Prologue of Wizards of Once: Knock Three Times (you can download the extract at worldbookday.com/online-masterclasses/the-magic-of-empathy).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stops the Wizards from living in the Wildwoods ‘forever’?
2. What are the differences between the Wizards and the Warriors?
3. How do you predict the relationship between the Wizards and the Warriors will impact the main characters and the plot of the story?
4. What is Wish’s ‘terrible secret’?
5. Do you think it is possible to be friends with someone who you have been brought up to hate ‘like poison’? Why or why not?
6. Why do you think the Prologue ends with two questions? What is the effect of these questions on the reader? Who do you think is asking the questions?

FUN ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: SOMEONE ELSE'S POINT OF VIEW

Cressida describes how The Wizards of Once is set in a world that is split in two. On one side live the Wizards, who are magic, and on the other side, live the Warriors, who are trying to get rid of all the magic!

- In pairs, one of you will be a Wizard and one of you will be a Warrior. On separate pieces of paper, write down all of the ways you might behave towards each other. For example, you might be violent, aggressive, angry or defensive. Use everything that Cressida talks about in her video as well as the extract from *The Wizards of Once: Knock Three Times* to help you.
- When you have finished, pick another colour of pen or pencil. Underneath each of the behaviours that you've already written down, write the feelings that lie behind them. For example, you might behave defensively because you feel threatened. Continue this process with as many colours as you can.
- Then, read out your sheets to each other and explain how your behaviour is influenced by your feelings. How does this exercise help you to have more empathy for each other?

ACTIVITY 2: WORKING TOGETHER & COOPERATION

In her film, Cressida emphasises the importance of having empathy so that we can all understand each other better and work together to defeat our 'common enemies'.

- What does Cressida Cowell mean by 'common enemies'? Can you work together to list some common enemies that we face in the world today? How does lack of empathy sometimes get in the way of solving the big problems that we all face together?
- Write a postcard to someone who is completely different to you. In your postcard, persuade the other person that you must work together to face the common enemies that you have identified.

ACTIVITY 3: MAGICAL BONDS

Cressida talks about how the Vikings in How to

Train Your Dragon think of the dragons as the enemy, whereas Hiccup has a magical bond with the dragons and thinks they are just as important as the humans.

- In pairs discuss: is it possible to have empathy for animals or creatures and not just humans? What are the barriers to having empathy with animals or creatures?
- Think of a special relationship in your life. It could be with a pet or a creature or a human – a family member or a friend or even a teacher! Create an illustration or collage showing the relationship between you. How can you show a magical bond using only colour, texture and imagery?

SHARE A STORY

Choose someone to swap lives with for one week only! It can be a friend, a teacher or a family member. Write a diary entry in role as that person every day for one week. To do this exercise, you will need to show empathy towards your chosen person and be able to put yourself in their shoes. What happens to them? How do they feel? What is their point of view? After a week, share your diary with your chosen person. How accurate are your entries? How does the exercise help you to have more empathy for each other?

SPARK YOUR IMAGINATION...

AN INSPIRING SHARE A STORY CHALLENGE FOR YOU from Cressida Cowell...

Create your own magical creature that others might find scary, but that you have a special relationship with – just like Hiccup's relationship with the dragon in How to Train Your Dragon. Make sure that your girl hero or your boy hero has a special bond with this magical creature and, most importantly, has empathy for the creature. Share your story with the rest of the class, your friends and family and see what their reaction is to the relationship that you have created between your character and his or her magical creature.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are more brilliant Masterclass films and resources featuring amazing authors and illustrators over at [worldbookday.com/online-masterclasses](https://www.worldbookday.com/online-masterclasses). Don't miss out, download them today!